

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 1977
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Publication:
Attachments: No attachment
Submitter Comments:

Subject: The Education Reforms and Advocating for Educational Choice for children with disabilities – A father’s perspective

Dear Committee Member,

I am writing to emphasize the importance of recognizing and respecting the diverse needs of students when it comes to education. While the traditional school system may work well for some children, it is crucial to acknowledge that it does not benefit every child equally.

I am also writing to you to point out the shortcomings of the reforms and what I feel are the real reasons the Education Department wish to implement the Education Reforms.

My Background

- I am the father of two autistic children (16 and 10) who are home schooled.
- Our eldest attended mainstream school up until the first term of grade 5.
- In the middle grade 4, we took our eldest child out of the system on a 6 month exemption to travel around Australia and were horrified at how bad his reading and writing skills were. It was very clear that the school system was failing him.
- We were always concerned that his reading and writing levels weren't up to scratch, but we were always informed by his teachers that he was doing “fine”. They were trying to hide the fact that the ACARA system was failing our child, and he was actually falling behind.
- During our trip we were able to increase his reading and writing skills by about 3 grades. This was done using absolutely no formal learning whatsoever.
- Upon our return we re-enrolled him in mainstream school. However, he was so bullied by both the students and his teacher that he attempted to take his own life in school - where the teacher did not even notice. It was only because of the quick

actions of the boy beside him, who took the scissors off him that we still have him today.

- With the bullying and his grades slipping we took him out of school and commenced home school full time.

Home Schooling

- Home schooling children with disabilities is challenging and requires thinking outside the box to determine what works with each child.
- Our children learn best from practical examples and real experiences as well as videos.
- My wife spends hours thinking outside the box to come up with new and different ways to stimulate our children to learn. This is something that can't be done in a classroom with 30 other children.
- Our children do not respond to normal school practices of workbooks/sheets etc.
- Children with disabilities can't follow a normal school day as they have therapy appointments and need breaks throughout the day, so schooling is done wherever possible.
- Schooling for children with disabilities especially autistic children means using their interests to create lessons. For example, if they are not interested in the book, they are supposed to review they won't do it.
- There are various co-ops operated by likeminded home school parents where children can socialise and attend classes that are dedicated to their interests.
- Socialisation Myth – There are many activities organised for home school children to attend to make friends and socialise with other people.
- Like a lot of other home school families, we have a dedicated room for schooling, and we use the meagre government assistance to buy resources.

- My wife and I spend hours creating lessons, searching for resources and activities, coming up with creative ways to present learning opportunities to our children. We also have to ensure that both children plans and reports are done for HEU – which takes a lot of time. We and the children are not just sitting on our laurels doing nothing all day as some educators seem to think.
- For me as a father being involved more in their education means I have been able to be a part of their learning journey and see my children flourish as a result of being able to learn the way that suits them.

The Education Reforms - Committee Briefing

- The reforms are not about making education better. It's about the Education department having more control over home schooling because they fear it.
- The Education Department's assertion that the influx of new home school enrolments post COVID were the result of social media and parent complacency is ridiculous. Many parents like ourselves realised that the current school system and the ACARA were failing their children. They found that although it was hard work home schooling it was actually allowing them to be with their children and watch them learn and grow and allowing the children to learn in a stress free, safe environment. Most of these parents were probably dealing with school refusal anyway and having to collect their early because schools couldn't handle them,
- Interestingly, many schoolteachers are opting to homeschool their own children. This choice reflects a deep understanding of the limitations of the traditional schooling system and the desire to provide a more tailored and effective education for their own families.
- There is no Home School Association in Queensland. It would be beneficial to both government and the home-schooling community to have an association implemented.

- The Education Department used deceptive examples to argue for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. They cited that a child who committed suicide was as a result of their problems with home schooling - however they have not even investigated the death to know why the person took their own life. In addition they had extensive mental health issues and were under the care of CHYMS at the time.
- The Education department in its second round of consultation actively left out the two home schooling representatives that were included in the first round, instead they consulted with two home school providers Simply Homeschool and another. Both of which sell the Australian curriculum. Of course, they are going to support forcing home schoolers to use the Australian Curriculum as it would be a huge financial windfall for them and other providers.
- Simply Homeschool advised they did not support the reforms, so the Education Department lied about the support that businesses were putting behind the Reforms.
- Secondly the media has sighted a case of a cult not having their children registered and the children were not learning anything. This is not a fair representation of the Homeschooling community as the vast majority are registered and provide reports and work samples to HEU to prove their children are learning and progressing.
- The Reforms are in total violation of the Human Rights Act. It does not allow parents the right to choose how they educate their children.

In conclusion, these Education Reforms have been presented by very out of touch politicians and educators who are more worried that the trend towards home schooling and its advantages will expose the serious failings of the current school system.

I implore you to support us in

- Ensuring that people have their right to determine for themselves how they will educate their children.
- Ensure children with disabilities are not shoehorned into an education system that cannot cater for them.

Yours Sincerely,

John

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