

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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25 March 2024

Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee for *Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024*.

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the recent education legislation changes that have been proposed in our state. As a constituent and a member of the community, I believe it is crucial to voice my apprehensions about the potential impact of these changes on our education system.

I am the mother of an exceptionally bright six-year old girl – she is growing up in a semi-rural area on a hobby farm and she absolutely loves animals, nature and anything outdoors. She is in first grade at a nearby private school and she is struggling with bullying and being required to sit still and inside for extended periods of time. We are in the process of moving to homeschooling to meet her social, educational and emotional needs that are currently not being met in mainstream education.

She is so far advanced on many areas not currently being taught in year one as her natural enquiry is around nature and animals and how things work. Yet she is continually “in trouble” and “not meeting grades” in areas such as reading and writing which is where the curriculum focuses at this age. She will get to those concepts when she is ready and we know she will excel at them at that time.

My husband and I are both professionals in our own right; highly educated and have always believed in the concept of “school”. We had been struggling with the thought of taking the challenge of home-schooling on ourselves until we realized that our child is so inquisitive about life in general that we teach her every single day in so many amazing ways. There is a vibrant community out there that values individual learning as much as we do and we know we will be able to give our daughter the most amazing education for her to be the absolute best version of herself she can be.

She will not be bullied at home. She will not be subject to physical abuse and violence at home. She will not be dogmatically taught concepts against our family values at home yet she will be free to explore any and all concepts and subjects she finds interest in and wants to know more about. Sometimes these will align with the ACARA and sometimes they won't. But she will be *free* to think for herself and discover her own way.

Currently at school, she feels unsafe, she comes home physically harmed and she gets frustrated and upset for getting “into trouble” for being a tactile child who is “easily distracted”. We have noticed a terrible decline in her attitude and behaviour in the eight short weeks she has been back at school this year already and we are not getting far with the school in remedying the situation.

She is a child that does not fit ACARA at this point in time. That may change as she grows and matures and she will have the *option* to follow that curriculum; if and when it meets her needs. You are falsely assuming that ACARA does meet all needs. Australia’s declining educational results are clear evidence ACARA is not meeting the needs of a vast number of students. Why then are you pushing it onto home-schooling families?

We are significantly concerned with the wording around “in the best interests of the child”; Government and its bureaucratic departments have no business deciding what’s in the “best interests” of my child. That is our job as her parents. It’s also beyond ironic that using current popular terminology “inclusion, diversity, equity” to justify and support these changes, that this legislation seeks to stuff more children into the “one size fits all” box and not enable different pathways for children and their parents without increasing red tape and potentially for government and bureaucrats to say “no”.

The home-schooling community has the most amazing links and intelligent people! They share knowledge and wisdom for the benefit of the children; that’s what truly quality education should be. Some are qualified teachers in their own right; others, like us, educated professionals from other disciplines keen to see our children excel and grow. To assume the classroom is the only place to learn is to significantly underestimate the opportunities beyond it.

The proposed legislation raises several pressing concerns that I believe need to be addressed. The fact that home-schooling bodies were not part of the consultation demonstrates a lack of understanding about the rich intellect, skills and dedication of that community. I note your “Human Rights Statement” and draw to your attention your failure to include individuals from the home-schooling sector, especially knowing you planned to make changes directly affecting the home-schooling process, and suggest that exclusion of this group violates that veracity of that document.

Moreover, I am worried about the lack of transparency and public consultation surrounding these changes. As a stakeholder in our education system, I believe it is imperative for the voices of educators, parents, students, and community members to be heard and considered in any decision-making process that impacts our schools.

We express concern and dismay at Ms Farmer’s “Human Rights Declaration” accompanying this Bill. It does not reflect the basic human right of parents to determine what’s in the best interests of their child. It imposes further overreach of government and bureaucratic departments into the family unit. These changes most certainly do not represent the basic right of a child to the best education possible; or it wouldn’t be demanding adherence to a curriculum which is proven to be failing and is not building a generation with resilience and the ability to think and invent and create along their passions and natural talents.

We are just starting out on our journey; it is scary enough without wondering if we are about to be forced out before we get started properly. We certainly don't want to be forced to follow ACARA when we already know it does not fit our daughter's needs and will result in the same anxiety and "failures" and definitely will not bring out the absolute best in her now and into her future.

In light of these concerns, we urge you to carefully reconsider the proposed education legislation and to prioritize the best interests of our students, teachers, and schools. I implore you to advocate for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to policymaking that values input from all stakeholders and ensures the integrity and quality of our education system.

We **do not** support any of the proposed changes to the Act that will impact our rights to educate our child in the manner we see fit and we **do not** support the enforced teaching of ACARA in home-school settings.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Tyrrell and Vincent Tyrrell