

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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To The Committee Secretary
Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee - Parliament House
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Opposition of proposed changes under the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Please find below my extensive objection to the above named Bill. I have chosen not to use bullet points because I believe they don't convey a picture with the point of concern. Therefore I would appreciate your reading my detailed descriptions of my concerns – written in an effort to educate those who may not fully understand the concept of home education and have perhaps based viewpoints on assumptions that are not necessarily correct. Thank you for your time.

Firstly, what is being proposed is not in line with other states with not all states following the Nation Curriculum, and most importantly states which are required to follow the NC have face to face AP/moderators to assist people with the processes and reporting. NSW has no reporting requirement, which is the opposite of what was mentioned at the Briefing and the proposal in this Bill wants to increase reporting AND other states are not 100% paper based like QLD creating a huge workload on top of other states obligations - so this proposal is actually nothing like other states.

Secondly, there is no way welfare can be assessed through written plans and reports and no visit or sighting of the child.

Thirdly, I strongly oppose the suggestion of removing all gendered terms from the Education Act. This woke ideology trying to make everything gender-neutral as if it will magically fix society's issues is inappropriate in a young child's environment and does not belong in a classroom where the Departments have been convinced it's acceptable for innocent children to witness a child drinking out of a water bowl on all fours because they identify as a cat. This is reason enough to avoid mainstream schooling.

Fourthly, I oppose the suggestion that the 'Registration Certificate' be replaced with a 'Notice'. I find it unacceptable that I would now be required to provide other government departments and service providers private and personal information about my children when proving their registration status, and removing the statutory obligations of the departments and attached timeframes. This is absolutely not required of a student who attends the school system, is a breach in privacy and is a serious oversight in the provisions of this amendment.

Most importantly I do not agree with the following proposed changes to the Education Bill in relation to homeschooling in Queensland:

1. BEST INTERESTS - Removing the parents right to choose what is in the best interest of their child's well-being; and
2. PROVISIONAL REGISTRATIONS - Removing provisional registrations preventing parents taking immediate action to rectify very real debilitating issues occurring in mainstream schools; and
3. USE OF ACARA - Imposing the National Curriculum upon home schooling families against their wishes; and
4. REPORTING - Increased reporting obligations creating excessive workload: and
5. TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING LIMITATIONS - Recognising these limitations and not forcing homeschooled children back to school by implementing the proposed changes

Below I will address my reasons for opposing these changes and the affects these changes will have on the innocent parties involved – including myself and my children:

1. BEST INTERESTS - HUMAN RIGHTS

Firstly I extracted this from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) under the UN Human Rights Treaties.

“Responsibilities, rights and duties of parents.

Under the CRC, countries are required to respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or other persons who have responsibility for the child to provide direction and guidance in the child's exercise of the rights recognised in the CRC.”

My Story

The complexity of our case lies with my daughter's Chronic Anxiety Disorder and PTSD from past Family & Domestic Violence trauma, as well as recently diagnosed ADHD, Oppositional Defiance and Avoidant Behaviours. As a high achiever she does not function well in a classroom due to her very low tolerance for distractions, time wasting and disrupted focus - affecting her need to be learning as much as possible and the lack of one-on-one opportunities to raise questions and gain clarification quickly in order to move on quickly.

With her frustration, anger and anxiety being exacerbated by the day in mainstream schooling on top of suffering from fears of abandonment after her father left, nightmares, sleep deprivation and separation anxiety from me to attend school, extended absences, changing schools, attempting Distance Education, boredom with the curriculum, and depression over the entire traditional schooling process with some added bullying, I engaged her in counselling, removed her from the traditional education system, got her a support dog and registered her with the Qld Home Education Unit - IN HER BEST INTERESTS.

The change in her demeanour, mindset and anxiety levels since commencing home schooling in January 2023 is immeasurable. Her fear of leaving the house has diminished, her trust in life itself has flourished, her interest in learning is impressive, her reintegration with society is admirable. My daughter had become a shell of herself and I was scared for her future, but not anymore.

I ask you, if the Qld Education System was responsible for ensuring my daughter was taken care of appropriately in her best interests - how would that process look?

I find it offensive that it's being suggested you have the right to overrule parents rights to do what is best for a child in their best interests. I would be very angry if it was decided by a government employee that my child's best interests were being compromised by not attending a mainstream school and be forced to watch her spiral backwards in the education system she escaped from. This would not be acceptable to me as her mother.

It is my opinion that the government should stop trying to over reach and cross over with Child Safety, GP's, Qld Health and Allied Services as well as other departments and services responsible for monitoring children at risk with 'compulsory reporting', and leave the best interests of a child to be established by their parent, with the freedom to choose home schooling if it is the most suitable option for that child regardless of their reasons - which is legally their right as the primary care giver and to also choose their Education Plan based around the 8 core subjects as currently required by Qld Home Education Unit, but still be allowed to base their learning around interests and passions, using one on one teaching methods, suitable and engaging resources, conducive learning environments, flexible schedules and essential life-skills to achieve better results than the traditional system - IN THE CHILDS BEST INTERESTS.

