

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission to Parliamentary Review Committee by Ken Woolford.

25 March 2024

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Dear Committee members

Thank you for considering this submission.

I have had almost 60 years working as a professional educator, 40 in various State, Private and International establishments. The last 17 years I have exclusively advised and collaborated with home educators in Queensland.

My submission relates to the 2024 proposed Bill, focusing on sections which have remained unchanged from the EGPA 2006 and how they might affect the proposed changes to the 2024 Bill.

It does not cover all my objections, but focuses on the existing EGPA 2006 and sections not being altered which could affect those being altered in the proposed Bill.

An ACARA 2020 document (referenced) is also referred to.

I begin with a reminder that in 2004 a Review of Qld Home Education was written by an agent appointed by the then Minister for Education.

2004 Home Education Review. 2004 Homeschooling Review Report Deborah Jeffrey and Renee Giskes Research Brief No 2004/09

2.1.3 Pedagogical Reasons for Home Schooling

Some parents consider that compulsory enrolment of a child at school does not guarantee or ensure the child's education. By home schooling, these parents believe that they will ensure a quality education for their children, which is closely aligned with their family values and morals.

14 The pedagogical reasons for home schooling expressed by parents include:

- greater flexibility in planning options which are suited to the individual needs of the child;
- simplification of environmental and social factors;
- allowing identification of the child's individual strengths and weaknesses;
- tailoring teaching method to the individual needs of the child;

- providing a 'child centred' approach to learning; and
- overcoming limitations of the formal schooling system to cater for individual needs (for example, not adopting the age/grade level of teaching and instead catering for a child who may have a certain standard of writing skills and a different standard of verbal and logic skills)

My Comment

Comment I believe that any perusal of reasons being presented by Home Educators in 2024 for home educating their children do not vary significantly those in 2004.

4.1 REVIEW PROCEDURE

A public consultation phases was conducted between February and March 2003. Approximately 600 people attended public meetings held in 13 locations, and 134 written submissions were lodged. Further consultation with other interest groups also occurred.

Comment . The "consultation " process for the proposed changes in the Bill re home education have been significantly inferior to those that informed the 2004 report. No summary of submission by stakeholders to the Government review committee has been provided for comment. No focus group meetings have been held that are significant and allow all parents home educating (the only legal representatives for their children and no Home Education Review Board has been legislated for - unlike Committees in State Schools).

Sections of the EGPA 2006 which will remain unchanged in the proposed 2024 Bill and which I believe impinge of proposed changes.

Section 12 ECPA 2006 -unchanged

(1) For each student attending a State instructional institution there must be provided an educational program approved by the Minister.

Comment I see no authority here for the Minister to dictate curricula for non State school attendees.

Section 7 (a) - unchanged

parents have the responsibility of choosing a suitable education environment for their children

Comment This is for all parents. They can choose State, non State or Home Education. The education environment included style of education, location and material

to be sourced. The curriculum cannot be mandated. If parents choose school education then they are accepting the curriculum that school promotes.

Section 7 (c) - unchanged

children and young people should be actively involved in decisions affecting them to the extent that is appropriate having regard to their age and ability to understand.

Comment While Home Educating parents do, from my 17 years experience working with hundreds of families, indicate to me that children are part of the discussion regarding moving to Home Education and the material to be employed, under the proposed Bill, this right is being ignored.

Section 7 (d) - unchanged

the State, parents, teachers, school communities and non- government entities should work to foster a commitment to achieving the educational outcome for children and young people,

Comment The process used for *gathering and* discussing the proposed changes have, as pointed out above, been unsatisfactory.

Section 205 home education - unchanged

home education for a child means the education of the child provided by 1 or both of the child's parents or a registered teacher primarily at the child's usual place of residence'

Comment

1. Black's Dictionary re provided " Act of furnishing or providing a person with a product 2. the allocation of resources ... to allow a project to proceed to completion or the next stage".

2 Comment Providing the education implies choice. This choice is being negated in the proposed Bill, in which the use of ACARA is being mandated. The ACARA document provides educators a guide for assessing whether a child's educational achievements compared to ACARA expectations are above at or below par. This is an education PHILOSOPHY informed guide. If a parent does not subscribe to this philosophy , a philosophy which states that a child can be obliged to respond to a curriculum not expressly designed for the child, then the parent's philosophy will be redundant under the proposed Bill.

ACARA is designed for professionals. The Shape of the Australian Curriculum. Volume 5, June, page 11

It states in the ACARA documentation that

"The primary audience for the Australian Curriculum is teachers. The curriculum is concise and expressed in plain language while preserving a complexity appropriate for professional practitioners."

Comment Expecting parents to use ACARA can be seen as discriminatory, given that (i) they are not necessarily professional practitioners (ii) ACARA is necessarily an aggregation of academics concepts not an attempt to offer a bespoke education and (iii) is generally accepted to be underpinned by a particular type of philosophy and pedagogy which supports group rather than individual education needs.

