

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission to the Education, Employment and Training Committee

Regarding Proposed Legislative Changes to Home Education in Queensland

From: Nathan Ban & Anita Winsch – Home Schooling Parents

Dear Members of the Education, Employment and Training Committee, (eesc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

As dedicated supporters and practitioners of home education in Queensland, we do not approve of the proposed changes, and we wish to express our concerns regarding the proposed legislative changes to home education outlined in the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006. We believe these changes, if implemented as is, could have detrimental effects on the educational freedoms and well-being of home-educated children across the state.

Our concerns centre around the following key issues:

1. Burden of Proof on Safety and Wellbeing:

We argue that placing the burden of proof on families to demonstrate children's safety and wellbeing unfairly assumes negligence without evidence. Families already interact with existing child protection services when concerns arise, and requiring additional proof may create unnecessary stress and surveillance.

2. Definition of "Suitable" Educational Environment:

We believe that a subjective interpretation of what constitutes a suitable educational environment lacks transparency and may lead to inconsistent application. Without clear guidelines, local authorities could arbitrarily assess and restrict educational choices, undermining parental control.

3. Additional Conditions for Home Educating Families:

Imposing extra conditions on home educators suggests distrust in their ability to provide quality education, unfairly targeting a specific group. All education providers, including traditional schools, should be held to the same basic standards without singling out homeschooling families.

4. Differential Treatment of Home Educated Students:

The proposed guiding principle imposes a higher level of scrutiny on homeschooling families compared to students attending traditional schools. This unequal treatment undermines parental autonomy and places undue pressure on families without corresponding benefits in child safety.

5. Challenges with Curriculum Changes:

Frequent curriculum updates hinder long-term planning for homeschooling families, impacting educational stability. Families may struggle to adapt educational plans to meet shifting requirements, affecting the quality and continuity of their children's education. Our current homeschooling strategy to incorporate interest-based learnings has fostered a love of learning within our children, compared to rigid strict structure.

6. Mandatory Subjects at All Grade Levels:

Children learn best when they are interested in the topic, and we have observed this with our children. Since we began home schooling, we have incorporated interest-based learnings while including the mandatory Maths and English (*Spelling, Reading, and Comprehension*). And this has fostered a new love of learning new things and topics. This in turn, has engaged our children to be more inquisitive of their world around them instead of arguing about topics being boring. Furthermore, older students may have diverse interests or career aspirations that don't align with traditional academic subjects, limiting their educational flexibility.

7. Impact on Diversity and Religious Beliefs:

A rigid national curriculum may overlook cultural and religious diversity, infringing on parental rights to tailor education. Homeschooling families should have the freedom to incorporate cultural or religious teachings into their curriculum without being constrained by a standardized approach.

8. Administrative Burden of Reporting Requirements:

Excessive reporting demands place an undue administrative burden on homeschooling families and regulatory agencies. Instead of focusing on bureaucratic paperwork, resources should be allocated to support educational outcomes and child welfare.

9. Unrealistic Timeframes for Response:

The short timeframe for responding to notices undermines families' ability to provide a thoughtful and comprehensive reply. Families may require additional time to gather necessary information or seek guidance, especially in complex situations involving child welfare.

10. Changes in Registration Processes:

Removing provisional registration options limits flexibility and accessibility for families transitioning to homeschooling. Provisional registrations provide a vital interim option for families awaiting enrolment or adjusting to homeschooling, facilitating smoother transitions.

11. Lack of Inclusive Consultation:

Meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including homeschooling families, is essential to ensure proposed changes reflect diverse perspectives and concerns. By excluding key stakeholders from the consultation process, the legislation risks overlooking important insights and potential unintended consequences. Furthermore, this bill **MUST** be transparent about the following:

- removing the use of “gendered language” (WHAT does this mean, does it mean to REMOVE the WORDS “BOY” & “GIRL”?)
- make other minor and technical amendments (WHAT exact minor and technical amendments is the proposed Bill referring to?)

In conclusion, we urge the Education, Employment, and Training Committee to carefully consider these concerns and advocate for amendments that uphold the rights and freedoms of home-educated children and their families. We believe that collaborative efforts between policymakers and stakeholders are crucial in shaping legislation that promotes educational excellence while respecting parental autonomy.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,

Nathan Ban & Anita Wunsch

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