Clearly it would seem that Covid has increased the numbers of homeschoolers right across Australia but I believe that's because the mandated lockdowns and schooling at home gave parents the opportunity and confidence they needed to step outside of the box they had been pushed into, to trial what they had been led to believe was unachievable albeit completely legal. That is certainly the case for me after persisting with the battle to try to keep my child at school for 2 years prior to the pandemic.

By all appearances these proposed changes look like a knee jerk reaction to get bums back on seats in order to regain funding the schools have lost and attempt to regain control over the masses who have seen the light - while using underhanded justifications like blowing up the stories of a home schooled child who committed suicide without the facts behind the case or laying blame where it belongs; or the cult who were disadvantaging their children by isolating them from any form of normalcy and robbing them of an education. When the majority of home educators are doing the right thing with successful young adults consistently entering the world, tarring us all with that 'possibly negligent care giver' brush is also highly offensive and unacceptable.

School Dropouts

I have extreme concerns over the proposed changes possibly forcing children back to mainstream schooling to possibly drop out.

I would now like to address the very valid reasons I myself, as well as thousands of other home educating parents choose to homeschool their children - regardless of learning difficulties, behavioural issues or disabilities in order to prevent or mitigate dropping out of school - IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS.

Bullying

The Bullying epidemic remains a pervasive issue in many schools, affecting students of all ages and backgrounds which is still often overlooked by the school, can have devastating effects on their mental health, self-esteem, and academic performance.

The victims can suffer from:

- Relentless harassment
- Physical violence
- Social exclusion
- Humiliation
- Isolation
- Anxiety and Depression

For some students, the trauma of bullying becomes unbearable, leading them to withdraw from school altogether.

Impact on Mental Health

It's essential for parents, teachers, and mental health professionals to recognise the signs of these disorders early and provide appropriate support and intervention to help children manage their symptoms and succeed in school.

- Anxiety disorders (including generalised, social, separation and panic) are prevalent among school-aged children and adolescents. The pressure to perform academically, socialise with peers, and navigate the complexities of school life can exacerbate feelings of anxiety and overwhelm and cause excessive worry, fear, and avoidance behaviours that interfere with school attendance. My daughter struggled with every anxiety disorder mentioned as identified by myself and her psychologist, and found it increasingly difficult to attend school regularly, participate in class activities, or cope with everyday stressors which contributed to my decision to homeschool her.
- Depression can lead to feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and fatigue, making it difficult for children to engage in school activities and attend regularly. My daughters depression levels as assessed by her psychologist were deeply worrying which contributed to my decision to homeschool her.
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) - My daughter is officially diagnosed with PTSD from witnessing DV - which can result from experiences such as abuse, neglect, or witnessing violence, impacting a child's emotional well-being and school attendance. This disorder can be debilitating and also contributed to my decision to homeschool my daughter.

- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) - Children with ADHD may struggle with impulsivity, hyperactivity, and difficulty sustaining attention, which can impact their ability to focus and participate in school. While my daughter does not suffer from hyperactivity she hyper focusses and gets very distressed over noise, violent behaviours by other children, disruptions and distractions which can lead to her temper outbursts and/or removing herself from the situation and isolating herself in the safety of our home or her room, where she now homeschools very happily without all of the external stressors. This also contributed to my decision to homeschool her.
- Behavioural Disorders - Conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, or disruptive mood dysregulation disorder can lead to behavioural problems, defiance, and conflicts with authority figures, affecting school attendance and performance. My daughter suffers from emotional dysregulation and ODD which was exacerbated by being instructed to comply with instructions where other children acting out were not, her disbelief and distrust in the failing educational system and boring curriculum which eventually caused her grades to drop and also contributed to my decision to homeschool her.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is prevalent in today's society and children with ASD may face challenges with social interaction, communication, and repetitive behaviours, affecting their ability to navigate the social and academic demands of school. While my daughter does not suffer from this disorder we know many children who are homeschooled for this reason.
- Specific Learning Disorders such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia can impair a child's ability to read, write, or perform math tasks, leading to academic difficulties and school avoidance. Again while my daughter does not suffer from these disorders we know many children who are homeschooled for this reason.
- Substance Use Disorders or dependence can interfere with a child's ability to attend school regularly and engage in academic activities. My daughter is certainly not affected by this, however it was present amongst her peers while attending mainstream schooling and preventing her succumbing to peer pressure was certainly on my mind when deciding to homeschool her.

Personally I respectfully acknowledged the teachers inability to manage my daughter effectively while at school due to their enormous workload and management of 20-30 children in their care, their inability to know and understand every student at an appropriate intimate level, as well as their credentials being in teaching and not psychology. Instead I engaged GP, Psychologist and Paediatrician, unenrolled her from the system which was incapable of managing my child in her best interests and registered her for homeschooling.

