

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by: Tania Ferguson
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From: [REDACTED]
To: [Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee](#)
Subject: Submission to the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee re. Proposed amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006
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Dear members of the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee,

Re. Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

I am writing to share my opposition to the proposed amendments of the home education provisions in the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 recently submitted to you for consideration.

I agree with the Amendment Bill's guiding principle that home education should prioritise the best interests of the young person, considering their safety, wellbeing, and access to a high-quality education.

However, with this principle in mind, I strongly object to the proposed amendment requiring the educational program, for a child registered for home education, be consistent with the Australian curriculum or Queensland syllabus for senior subjects and, as such, annual reporting must show a child's educational progress across the Curriculum's eight learning areas.

For my child, the Australian curriculum does not provide a high-quality education because it does not meet his complex learning needs, nor does it cater for his evolving interests and curiosities.

My families story.

One of my children has a Specific Learning Disorder, with impairment in reading (Dyslexia) and writing (Dysgraphia) and his cognitive proficiency (working memory and processing skills) are not well developed.

My child completed prep to year three at an Independent State School and year four at a Private Catholic School. At the conclusion of year four, he was unable to read, spell or write and his basic numeracy capabilities were poor. Consequently, he was unable to access the curriculum independently, nor participate in many classroom activities.

Believing he was the "dumbest in the class", he slowly disengaged from learning and eventually refused to go to school at all. No amount of coaxing, bribing, punishing or threats of legal action from his school could get my sad, self-loathing and anxious boy out of the car each morning. He became part of the growing cohort of school "refusers" identified by the Senate Inquiry in the National Trend of School Refusal (Parliament of Australia, 2023).

Meanwhile, I was a registered teacher in a Brisbane school, working with students with diagnosis. While some of these students were surviving, few were thriving and, sadly, many faced the same barriers to learning my son was experiencing in the classroom.

While the reasons for the challenges experienced by many school students are numerous, and extend beyond the scope of this submission, I draw your attention to four shortcomings that lead me to resign from my position (and, in so doing, become a single-income family), unenroll my son from mainstream education and register him to learn from home:

1. Large class sizes comprising students with diverse learning, social and emotional needs.
2. Inadequate differentiation and accommodations/reasonable adjustments for students below and above the "standard".
3. The Australian curriculum is a crammed, prescriptive, and largely uninspiring

document that does not cater for the diverse learning needs and interests of its audience.

4. Teachers are compelled to cover content quickly or resort to “teaching to the test” to deliver, assess, collect data and report on all eight learning areas outlined in the Australian curriculum. This sacrifices student engagement, meaningful learning, and the opportunity to review foundational concepts to ensure understanding and mastery.

In 2021, we navigated our first year of home schooling, with the objective to meet my son’s goal – to become a fluent reader, good speller and proficient in math facts – and my goal – to aid him in regaining his self-esteem and confidence and to (re)discover the joy of learning.

Today, I am pleased to report we have, largely, met these goals.

This has been possible, only because I have been able to develop a flexible and dynamic educational plan that meets my son’s academic, social, and emotional requirements as well as his personal interests. I deliver this program explicitly, at a slower pace, and revisit and revise core concepts often. My son consolidates learning through meaningful practice and authentic inquiry-based learning. I use a variety of assessment strategies to help monitor, personalise, and progress my son’s learning. And, when a topic or concept catches my son’s interest, we deviate from the “plan” to explore his curiosity and find answers to his questions.

The development of strong literacy and numeracy capabilities will always be the core academic focus for my son. In literacy, my son is working through evidence-based reading, spelling, and writing curriculums, selected to assist him to develop phonological awareness, the cognitive-based skills of spelling and grammar, and control over text structures and language features.

Likewise, in mathematics, an evidence-based, multi-sensory, mastery (rather than spiral) curriculum is building his toolkit of fundamental mathematical concepts and skills.

While my son's exploration of Science and HASS is guided by the subject-specific knowledge and understanding outlined in the Australian curriculum, it is primarily driven by interest-based topics, activities, and “real life” projects tailored to his evolving curiosities and modes of reception and expression.

Under the current legislation, I have been afforded the scope to design and deliver a dynamic educational program that provides my child with high-quality education responsive his developmental needs and evolving interests, in a safe, supportive, and collaborative environment.

In accordance with the bill before you, however, I will be mandated to deliver a program aligned with the Australian curriculum; a curriculum that failed to meet my child’s learning requirements during the five years he attended mainstream schooling and contributed to his disengagement from learning altogether.

Families opt to home educate their children for a variety of reasons. But many of us are “accidental home schoolers”. We have left employment to take on the significant responsibility of educating our children because mainstream education has failed to provide them with the high-quality education they deserve – and will require to be productive citizens.

I think I speak for many home-schooling families. We do not want to replicate the traditional school environment within our homes. We do not want to deliver, nor assess against, an over-crowded, standardised curriculum that does not meet the diverse learning needs and interests of our children. We strongly object to amendments to the legislation requiring us to do so.

Thank you for considering my submission to continue to empower home-schooling families to provide a personalised, high-quality education for our children – Queensland's future.

Kind regards,

Tania Ferguson