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Education Council, 2019)
(attached is those if its goals alluding exclusively to students).

Comment This document offers some 48 Educational Goals for Australian students, At No 30 is

30. have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy as the foundation for learning

The proposed Bill requires parents to focus primarily on these two areas of learning to the exclusion of "choice" for reporting learning areas in which their child has demonstrated skill and understanding and possible development (existing Explanations p107).

The 2024 Bill also insists that parents report on ACARA mandated subject areas. I note that State Schools are required to do the same using and A,B,C,D,E notation in which E usually denotes a not yet achieving in this area connotation.

In my 17 years of experience with Home Education, parents are not interested in "forcing" their children to "perform" unless the children are willing and able. School children do not have this safety net. They can be publicly shamed for not achieving outcomes over which neither they nor their parents have any control.

Home Education removes the necessity for this shaming. The 2024 Bill could remove this right for parents and children.,

I submit to the Committee that there is a need to consider not only the lawfulness of proposed changes to the EGPA 2006 Act but that they also consider the Human Rights aspects and those aspects of common decency which these changes could violate.

1. The Education Goals for Young Australians from the 2019 Alice Springs declaration

Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation's social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives.

The Declaration has two distinct but interconnected goals:

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity

Goal 2: All young Australians become:

1. confident and creative individuals
2. successful lifelong learners
3. active and informed members of the community.

Achieving these education goals is the responsibility of Australian Governments and the education community in partnership with young Australians, **their families** and carers and the **broader community**.

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity

Australian Governments commit to promoting excellence and equity in Australian education.

This means that all Australian Governments will work with the education community to:

4. provide all young Australians with access to high-quality education that is inclusive and free from any form of discrimination
5. recognise the individual needs of all young Australians, identify barriers that can be addressed, and empower learners to overcome barriers
6. promote personalised learning and provide support that aims to fulfil the individual capabilities and needs of learners
7. ensure that young Australians of all backgrounds are supported to achieve their full educational potential
8. encourage young people to hold high expectations for their educational outcomes, supported by parents, carers, families and the broader community
9. ensure that education promotes and contributes to a socially cohesive society that values, respects and appreciates different points of view and cultural, social, linguistic and religious diversity

10. ensure that learning is built on and includes local, regional and national cultural knowledge and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and work in partnership with local communities
11. collaborate internationally to share best practice and help young Australians learn about and engage with the world
12. support all education sectors – government, non-government, secular and faith based education
13. promote a culture of excellence in all learning environments, by providing varied, challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all learners to explore and build on their individual abilities, interests, and experiences
14. ensure that Australia's education system is recognised internationally for delivering high quality learning outcomes.

Goal 2: All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community

Australian Governments commit to working in collaboration with the education community to support all young Australians to become:

- confident and creative individuals
- successful lifelong learners
- active and informed members of the community.

Confident and creative individuals who...

15. have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual and physical wellbeing -
16. develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, empathy, loyalty, responsibility and respect for others
17. are resilient and develop the skills and strategies they need to tackle current and future challenges
18. are able to recognise, adapt to, and manage change
19. have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future
20. show initiative, use their creative abilities and are enterprising
21. have the imagination, knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives
22. understand their responsibilities as global citizens and know how to affect positive change
23. have the confidence and capability to pursue learning throughout life, leading to enjoyable, fulfilling and productive employment
24. relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships - *that's where families come to the front.*
25. are well prepared for their potential life roles as friends, family, community and workforce members
26. embrace opportunities, make informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions
27. have a sense of belonging, purpose and meaning that enable them to thrive in their learning environment.
28. Successful lifelong learners who...
29. develop their ability and motivation to learn and play an active role in their own learning
30. have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy as the foundation for learning
31. engage in respectful debate on a diverse range of views
32. are productive and informed users of technology as a vehicle for information gathering and sharing, and are able to adapt to emerging technologies into the future -
33. are able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence as the result of studying fundamental disciplines
34. are creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines and deep content knowledge

35. are inquisitive and experimental, and have the ability to test different sources and types of knowledge
36. are responsive and adaptive to new ways of thinking and learning
37. are able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas
38. continue to improve through formal and informal learning in further education, and training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed decisions throughout their lives
39. are able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are
40. are confident and motivated to reach their full potential

Active and informed members of the community who...

41. act with moral and ethical integrity.
42. have empathy for the circumstances of others and work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments
43. appreciate and respect Australia's rich social, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and embrace opportunities to communicate and share knowledge and experiences
44. have an understanding of Australia's system of government, its histories, religions and culture
45. are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life by connecting with their community and contributing to local and national conversations -
46. understand, acknowledge and celebrate the diversity and richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
47. possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians
48. are informed and responsible global and local members of the community who value and celebrate cultural and linguistic differences, and engage in the global community, particularly with our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific regions.