Boring Uninspired Disengaging Curriculum

The standardised curriculum used in traditional schools does not always align with children's interests, leading to disengagement and boredom. During 2023 we relocated due to our family home being caught up in Property Settlement. My daughter had a great friend near our new

address who attended the local school. Her friend managed to convince her to attempt to return to mainstream schooling with her, so I arranged a trial with the school principal, spent money on new uniform, shoes, books etc.

Upon my daughter attending for 2 days she quit. Already she ascertained they were learning at a lower level than her, there were disruptive children in the class and a bunch of bullying girls in the toilets. Besides the obvious, she was anxious and bored in 2 days and that is not acceptable to me under my promise to give her the best quality education she is entitled to, and in her best interests we set up her schooling at home once again and I donated the uniforms I had spent money on back to the school.

Long-Term Consequences

Dropping out of school has serious long-term consequences for individuals, including limited job opportunities, lower earning potential, and increased risk of involvement in criminal activities. Further, the emotional scars left by bullying and untreated anxiety can linger into adulthood, impacting relationships, mental well-being, and overall quality of life.

Lack of Support Systems

Until I removed my daughter from school she had 2 friends she spent time with. Two girls who shared her mature attitude of not tolerating the rubbish that goes on within the boundaries. They isolated themselves and spent time making their own fun during breaks away from everybody else, and were then bullied for that.

The bullies do not stop when reprimanded. They just fly under the radar counting on their victims staying quiet to avoid any further drama and isolating themselves which actually offers them more opportunities to fly under the radar. This process also reduces witnesses to any incidents, which makes it extremely difficult for staff to manage the behaviour, which in turn gives the bullies more power. It's a vicious cycle which I will never again subject my child to by choice and if we are ever forced by the government to endure such a situation I will not tolerate it at all in any way with very large displays of disgust and non-acceptance being made at whatever cost until suitable meaningful action is taken.

I've noticed the Bill being proposed contains changes across the entirety of Education Qld in addition to the Home Education Unit. Namely across most areas I have already mentioned above, which have been ongoing issues for many years and with many promises of change, but failing to come to fruition on our end.

I ask you, how do you propose to protect the children forced back into the mainstream schooling system under the proposed changes across the Home Education Unit who had dedicated home educating parents prior to the changes, which has already failed them in big ways?

Many students and families opt for alternative education options, such as homeschooling, Distance Education or specialised schools with alternative learning environments that cater to students with specific needs and that is currently their choice to make.

These alternatives provide:

Safe and Supportive Environment

Home education provides a safe and supportive environment where children are shielded from the negative social dynamics, bullying, and peer pressure and can learn without the negative influences often present in traditional school settings. The absence of these stressors contributes to a secure learning environment where children can thrive academically and emotionally without the fear of bullying or overwhelming anxiety, reducing the risk of dropout due to social or emotional challenges. The change in my daughters sense of safety and security is immeasurable and hardly needs describing.

Individualised Attention

Home-educated children receive personalised attention from their parents or tutors, allowing for tailored instruction and support of a child's unique needs, interests, and learning styles as well as one-on-one instruction tailored to the specific needs and learning styles of children with disabilities. In my home during the day there is just me and my daughter so she has 100% access to me and my assistance. We research things on the spot, watch clips or documentaries as required when subjects arise and spend countless hours together in the kitchen or in the garden. This individualised approach can address learning difficulties, help accommodate their unique challenges and provide targeted support in areas where they may struggle, foster a love for learning, and prevent students from falling through the cracks, reducing the likelihood of dropout - as opposed to traditional schooling.

Flexible Learning Environment

Home education offers flexibility in scheduling, pacing, and curriculum selection, accommodating diverse learning styles and preferences free from the distractions and pressures often found in traditional school settings. Children can learn at their own pace, take breaks as needed, and engage in activities that cater to their interests and abilities. This flexibility allows children to engage with subjects in ways that resonate with them, promoting intrinsic motivation and academic success - as opposed to traditional schooling. Mandating a rigid school curriculum would undermine this flexibility and stifle the creativity and curiosity inherent in the learning process.

My daughter suffers from nightmares, insomnia and sleep deprivation. She was going to school like a walking zombie and was very emotionally unwell from all of that. She can now sleep until 9am, wake up happy, do her chores, eat and homeschool into the evening or even at night time if she wishes. This does not concern me because she is a night owl like her mother and who are we to push her to meet 'expectations' and harm her learning just because she is a 'child'. She is 12 and is very mature for her age. She has developed her own world views, can debate with an adult over 'adult' topics and does her best work in the evening. Maybe she will thrive in a career as a night shift worker or run her own business where she can work her own hours as she chooses.

Strong Family Engagement and Positive Family Dynamics

Home education fosters strong bonds between parents, children and their siblings creating a supportive family dynamic that encourages open communication, mutual respect, and collaborative learning. This familial support network can serve as a protective factor against dropout by providing students with the encouragement and resources they need to persevere in their studies. Families can work together to overcome challenges, celebrate achievements, and cultivate a positive attitude towards education despite any disabilities.

