

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you with my concerns regarding the proposed amendments to the education bill that has recently been presented to parliament. As a home educating parent, I do not support some of these changes that have been introduced and I am worried about the impact that they will have on my family and the homeschooling community.

My main area of concern is the **implementation of the Australian Curriculum** into homeschooling and the impacts this one-size-fits-all approach has on the children in our homeschooling community.

With my employment history in Early Education roles, the required plans and goals and observations required for my role was always **child-centred** and reflecting how I as an educator could best provide opportunities to **extend on the child's interests, strengths, and skills**. This is the same approach I take through our home education journey. This has strengthened my belief that all children develop at their own pace and often when given the opportunity can extend their own learning further than we ever thought possible. I will give an example where a simple walk to the park spiked numerous interesting conversations about road safety, safety around dogs, why birds poo, seasons and why there were not any yellow flowers on the grass for my son to pick. Or another example would be when I bought a maze book to extend on that interest he had at the time. Instead of arguing about doing bookwork, he sat and did 41 pages of mazes because it is something he is interested in.

Since having my second child, it is even more evident how each child develops at a different pace and how their needs differ. My almost 7 year old son has strengths in Maths and has been adding and subtracting large numbers for the past 12+ months whereas English is a learning area he finds difficult. We have been working on the foundation for English since our homeschooling journey began over two years ago. By following his own cues, strengths and interests we have been using a more **hands-on, holistic-approach** to English where we have seen him thrive in his abilities. In the past 6 months, he has taught himself to read and has starting using the computer to begin learning typing skills and sentence structure. We have been working with his occupational therapist to build his fine motor skills to again, lay the foundation for handwriting further down the track. If we had followed the national curriculum based simply on his age he would be behind in some areas, but instead we celebrate the whole child. Recognising and celebrating he is above his age group in Maths, recognising and celebrating his enthusiasm for wanting to learn to read, recognising and celebrating his many skills he is mastering in other areas of development - by using an **individualised, goal-based approach** to his education ensures **continuous improvement** tailored for him.

My daughter, whilst still young, has the independence and confidence to support both her and her brother, which I'm sure will take her far in her career as an adult. For now, fostering their learning to continue to provide **life-skills and real world opportunities** is far more valuable than any bookwork I ever completed as a child. I would like to tell you a story about my life-skills that I had when I moved out of home for the first time at age 22. The only thing I ever knew how to cook was spaghetti

bolognese from a jar. I didn't learn how to crumb chicken until I was about 23. Even though I had taken home economics during my own high school journey these classes never had any real-life learning for me. I didn't know how to sew a button back on, I didn't know how to boil an egg. I didn't have the confidence to call and make my own doctors appointments. These are the opportunities I value, for my children to become happy, healthy, independent adults and how using everyday tasks and an **individualised goal-based curriculum** to support our family values and working towards continuous improvement of my children's current level, skills, strengths, interests and wellbeing are my priority in our home educating journey.

On a side note, having the flexibility to create a plan that individual families can use also allows parents/ carers the option to choose what works best for themselves. We all interpret or understand things differently and if families are choosing to use a particular type of plan of their own, that they can confidently understand and that empowers them, is this not better than forcing a set curriculum? We should be **supporting home educating families** and lifting them up to be able to ensure continuous improvement of each child's learning and wellbeing. We love using the Home Education Unit's goal-based plan as it allows us to focus on my children's individual learning. Whereas I know a lot of families don't like using tables and charts and would rather write their own plan in a letter format or flow chart etc. My point being that it's not only children who need flexibility and hands-on learning. A lot of parents work this way too.

I would also like to address the wording of 'best interests of the child,' and how this will be determined in relation to applying for home education. I would ask you to reflect on a time when children being made to go to school to be taught by strangers became the 'norm.' How is it that families who keep their children home are often considered 'outside the norm,' when we are our child's whole world – their carer, taxi driver, chef, cleaner, teacher, **their advocate**. We as parents assist our children in major milestones such as crawling, walking, talking, toilet training etc. following on from their cues and researching our own information or liaising with others to assist our children to complete these tasks. How is it deemed that these milestones are parents roles but learning to read etc. is to be left up to somebody else? Parents who are in a position to be able to home educate their child are doing so because they believe they are acting in the **best interests of the child/ren**; there shouldn't need to be a reason as to why families are choosing to home educate, simply for the fact that they choose to spend their time with their family and **family connections will always be in the best interests of the child**.

In conclusion, using the Australian Curriculum is not in the best interests of the children or their families when home educating goes so far beyond that. Using the Australian Curriculum as success markers will hinder the learning opportunities families provide and the way children learn. Continuous improvement for each individual child should be the benchmark for learning as well as their wellbeing, health, independence and relationships they make.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns. It is my hope that, going forward, this legislation can suit the needs of all students across Queensland. I look forward to hearing your response about this important issue.

Sincerely,

Samantha Cole

Home Educating Parent