

Submission
No 192

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 8/08/2014

Partially Confidential

8 August 2014

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HOME SCHOOLING INQUIRY

I know it may negatively influence the validity of my views, I am choosing to keep my submission anonymous. I am choosing to do so, not because I am an unregistered homeschooler, or even because I struggled with the current registration process, but rather because I feel the registration process has the potential to be overly invasive for those choosing to educate their children outside of the mainstream education system.

I would like to comment on the following terms of reference:

(a) the background of home schooling including comparison of practices with other jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand,

(b) the current context of home schooling in New South Wales.

I currently home educate 2 children, aged 9 and 7. This was a choice we did not take lightly, and the reasons we chose the path of educating our children outside the school system are many and complex. However, I do not feel I should have to explain the reasons for this choice any more than those who send their children to school would be expected to explain their choice. I am well aware this is a minority educational choice, however I feel strongly that it is the right choice for many families for many different reasons.

While I am not familiar with registration practices for homeschoolers in NZ, I do have a general understanding of registration processes within Australia. My concern is that the process is becoming overly bureaucratic, and that this actually interferes with parents ability to educate their children; as they are feeling pressured to jump through hoops that aren't necessarily relevant to the learning process within their families.

As I previously mentioned, people homeschool for many reason, I feel that one of the main reasons is that many people feel that the one-size-fits all approach being implemented within Australian schools is not meeting the needs of all students. Home educating allows us to cater for children individual learning needs in a way that the 'Australian Curriculum' never can.

Current requirements of registration are putting pressure on homeschooling families to apply a 'school at home' approach, which I feel undermines the many amazing possibilities of home education. Furthermore, not all people are able to jump through these hoops and successfully register, and this does not at all reflect how they are coping as a home educating parent, rather it only points out their weaknesses in writing in a way that satisfies a bureaucracy, and as a result many families choose to 'fly under the radar'.

(b) the current context of home schooling in New South Wales including: (ii) financial costs,

While some families are able to adapt parents work around home education, for many it takes a significant toll on the finances of the family. As the main 'educator' I have been unable to return to work when my youngest child reached school age. Furthermore, for our family the costs of home education our two children are at least \$4,000 a year. This figure takes into account - the costs of school supplies (books, subscriptions, stationary etc), and also extra-curricula activities such as art classes, swimming lessons, sporting activities, museum visits and so forth. If our children were at school we

would not feel the need to do so many of these paid activities, as we feel they would be accessing much of these sorts of activities through the public school system. While we knew when we made this choice that there was not funding to assist us along the way, it does seem unfair that there is no support for us when schools are receiving a certain amount of money per child (including my children if they were at school). Obviously my children being at home is saving the government money. Maybe if the money schools were receiving for each child was made accessible for home educating families people would feel more inclined to register – why should we be forced to do it 'your' way, when other children doing 'your way' within schools get funding. If we aren't getting funding why can't we be left to do it as we see fit?

Conclusions:

While I would like to write more on my thoughts on this topic, like most homeschooling parents, I am very busy. In a nutshell, my concerns about the current registration process is that there is no give and take. The NSW BOS expects us to do everything they think is meeting the needs of OUR children. There are many problems within the education system in Australia and it seems crazy that homeschoolers are beginning to have stricter guidelines with regards to 'educator' monitoring than exist for teachers within schools.