Up to this point I have not mentioned I have 2 daughters. My youngest is in Grade 3 at school and is diagnosed with Anxiety Disorder, ADHD Inattentive Type with significant emotional dysregulation and Dyslexia. While I would prefer to be homeschooling her due to her inattention to learning in a classroom with disruptions and distractions as well as her delayed reading capacity, with her being in a lower grade I gave myself time to adjust to homeschooling my older daughter effectively before adding the management of both girls behaviours to the mix.

She was previously managing her emotions better at school than at home while we were all learning to manage all of our conditions with my oldest daughters intolerance to noise not being helped by my younger daughters hyperactivity and talking too much which caused issues within the home if they spent too much time together however that is now improving as we go along with their interactions becoming much more positive now that I've been able to put the work into my oldest daughter. Additionally this scenario gave me the opportunity to form a fantastic bond with my 12 year old daughter with us being closer than ever and with her reinforced trust in me keeping her safe and having her best interests at the absolute top of my list she can tell me anything at all, and does. I'm no longer scared of what the future may bring for her.

Customised Curriculum

Parents can adapt the curriculum to suit the strengths and weaknesses of their child. They can incorporate specialised teaching methods, adaptive technology, and therapeutic interventions to enhance learning outcomes and promote academic progress. Mandating a school curriculum for home-educated children would not only fail to address the challenges of traditional schooling but also undermine the holistic well-being and educational experiences of home-educated children.

I am now looking at registering my youngest in homeschooling. I'm now excited about being able to then invest the time required to teach her to read, save her from being lost in the system like so many others have experienced and have commenced her education plan as well, with multiple options for customised, engaging learning opportunities to enhance her schooling journey. She is very smart, just not on paper and homeschooling offers me the perfect environment to bring her up to speed so to speak and lead her into an exciting future like she also deserves.

Diverse Educational Philosophies

Home education encompasses a diverse range of educational philosophies, including unschooling, Charlotte Mason, and Montessori, among others. Each philosophy emphasises

different aspects of learning, such as self-directed exploration, nature-based learning, or hands-on experiences. Imposing a standardised curriculum would disregard these philosophies and limit educational freedom.

It took some time to establish how my daughter best functions with her core subject work but with the freedom to develop her learning plan around her needs, she is thriving.

Holistic Development

Education is not solely about academic achievement but also encompasses social, emotional, and moral development. Home education allows parents to focus on holistic development, nurturing their children's character, values, and life skills in addition to academic knowledge. A mandated school curriculum may prioritise academic outcomes at the expense of these broader developmental goals.

My daughters education plan incorporates life skills, baking, journaling, poetry, drawing and all art perspectives, bush experiences and nature journal, nutrition and managing her food allergies, budgeting for and ordering her selected groceries, growing and eating fresh food, equine therapy and learning to ride a horse, caring for and training her support dog, tending to our pet pig, swimming in our pool, historical excursions and travelling when we can. She is the happiest she has ever been and I am darn proud of that.

I have been working together with my daughters GP and her psychologist for 18 months now, improving her physical health, mental health, emotional development and social reintegration with immeasurable results. We are on the right track.

Reduced Stress and Anxiety

Home education offers a less stressful learning environment, free from the anxieties associated with navigating complex social hierarchies, peer pressure, and rigid schedules. Children with disabilities may experience heightened stress and anxiety in traditional school settings due to social pressures, academic challenges, and sensory overload. Homeschooling provides a calmer, more supportive environment where children can feel safe and comfortable as they learn and grow.

Enhanced Socialisation Opportunities

Contrary to common misconceptions, homeschooling does not necessarily isolate children with or without disabilities. Parents can facilitate socialisation through community programs, extracurricular activities, support groups, and interactions with peers in various settings. This allows children to develop social skills at their own pace and in environments that accommodate their needs.

My oldest daughter has a fantastic network of close friends and enjoys regular visits with them as well as daily contact through various platforms on her iPad including FaceTime catch-ups on every facet of their day. We engage in groups and extra curricular activities where she has built further support networks and spend a lot more time with extended family than we ever did

before her improved anxiety levels over leaving the house. Where she used to whisper to customer service staff and other service providers she can now confidently engage with those people and place orders without my needing to repeat everything she said in order to be heard.

My youngest daughter does enjoy the social aspect of school, but loves to have 'best friends' and will thrive in the homeschooling groups where smaller groups offer the opportunity to have a smaller group of best friends rather than a large group of acquaintances. This will enhance her confidence and be in her best interests too.

Hands On and Real-World Learning Opportunities

One of the strengths of home education is its ability to integrate learning into real-world experiences. These real-life experiences offer the flexibility to engage in hands-on, experiential learning experiences outside the confines of traditional classrooms, help children develop practical skills, pursue their passions, and cultivate a sense of purpose, again reducing disengagement and dropout. Home-educated children can enjoy excursions, explore their communities and sometimes travel, all of which provide valuable learning opportunities not offered by the prescribed curriculum.

