

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 2060
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Publication:
Attachments: No attachment
Submitter Comments:

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee](#)
Subject: Submission re EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024
Date: Monday, 25 March 2024 11:56:38 AM

Elizabeth Read
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Committee Secretary
Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed amendments to the education bill that has recently been presented to Queensland parliament.

As a longterm home educator, having been a keen student of child development and education since the 1980's,, and as the chairperson of Home Education WA (the peak body for home-educating parents in Western Australia), I strongly believe that a requirement to strictly adhere to the ACARA curriculum would be decidedly detrimental for the vast majority of home educated children.

Standardised curricula are clearly written with schools in mind, and the necessity they have to manage large groups of students. Given the numbers of students in school classes, school teachers simply cannot tailor education to each student in the way that a parent or guardian home-educating their own child or children can. Many home-educating parents have chosen this approach specifically because the standardised approach of school education did not suit their child/ren.

In home education, parents can facilitate their child's education in each subject at a pace, and using methods, to suit the individual students strengths and challenges in that subject. In a subject which they find easy and particularly enjoy, they can streak ahead far beyond their nominal grade level. In a subject they find more difficult, a parent can ensure that they have grasped concepts before moving on to more advanced studies which build on those concepts, which may require that they progress more slowly in that subject, but results in them understanding it properly in the long run. Forcing students to rush through material which they do not understand, in order to comply with standardised curriculum content, is clearly not beneficial in this situation, and is a common reason for parents choosing to home educate, having realised that their child was getting further and further behind as time passed.

Neurodiverse children in particular are often at different grade levels in different subjects. A dyslexic student, for example, may need to study written English at a much slower pace than his or her other subjects, which in home education may be pursued using much more varied and immersive means than is practicable in

schools. Such means may include video documentaries, audiobooks, speech-to-text software; and vastly more practical exploration, experimentation and excursions than can be managed in school education, especially given the amount of paperwork required for approval and management of a school excursion. As parents, home educators have the enormous advantage of being able to take their students to visit historical sites, museums, aquaria, zoos and local ecosystems much more frequently, and not being restricted to doing that within "school hours".

Students' individual interests and fascinations can also be harnessed in home education to cover the concepts of different subjects with more passion than would be inspired for them by the specific content of the standard curriculum. In history, for example, the concepts of social and international dynamics are not dependent on which individual cultures are studied when, so if a child has a fascination with a particular culture, the concepts of the curriculum may be covered within the context of that culture, rather than necessarily insisting on them studying Ancient Egypt or Medieval Europe at a specific age.

Students can also take advantage of local organisations offering tuition in particular skills they enjoy. The ability to pursue such passions at levels far beyond grade levels is very likely to lead to early engagement in areas of future employment, since that very passion motivates them to learn far more than they are likely to do in a subject imposed on them. My own twelve-year-old, for example, has recently joined a local lapidary and rockhunting club, where he is learning to craft gemstones, safely using mechanical equipment, and has also begun attending their monthly geology evenings, which include university-level presentations on geological topics.

I understand that there can be concerns that a small minority of home educators neglect their children's education, and that some provision is required to protect the interests of those children, but requiring all home educators to adhere rigidly to a set curriculum is not in the best interests of the majority. The Western Australian School Education Act, which does not *require* parents to follow the specified curriculum, but provides that in cases of concern regarding a home-educated child's progress, the curriculum may be used as a comparison tool, presents a helpful example of such a protective measure.

I implore you to maintain the flexibility of home education that is the very reason for its benefit to the majority of families who choose it.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Read

Sent from my iPhone