

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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SUBJECT: Proposed EGPA Changes to Home Education Submission

Dear Committee Members

I'm writing this letter as I'm deeply concerned and strongly oppose the proposed changes to the home-schooling legislation. My almost 10-year-old attended school during her first year from age 5 to 6 and it was the worst possible experience for our family. **Our daughter who was a bright, confident and happy 5-year-old left Kindergarten with a glowing report from her teachers and within a year of experiencing the traditional school curriculum and environment changed into a quiet, shy and insecure child by the time the school year had ended.**

My husband and I were very concerned about the change we saw in our child and the report we received from her teachers advising that she was behind and needed to be kept back a year and in addition would need a large amount of work done at home, after school in order to bring her "up to speed" with the other children. This was not our experience with our daughter at home and we could not understand what had caused such a drastic change in her temperament and abilities over the course of a single year. **We analysed her experience in the past year and spoke to her teachers about our concerns. It became clear that the pressure to keep to a "standard", being forced to sit for hours on end, being judged with stickers on a highly visible tracking chart within the classroom and being held back almost every break for not completing her work quickly enough had all contributed to the erosion of her self-confidence and had made her lose her love for learning.** It was also clear that there was an undiagnosed reading disability that the teachers had not identified during that year. We raised the issue with them, and they proposed some small changes but could not provide a specific approach to help her as she had not been diagnosed with dyslexia yet and suggested a wait and see scenario.

This was the catalyst for our home-schooling journey and we were fortunate enough to be able to make this decision for our family. We knew it would be a sacrifice as I would not be able to work full time however our daughters mental health and self-worth was for more important than the income we would be losing as a result of our choice. **I spent a large amount of time researching home schooling and investigating various strategies to assist her with her dyslexia and found that the traditional curriculum and teaching approach did not support children with this type of disability.** I could not get her diagnosed because of her age and all the experts and doctors I spoke to advised that most children don't get a formal diagnosis until later, around the age of 8 or 9. We did not want to wait so long before helping our child and so **I tailored a home-schooling curriculum for her based on my research.**

Once I started home-schooling it was clear that there was a large amount of foundational work that was missing, something her teachers had never picked up on in the entire year she was at school and so I took it back to basics and worked slowly with her to get the fundamentals correct. It took time and patience as she had so much self-doubt. She would tell me she was "bad" because she couldn't understand a concept quickly enough and I realised that she had been given the impression by her teacher that bad children don't understand or work quickly enough. That first year of home-schooling was an eye opening experience for me as I realised how children like mine can so quickly fall through the cracks. **It is impossible for a teacher to cater to the individual needs of each child in classroom of 20 or 30 kids and if a child does not fit within a teachable mould, then they will fall behind and in my daughter's case start developing a sense that they are not good enough.** It was terrible to see my daughter so despondent and scared to learn. I myself love reading and I started reading at the age of 4 without any formal teaching and read 5 or more books a week by the age of 6. It was heartbreaking that my daughter didn't have the same experience with reading and learning and I wanted to help her develop that same love for reading as I had as a child.

It was slow progress in that first year as it took time to bring her back to herself but we are now reaping the rewards. **My daughter who is now almost 10 is testing at a spelling and reading age of 13 and at age 12 in maths. She can read most books fluently and her grammar and speech are far above other children her age. She is a mature, confident and happy child and everyone I speak to comments on how well rounded and**

intelligent she is. She loves learning now and has developed a sense of self-discipline that I seldom see in other children her age. She sets her own timetable and works diligently on her schoolwork. Because she can read fluently, she works autonomously for most of her school day, only coming to me when she gets stuck or needs additional instruction. **Her dyslexia does not hinder her anymore and she understands that her brain works differently and she has worked out coping mechanisms to keep herself on track.** Writing is still struggle and it will take her twice or even three times as long to write a letter by hand but give her the same task with typing and she will finish it in record time. She is already a self-taught graphic artist and has created small animations and stories on her iPad. She can budget and set financial goals for herself. She wants to create a small business selling hand made items and she's learning about online businesses and how to set them up.

My youngest has just turned 6 and I can already see that she probably has ADHD. She cannot sit still for more than 5 minutes, and I shudder to think what kind of experience she would have in a traditional school environment that requires 5 to 6 hours of sitting still to work through a set curriculum. I have already started teaching her in a way that caters to her ability and although she is fast learner, she would not be able to work through the standard curriculum. **I have to take an entirely different approach with her than I did with my eldest daughter** and I know that this is what makes home-schooling so amazing. **She will be taught in a way that benefits her** and she will not have the unfortunate experience of not feeling good enough because I will make sure she understands that her abilities are unique and amazing.

I do not believe that a one approach will benefit all children and afford them a better education. Every home-schooling parent I've met, made the decision because their child's needs were not being met with a traditional curriculum or standard school approach and they want better outcomes for their children beyond education. Home-schooling is a blessing for most families who choose this road and there is a large amount of evidence that shows home-schooling children have better outcomes in University and in the workplace. I believe this is because most families cater their curriculum around the needs, interests and abilities of their children and those children flourish as a result. **If this freedom to choose is removed, then it will hinder not help the children that have already been let down by the system not help them.**

I would also like to query the following parts of the proposed legislation: Home school registration will only be allowed if it's in the best interest of the child. Who determines this? The government, doctors, teachers, or us as their parents? We know our children the best. Every decision we make is because we want our children to have a better future and more opportunities than we did as children. The home school community actively seek and explore, investigate, and implement the things that we deem work best for our children. **Education is very important but so is mental health and wellbeing.**

Thank you for your time and your attention to these materials. I hope that you will take the above into consideration when making your decision.