My children have had the benefit of quite extensive travelling both intrastate and interstate by car, 4WD, buses, trains, trams, planes and taxis. They've seen a multitude of different towns and cities, ancient rainforests, beaches, deserts, historical sites, cultural sites, animals, critters and rocks. They have touched volcanic and different soils, minerals, fungi, cotton balls off the bush, and understand satellites, constellations, tides, weather cycles and why some people live underground. They are well travelled and will enjoy more adventures when we are not restricted to a home base for the youngest to attend school, when they are both homeschooling.

Respect for Parental Rights

Parents have the fundamental right to direct the education and upbringing of their children, as recognised by numerous international human rights treaties and legal frameworks. Mandating a school curriculum for home-educated children would encroach upon this parental right and undermine the principle of family autonomy.

Overall, home education offers unique benefits and viable alternatives to traditional schooling and can help mitigate the risk of dropouts.

I ask you, when the public schools could never have achieved what I have, how on earth would an administrative officer in your Home Education Unit in Brisbane manage her best interests?

Now I ask you, where a child does not have learning difficulties, behavioural issues or disabilities that could possibly render them ineligible for homeschooling at the discretion of an administrative officer at the Home Education Unit in Brisbane under the proposed changes, yet are deemed more suitable to homeschooling by their parents - IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS - what would happen to these children?

By recognising the benefits of home education and supporting families who choose this path, policymakers and educators could work towards reducing dropout rates and ensuring that all children have access to quality education opportunities.

2. PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION = BREATHING SPACE

The removal of provisional registrations pose significant barriers, challenges and obstacles for families who are considering or have chosen home education. This process serves as an essential pathway for families to either explore home education as an option before fully committing to it, or in the situation where they have needed to unenrol their child from mainstream schooling abruptly for various reasons - it allows them to collate required documents, research a suitable tailored education plan and implement a home schooling environment around existing commitments. Removing this option could deter families from considering home education altogether, possibly forcing children to remain in volatile situations that can be detrimental to their mental health and depriving children of a valuable educational alternative.

I see no reason at all to remove the option for new home educators to transition into the home school process - when the reasons they are registering are most likely because things at school have become out of hand very quickly after their limping along in a frustrated, stretched and confused state over how to help their child navigate the school system. I follow every home schooling story I can read and it's the minority of parents who plan ahead to home school with most cases evolving out of necessity due to one failure or another of the mainstream schooling system, often requiring immediate action to remove their child from the school.

Under the new proposed changes, it would be seen that those parents were violating the human right of a child to an education if they weren't instantly home educating them the very next day. By some miracle they would need to do what it can take a whole month to organise in order to be done correctly and in the child's best interests - literally overnight. What an unrealistic expectation to put on an already mentally, physically and emotionally draining situation. Wow!

As demonstrated by my personal story above, I was at my wits end at the end of Term 4 2022 and spent the entire Christmas break to-ing and fro-ing about taking the giant leap and registering for home schooling for my daughter. I finally made the call the day before school started and was up all night reading up on the processes and requirements, joining social media support pages and quickly became very overwhelmed by what seemed extremely daunting until I learnt I could unenrol from school and register with HEU on the same day under a Provisional Registration. So that is what I did.

I could then take a breath and take some time to consider my child's interests, develop her education plan and gather required documentation while under no obligation to answer to the school or my ex husbands wrath if found guilty of any wrong doing - which gave me panic attacks as I also suffer from PTSD and Chronic Anxiety Disorder from DV trauma. Heck I couldn't even locate my daughter's birth certificate under the circumstances and had to order a new one. Because I had no idea where to start with the education plan like every other person I have seen join the support pages since commencing this journey, I engaged a Home Schooling Service,

joined their program which loosely follows the ACARA guidelines, chose cores based around my daughter's interests and passions, had them write my plan, submitted all of the paperwork to HEU and stood up and cheered HOORAY! I did it! And I can do this!

Without that option to transition into homeschooling I most likely would have torn out my hair for another 2 or 10 months over forcing my daughter to school while banging my head on the wall over that process as well as the process of registering for home schooling all at the same time. But instead I gained immediate relief and became very excited about our learning program, charged ahead and have been thoroughly enjoying our homeschool journey along with my daughter who engaged in self led learning from Day 1.

Her enthusiasm returned immediately and she has gone above and beyond to 'learn stuff'. Besides the multi-subject core programs offered by Simply Homeschool to engage multiple interests into 1 lesson, she is a gifted poet and short story writer who blew her Grade 4 teacher away with her poetry in 2021 which was well beyond her peers and she hasn't stopped reading and writing about multitudes of weird and wonderful topics since. Because that is her passion and who is anyone to say what she can and can't write about like they did in school. She hated the curriculum and found it very boring. Which brings me to my next point.

3. USE OF ACARA = A TEACHERS NIGHTMARE

As advocates for the rights of home-educated children, it is imperative to address the proposal of the imposition of a school curriculum on home education. While acknowledging the importance of education, it is vital to recognise that the one-size-fits-all approach of traditional schooling may not be suitable for every child. Herein lies my opposition to mandating a school curriculum for home-educated children.

