

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Committee Secretary
Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

25 March 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my opposition to the Education Amendment Bill 2024.

I am a mother and have worked as a teacher. I don't home school, but I have family and friends who do, and very successfully. The children I know who are home schooled are very sociable, articulate, well rounded, knowledgeable and high achieving. Of course, I know many, many children who attend state schools, including my own children, who can be similarly described.

I also know or know of children in public and private schooling who are anti-social, depressed, aggressive, disinterested and disengaged, struggling to keep up, or not able to demonstrate skills and learning appropriate for their age.

As I said, my children all attend public schools, and I happy with what they've achieved academically and socially, so I'm certainly not denigrating public schooling. However, we can't assume that the school system suits everyone. There are many paths to great results and success, and limiting everyone to one system, surely limits success!

Home schooling comes at a huge cost to a family – time, effort and a lot of money, conceivably one parent's income. It is a monumental choice a family makes when school education is believed to have failed a child, one way or another. Some reasons for this may include: curriculum (including subject matter covered and not covered, interest and/or relevance to the child, ordering and timing, the actual teaching of the curriculum) values, social considerations, and the safety and wellbeing of a child.

Note: since I mentioned values, I'll add here that I strongly oppose **removing the use of gendered language**.

Therefore, **requiring that home schoolers teach to the Australian Curriculum**, covering specific subjects in a specific order at specific times directed by the Department of Education, clashes with the very reasons a child may have needed to enter into home schooling.

I personally saw some of the dissatisfaction of parents of school children in the pandemic. In the lockdowns, school work suddenly became more visible to parents, who were supervising their children doing their home learning. It became common to hear parents commenting on, questioning or criticizing the school work

given to their children.

The bill states it aims to **acknowledge wellbeing, inclusion and diversity**. With such a diversity in backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, environments, prospects, goals, interests, abilities, needs, learning styles... why should we all be taught exactly the same thing, in the same way? We all know that a ONE SIZE FITS ALL garment fits barely anybody well!

The proposed requirement for **parents to prove that homeschooling is in the best interest of the child** is problematic.

Homeschooling is on the rise around the world, as well as in our state, showing that more and more people do not believe schools are in the best interest of their child.

A Parliament of Australia paper titled "School Refusal" dated 19 April 2023, explains that school refusal in Australia is estimated at between 1% and 5%, and attendance has been declining over recent years (in 2022, years 1-10 students attended 86.5% of possible days, and only 49.9% of Year 1-10 students had an attendance rate over 90%).

According to the Courier Mail (Jan 4, 2024), "the Department of Education's School Opinion Survey reveals more than a third of kids and more than a quarter of staff believe their school does not manage student behaviour well." And "One in five children don't feel safe in Queensland schools."

According to an ABC news story by Claudia Long posted on the 5 December 2023, "Just over half of Australian students achieved the National Proficiency Standard – 51% in Maths, 58% in science and 57% in reading – so a significant number of students are failing to demonstrate they have more than basic skills in those areas."

In the same article, Mr Amey, a member of the Australian Education Union, says "contending with bigger class sizes and a pile of admin work inflamed the problem... We have so many requirements about data keeping and compliance and so on, that we don't get to do the most important stuff in the classrooms."

If the onus is to be placed on home schooling parents, then perhaps schools should also be required to prove that schooling is in the best interest of the child.

Sincerely,

Chantal Cabale

