

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission
EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

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Overview of concerns about the changes proposed to home education:

Welcomed change to the legislation:

Firstly, I welcome the proposed changes to the age for the Year 12 equivalent of senior home educating students to align with the school sector.

“Extending the age eligibility to enable a child to be registered for home education until 31 December in the year the child turns 18, consistent with the schooling sector.” Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Explanatory Notes.

I have previously written to the former Minister for Education, Grace Grace on this matter, dated 15 December 2023. My letter “Subject: Request for Policy Change Regarding Home Education Registration for Students Turning 18 in Year 12 Equivalent,” is attached for your review. Outlined in the letter are my arguments for the change including how it personally affects two out of four of my children. I am amazed that my children are treated differently based on their birth month.

My main arguments **for** this change include:

- Consistency with the peers in the school sector.
- To remove the financial disadvantages this current policy has on home educating students turning 18 in their Year 12 equivalent year. For example, the inability for family tax benefits, ABSTUDY, Assistance for Isolated Children payments (AIC), and the textbook resource allowance (TRA) etc.
- To remove the educational disadvantages this current policy has on home educating seniors turning 18. For example, one less year to complete QCE if desired, one less year to enrol in start university in high school programs such as CQU's Start Uni Now, one less year to enter school-based competitions, challenges, and sport events.
- To remove the psychological stigma that they cannot graduate the full year 12 years of schooling, which feels discriminatory on a technicality.

Unwanted changes to the proposed changes to the legislation:

I have three main concerns about the proposed bill, which is drawn from (1) my personal experience as a home educator for 6 years (5 years in rural and remote settings) and (2) my 3 years of experience as a casual teacher aide. These three main concerns are:

- The implementation of ACARA and the QCAA syllabuses, and the impact on currently recognised alternatives. In particular, the proposal for **Queensland syllabus for senior subjects for home education**.
- The increased compliance burden will drive senior students out of home education too early.
- The requirement for parents to prove that home education is in the best interest of the child.

I will address each of my concerns below.

ACARA and the QCAA syllabuses:

“Requiring the educational program for a child registered for home education to be consistent with the Australian Curriculum or Queensland syllabus for senior subjects.” Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

I strongly oppose the changes requiring mandatory implementation of the Australian Curriculum for home education. Further, I most strongly oppose the requirement for home educating seniors to follow the Queensland syllabus. I have written and published a detailed argument against this policy change for seniors in a blog post on my Homeschool Hotline website. Read the article here:

<https://www.homeschoolhotline.com.au/blog/ln0h06pyl2t2tb0zgszq56nr13o44u>

I submit this article as supporting documentation of my argument and invite the committee to read it. In summary my arguments against the policy are as follows:

- Changes will drive home educating seniors out of the secondary school system too early.
- Where secondary education is no longer compulsory for seniors, home educating students should be able to choose their mix of curriculum including no ACARA.
- Home educating students currently are ineligible for ATAR and QCE is unlikely due to restricted literacy requirement options under the recognised studies of QCAA.
- Home educating students rarely value QCAA QCE as it has no bearing on tertiary applications and little bearing on employment.
- Home educating students are successfully entering tertiary education through alternative pathways through VET courses, diplomas, and start university early programs or open university qualifications. QTAC is not something home educating students are concerned with.
- QCAA and home education are not compatible for all stakeholders including students, parent home educators, and the education department. It will put unnecessary pressure and load on all parties.

- The QCAA senior syllabus is not suitable for home educating students. This standardised program is designed for teachers in a classroom setting. It is not required for home education.

Best interest of the child

I find the statement 'in the best interest of the child' in the new legislation potentially harmful. Without proper consultation and execution, these changes could have undesirable, even harmful effects. This is a case of over-regulation and impinges of the rights of the people. What indicators will the government use as factors for the best interest of the child? Who decides this? Will the home education community be consulted on this?

I argue home education is a legal and valid method of education for our youth. We do not need to determine why it is superior to the school sector for our children. This is a gross overstep of the government. What happened to democracy and free choice?

Home educators do not want unaccountability, in fact the opposite. As a home educator I take my role very seriously. I have given up employment and personal time to ensure my children have quality education. I offer up a small insight into one of my children for evidence of learning and progression outside the ACARA curriculum. My son has stated he will be overburdened with the senior syllabus. He does not want it and feels it will take away from his desired learning.

My son is considered year 11 equivalent:

- 2024 High Distinction for Programming Fundamentals Central Queensland University
- 2024 Currently enrolled in Database Design and Implementation (CQU)
- 2024 Currently enrolled in Cert III in Information Technology

- 2023 and 2022 Winner Year 10-12: Open Platform category in the Australian STEM Video Game Challenge – Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)
- 2023 STEM Together Future Shapers Problem Solving and Innovation Award – CSIRO in recognition for their efforts to strengthen their confidence, capability, and connection with STEM.
- High Distinction in the Year 10 level of the 2023 Australian Geography Competition
- 11029NAT – Course in Firearms and Weapons Safety, Site N Scope Training Pty Ltd (RTO)
- Silver and Bronze level for the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award
- Winners 2022 and 2023 History Makers School Video Challenge – National Museum Australia
- #Digitrek Regional Roadshow Schools Program – TAFE Queensland, Roma Campus
- Best Art Exhibit 13 to 17 Years – Mitchell Show 2023
- First Prize Champion Oil or Acrylic – Mitchell Show 2023
- Self-taught guitar
- 3-year community garden volunteer

Conclusion

In conclusion, I request the Minister and the committee review our home educating submissions and call for more consultation on this matter. I welcome the changes regarding the registration ages of our senior students. However, I am strongly against the changes for the mandatory following of the national curriculum, especially the senior syllabus. Finally, I call for more discussion on the definition of ‘best interest’ before a ruling is made.