As stated above, I follow every homeschooling story I can and what stands out to me is the quantity of teachers either walking away from their career choice over the use of ACARA; homeschooling their own children over choosing the school system due to their opinions of ACARA; and/or voicing their opinions on public forums over their disbelief in the supposed high standard of quality education it contains, the red tape and unreasonable reporting expectations causing an enormous workload taking them away from valuable teaching time and leaving very little opportunity for meaningful teaching – as well as claims that their Uni degree does not even teach them how to teach the curriculum. I mean, what on earth is even going on in schools these days?

I now wish to point out some statistics I have researched:

Extracted from the ACARA website:

Our vision

Inspire improvement in the learning of all young Australians through world-class curriculum, assessment and reporting.

What we do

Australian Curriculum

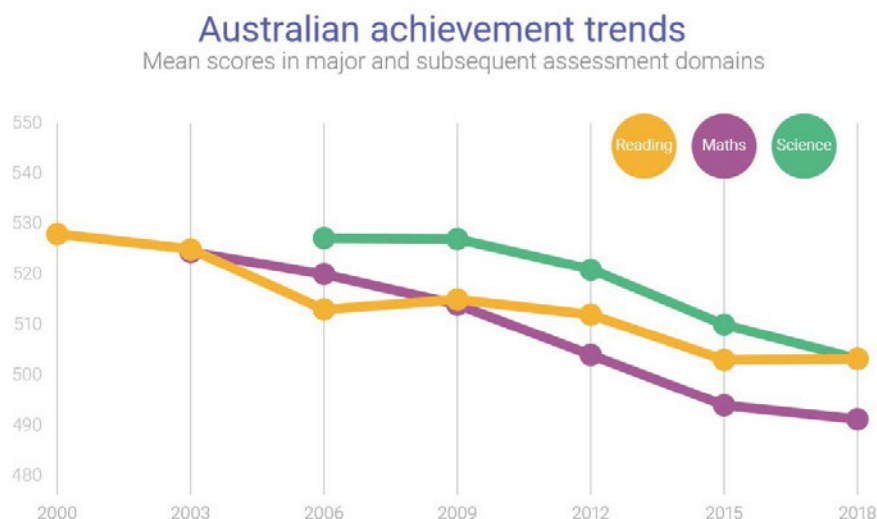
In September 2015, Australia's education ministers endorsed the Foundation – Year 10 curriculum. The curriculum provides teachers, parents, students and the community with a clear understanding of what students should learn regardless of where they live or what school they attend.

Table for Australian Scores & Rankings Extracted from OECD:
Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

Year	Maths		Science		Reading	
	Ranking	Score	Ranking	Score	Ranking	Score
2022	13	487	10	507	10	498
2018	30	491	16	503	17	503
2015	25	494	14	510	16	503
2012	17	504	14	521	12	522
2009	13	514	9	527	8	515
2006	12	520	8	527	7	513
2003	10	524			4	525
2003	6	533			4	528

Excerpt from abc.net.au Dec 2019

“The latest OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results show a long-term decline in reading, maths and science skills for Australian students.



In 2018, Australian 15 year olds performed more than a year below those in 2003 in maths, about a year lower in reading than those in 2000 and a year worse in science than those in 2006.

PISA also shows which countries are the highest performers and which are getting better in science, maths and reading. Singapore has been the highest scoring country in all areas since it joined testing in 2009.

The latest results show Australian students were three years behind Singapore in maths and three months behind in reading.

For Australia to improve, it is not about radically changing policy directions, or doing one thing differently.

Instead, Australia must do many things better; much, much better.”

World Class Education!?

I don't think so. Even with the 9th new version of ACARA being released in 2023, just 8 years since its inception in September 2015 the downwards spiral of Australia's compulsory education system has not improved and only declined.

Excerpt OECD website 2023

“Amidst unprecedented performance drop, some education systems buck the trend.

Eighteen countries and economies performed above the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science in 2022. Between 2018 and 2022, mean performance in mathematics across OECD countries fell by a record 15 points. Reading fell 10 points, twice the previous record, whereas science performance did not change significantly.”

Excerpt abc.net.au Dec 2023

“Students throughout the world have fallen behind on reading and maths during the pandemic, but Australian teens have managed to buck the trend.

Rather than dipping, Australia's results in maths, science and reading have actually held steady since 2018, according to the latest international education rankings.

But while Australia's results look good on paper, ACER senior research fellow Lisa De Bortoli says it's mostly thanks to other countries underperforming.

"While it's encouraging that Australia's results have stabilised, it's important to recognise that our position in the top 10 is largely due to the performance of other countries dropping below ours," she said.

"Just over half of Australian students achieved the National Proficiency Standard – 51 per cent in maths, 58 per cent in science and 57 per cent in reading – so a significant number of students are failing to demonstrate they have more than basic skills in those areas."

And while Australia's global ranking has improved in 2022, thanks to other countries dropping down the list, overall our performance has declined since the early 2000s.”

