

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION

AMMENDMENT BILL 2024

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Executive Summary of Concerns

I have three main concerns regarding this bill, from both the perspective of an allied health professional and a homeschooling parent:

1. The changes should not specify a curriculum/s that must be followed.
2. The 60 day provisional registration period needs to remain.
3. Do not include the requirement for proof that home education is in the best interest of the child.

One further concern is that the consultation process regarding this bill has not been conducted in a timely nor meaningful manner, nor have the relevant key stakeholders been appropriately engaged regarding the changes to home education. These key stakeholders include the families who homeschool and the medical and allied health professionals supporting students who are homeschooled.

1. The changes should not specify a curriculum/s that must be followed - ACARA and or other Syllabi:

There should not be a requirement to follow ACARA or any other standard curriculum. Specifying that a high quality education must be provided is more than enough. A high quality education looks very different for each child. No definition of a high quality education is required beyond the plan that is individually written for that student. Removing the flexibility of curriculum choice does not improve the quality of home education, it is a backwards step for home educated students.

Currently approximately one percent of the school aged children in Queensland are home educated. The families that homeschool do so largely because the education

system has not adequately provided an education for their child/ren. This is the case for our family.

Removing the flexibility for a family to tailor an education program for their students (often with significant input from supporting allied health professionals) is a backwards step for these students. Specialist schools are not readily available across the state for children with disabilities or different learning styles, nor are there schools that cater for gifted and talented students, such as the Queensland Academies (which do not follow ACARA). Accessing specialist learning opportunities such as these requires families to relocate and can create enormous financial and emotional pressure on families. Educating these children with additional needs at home can provide a specialist education tailored for their unique needs that is not available without their family needing to move away from their support networks in their home towns. This includes choosing from some amazing curriculum that are written specifically for gifted students or those who need another approach to learning. Integrating therapy goals into a home education program can be incredibly effective for the students and the flexibility in allocating that student's best attention times to that work can result in fantastic improvements from both an educational and a therapy perspective.

We personally purchase curriculum from the United States that offers our children a challenge and working through these well structured programs at their own pace allows them to continually experience challenge. They are able to spend more time on the things that need help with and more time diving deeply into the things that they love (an ongoing and in depth study of ancient and modern history in primary school for example). Contrast that with lots of waiting and waiting to move on after you have understood a concept and then clowning around because you are bored, then you are constantly in trouble for talking or clowning and then finally you refuse to go to school because you're not learning anything at all and all that happens is you are in trouble. This is the same situation for someone who isn't able to keep up. Both of these students would really benefit from a program that is designed for their needs and that program may not be a match with ACARA or similar. Do not pass a bill that specifies a set curriculum for our home school students - leave that to their families and supporting health care professionals.

2. Do not remove the 60 day provisional registration period - Children will be left in damaging situations for longer periods of time if the 60 day provisional registration period is removed. There is evidence that it takes between 18 months to two years for a suitable educational placement to be implemented from the initial notice of a problem to a new placement. That is a very long time in the life of a young child and much harm can be done in that time. This harm is not always visible. With my professional background, I personally have been able to register and submit a plan for an academic year that we have followed through with little change, however, this is not the case for all families and especially those in difficult situations. It can take time to make a useful plan for your students and submitting something that will get through or paying someone else to write something that will be approved but not used is not a good use of time for either the applicant nor the department reviewing it.

3. Best interest of the child –In the vast majority of cases, parents are the best judge of what is in the best interests of the child. This inclusion is an overreach and is not the role of the government to make decisions on what is in the best interests of the child, child safety cases aside.

However, if this requirement is passed – how will the best interests of the child be determined and what proof will be required? Will the education department also provide this same level of evidence for each child that attends day school?

Our children in Central Queensland currently face lengthy wait times for assessments and reports by medical and allied health professionals. Do not further disadvantage them by requiring evidence that is both expensive and difficult to obtain, and uses up the valuable time of our local medical and allied health staff.

Concluding Statement

Do not pass a bill that is a backwards step for students who have already been failed by the current education system. Allow and trust their families to make decisions that are in their best interest and can provide them with a high quality education that is designed just for them. Allow the medical and allied health professionals to continue to have input into the educational programs of these home educated students and support their families as they educate their children. Do not make registration and reporting more onerous for families without teaching or other professional backgrounds, this will only serve to drive them underground and not seek out help with their student's needs. Please consult with the key stakeholders for the home education community in a timely and appropriate manner.

Do not pass this bill in its current form as it relates to home education.