So while the latest figures claim we have climbed to 10th in the world for reading and science and 13th for maths it's all an illusion due to other countries suffering worse than Australia through the pandemic with detrimental economic affects demonstrating a clear discrepancy in

the results of wealthy families as against poor socio-economic families - which pushed Australia up the list. The actual scores show a decrease in scores of 4 points in Maths, 5 points in reading and an increase of 4 points in Science in 2022 with an overall progressive decline in scores being 46 points in Maths and 30 points in reading since 2003 and 20 points in Science since 2006.

In my experience under the confines of the Australian Curriculum both through mainstream and Distance Education it does not offer a high quality education - which can be demonstrated by my child's lack of interest in it. By mainstream standards she would be in Grade 7 and while she has always been a high achiever by the time she reached Grade 4 she struggled to engage in her grade level due to 'boring' content.

There would be detrimental negative affects to her mental health and significant progress since commencing home schooling in January 2023 under my tailored plan for a high quality education outside of the Australian Curriculum, should these changes be approved and implemented.

I do not want to use the National Curriculum and object to the guiding principle of proving that homeschooling is in the best interest of my child because I already know it's in my child's best interest and for many home-educated families, the proposed changes to mandate a school curriculum represents an horrific prospect. Home education is often chosen as an alternative to traditional schooling precisely because it offers freedom, flexibility, and autonomy in learning, as well as addressing learning difficulties, behavioural issues and disabilities.

The proposal to require a school curriculum for home-educated children fails to acknowledge the diverse needs and educational philosophies within the home education community. It undermines parental rights, stifles individualised learning, and overlooks the rich learning opportunities available outside traditional classrooms. Homeschooling offers children with learning and behavioural disabilities a supportive and nurturing educational experience that caters to their individual needs, fosters their growth and development, and empowers them to reach their full potential.

Mandating a school curriculum would also infringe upon the values and principles that drive families to choose home education in the first place, leading to feelings of frustration, anxiety, and disillusionment among home-educated children and their parents. It is essential to consider the perspectives and concerns of home-educated families when discussing potential changes to education policy, ensuring that their voices are heard and their rights respected.

4. INCREASED REPORTING = BUREAUCRATIC BURDEN

Increasing reporting requirements for homeschooling families will add bureaucratic burden by necessitating additional paperwork, time, and resources to document educational progress. This could be particularly challenging for large homeschooling families, those with additional educational requirements due to learning difficulties and disabilities, those with diverse educational philosophies, those who prioritise non-traditional learning methods or those with additional responsibilities outside of homeschooling - potentially leading to frustration, taking

valuable time away from implementing their education plans, hindering the flexibility that often attracts families to homeschooling in the first place and possibly ultimately lead to the inability to continue the quality home education of their children.

I now ask you what will this reporting look like?

5. TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING LIMITATIONS = NOT GOOD ENOUGH

While I hold grave concerns for the impact the imposition of the National Curriculum changes would have on my children, I do believe they would both meet the criteria to continue homeschooling and as with thousands of other home educators I would plan to tweak the new system to suit our needs, however as a whole I hold even more grave concerns for fellow home schoolers who don't meet your criteria for home schooling to be in their best interests.

Additionally to all of the points made above already which negatively impact children within the traditional school system, I will now set out my summary of why I believe the proposed changes are completely unnecessary and an over reach of the governments authority, when the system they should be overhauling is in fact traditional mainstream schooling.

Lack of Control and the Impact on Mental Health

Traditional school environments can pose significant challenges to children's mental health, including concerns about fitting in, exposure to bullying, disruptive behaviour, academic pressures, social dynamics and associated pressures. These factors contribute to increased anxiety, stress, and feelings of insecurity among students.

Despite efforts to combat bullying and promote mental health awareness in schools, many students still feel unsupported or misunderstood by teachers, administrators, and peers. The stigma surrounding mental illness often prevents students from seeking help or disclosing their struggles, leaving them feeling isolated and alone in their experiences. Without adequate support systems in place, students may see dropping out as the only viable solution to escape the pain and distress they endure at school.

I ask you, why should people be confident the proposed changes to mainstream schooling will make any difference in reality when it's been promised for many years with no eradication of the unacceptable behaviour in sight yet??

School dropouts due to bullying and anxiety are unfortunately all too common, highlighting the urgent need for solutions to address these issues within traditional schooling environments. As described above, home educated children are protected from these unacceptable factors but the children in mainstream schooling are not and that's not acceptable either.

It is evident that addressing the root causes of school dropouts due to bullying and anxiety requires a comprehensive multi-faceted approach involving collaboration between schools, mental health professionals, community organisations, and policymakers with

improving conditions within traditional schooling environments. While research suggests that home-educated children often exhibit lower rates of dropout compared to their traditionally-schooled counterparts it is not the solution to systemic issues within the education system.

By prioritising prevention, intervention, and support services, you could create safer, more inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed, which could possibly alleviate the stressors placed upon working parents who must resign from their jobs in the best interests of their children and struggle to afford homeschooling their children due to bullying and anxiety.

Proposing instead that all homeschooled children should be subjected to that environment at the discretion of an administrative officer at the Home Education Unit in Brisbane at the expense of innocent children becoming happy, healthy, valuable and successful adults, is unacceptable.

Allocation of Time and Attention

In traditional classrooms, valuable instructional time is often compromised by managing disruptive behaviour, addressing disciplinary issues, and managing large class sizes. Home-educated children benefit from focused attention and personalised instruction, allowing for more efficient use of learning time and deeper engagement with academic content.

Teaching Degree ≠ Better Teacher

It is a common misconception that holding a teaching degree automatically qualifies an individual as a superior educator. While formal education and training are valuable, effective teaching encompasses a myriad of qualities beyond academic credentials. Home-educated children benefit from the guidance of parents who are deeply invested in their education and well-being, regardless of formal teaching qualifications.

Lack of Accountability

Despite the adherence to standardised curriculum requirements in traditional schools, accountability measures often fall short. Many teachers struggle to fully meet curriculum requirements due to factors such as time constraints, resource limitations, and varying student needs. Mandating a school curriculum for home education would not guarantee better educational outcomes but rather impose an ineffective system of accountability on families who are already deeply engaged in their children's education.

Lack of Individualised Attention

With large class sizes and limited resources, teachers struggle to provide individualised attention to each student. This can result in some students falling behind academically or feeling neglected in the classroom.

Insufficient Training

While many teachers receive formal training in education theory and teaching methods, they may lack training in specialised areas such as special education, English as a second language, or teaching students with diverse learning needs. As a result, they struggle to effectively support all students in their classrooms.

Standardised Curriculum Constraints

Teachers often face pressure to adhere strictly to standardised curriculum guidelines and prepare students for standardised tests. This focus on standardised testing can lead to a narrow, rote approach to teaching that prioritises memorisation over critical thinking, creativity, and deeper understanding of subject matter. Home education allows parents to customise curriculum content to their children's passions, incorporating topics and activities that inspire curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.

The imposition of a school curriculum on home-educated children is not only unnecessary but also potentially detrimental to their educational experience and overall development. Instead of imposing uniformity, policymakers should respect and support the autonomy of families in choosing the educational path that best suits their children.

Limited Professional Development Opportunities

Due to time and budget constraints, teachers have limited opportunities for professional development and ongoing training. This can hinder their ability to stay updated on the latest teaching methods, educational technologies, and best practices in their field.

Burnout and High Turnover Rates

Teaching is a demanding and stressful profession, leading to high rates of burnout and turnover among educators. Inadequate support, heavy workloads, and challenging classroom environments can contribute to teacher dissatisfaction and ultimately impact the quality of instruction provided to students.

Lack of Cultural Competence

Teachers may lack cultural competence and sensitivity to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of their students. This can result in cultural misunderstandings, biases, and inequities in the classroom, ultimately affecting the learning outcomes and well-being of students from marginalised or underrepresented communities.

Addressing these inadequacies requires systemic changes in education policy, teacher training programs, and school leadership practices. By addressing bullying, prioritising smaller class sizes, providing more individualised support for students with diverse needs, improving teacher training and support, providing ongoing professional development opportunities, promoting culturally responsive teaching practices, and supporting teachers' well-being, you could work towards creating more effective and equitable learning environments for all students in traditional schools, but again, you are proposing changes that

could mean all children could/should be subjected to that environment at whatever cost to their becoming valuable and successful adults.

Rather than focusing solely on regulating home education, policymakers and educators must prioritise addressing the inadequacies in schools that contribute to dropout rates.

By Recognising the limitations of traditional schooling environments and acknowledging and addressing the issues within them, you can create safer, more supportive, and more inclusive learning environments that meet the needs of all students.

Punishing home schoolers for not conforming to standardised expectations is not the solution; instead, you must work towards creating a more equitable and effective education system that supports the success and well-being of all students, regardless of the educational path they choose.

Conclusion

I find nothing about the Bill to be reasonable except raising the age to 18 to enable all students to complete their final year of home education paving a simple pathway to Uni. Yes homeschooled children go to Uni as surprising as that may sound to some with many homeschooled graduates entering Uni EARLY due to the flexibility of homeschooling. Dumbing down our children is not acceptable and downright rude.

I ask the committee to table that all references to home schooling be removed from this Bill apart from raising the age to 18 as at the end of the day no representative consultation with key stakeholders has taken place, with the two people representing the people directly, Amanda Bartle and Patricia Fitzgerald being actively excluded as was mentioned in the briefing. Amanda and Patricia are well known to the EGPA review team and director. Therefore as we don't have a State Association like other states, I have not been represented and no one asked me who I wanted as a consultation representative.

In conclusion, it seems the proposals were made with the decision to just consult nobody with professional expert opinions, nor even talk to a single homeschooling family prior to tabling this Bill. This whole process is simply an attempt to remove freedoms from a minority group in order to remove more freedoms from the general population and I do not approve.