

**Submission
No 211**

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Mrs Marion Semtner

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Bernie and Marion Semtner

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HOME SCHOOLING INQUIRY

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Inquiry into Home Schooling in NSW. Our son, who is in Year 9, has been home schooled from Kindergarten. When our son is ready to attend university, we plan to access one of the alternative entry options.

We feel home education is a viable and successful alternative to public or private schooling. The benefits to our son's education has made us thankful that this option is available in NSW and hope it continues to be a viable option for other families into the future.

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

(b) (iii) demographics and motivation of parents to home school their children,

The ability to build an individual program to suit our son's learning style, interests and career preferences is a major reason for choosing home education. From Kindergarten through to the present, our son has had input into the selection of resources used to meet the curriculum requirements. Combining resources which our son is happy to use and weaving our son's interests into the NSW/Australian curriculum has worked well. For various subjects at various times, we have drawn upon the expertise of specialist teachers (e.g. speech and drama, mathematics, piano and guitar) to further enhance our son's education.

For external testing purposes, our son has participated in International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) tests, Big Science Competition and Australian Mathematics Trust tests.

Excursions have complemented the delivery of the curriculum. These have included, visits to galleries, Sydney Opera House, Powerhouse Museum, geology field trip, rockpool rambles, university open days, Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

We have also engaged with the authorised persons for their input into the direction of education and our options to incorporate this knowledge into our curriculum.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

We have always worked within the regulatory framework within NSW.

(i) current registration processes and ways of reducing the number of unregistered home schoolers,

The registration process has matured over our time home schooling. The current process, from our experience, appears to be at a point that is an appropriate balance between the commitment to home schooling and any unnecessary bureaucracy.

For clarity, future changes should have a notice period and overlap period to allow sufficient time to adjust to the changes. For example the changes can be used immediately however the old system is accepted for 6 months afterwards. Ideally all home schooling families due for renewal in the next 12 months would be notified to enable sufficient time to prepare.

It may be possible to reduce unregistered home schoolers through state and federal cooperation where proof of enrolment is provided to Centrelink as a requirement to obtain Family Tax Benefits.

(ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons,

We have appreciated the feedback and support provided by the authorised persons who have visited with us for the purpose of registration. For other renewals we have registered via documentation. We have always found the staff within BoSTES very helpful.

It would be helpful to all parties, home schooling families, APs and BoSTES management, for BoSTES to provide a sample registration submission for each of the 6 stages. This would provide all parties with a consistent and referable baseline. This would need to be maintained to reflect changes.

(iii) adherence to delivery of the New South Wales Syllabuses,

We utilise a range of resources including those written for the NSW/Australian curriculum. We also draw upon resources from other countries. This has been mainly for maths and science. When selecting resources from other countries we check to ensure NSW/Australian syllabus key learning areas are met.

(iv) potential benefits or impediments to children's safety, welfare and wellbeing,

We feel the home schooling environment has provided the safe and loving atmosphere for our son to grow and develop confidence. At home there are no silly questions, importance is placed on trying one's best, working in a peaceful environment, time spent caring for our animals, taking breaks as required, there is no bullying (physical or verbal).

(vi) appropriateness of the current regulatory regime and ways in which it could be improved,

The current requirements for registration are a fair balance. We would like to see the balance maintained. As per our suggestion above, it would be helpful for BoSTES to provide a sample registration submission for each of the 6 stages to provide a consistent baseline and expectation for all involved in the home schooling process.

(d) support issues for home schooling families and barriers to accessing support,

A few years ago we looked into non-Christian distance education options with disappointing results. In NSW we found in order to enrol in distance education, the student needed to meet certain criteria, e.g. illness. In contrast, the Brisbane School of Distance Education (Queensland) provides the option of enrolment by choice where the user pays to use the services of the school. As this school requires students to be Queensland residents, this

option was not available to us. Access to distance education by choice would be a beneficial option for those located in NSW.

This year ICAS and Big Science Competition have set minimum student number requirements for tests. Due to these changes our son will no longer be partaking in these tests. We understand that these tests are run by individual bodies, however with greater general awareness and understanding of home schooling, the bodies offering these tests may review the current requirements and look for strategies to increase accessibility to external testing options for home schooled students.

(e) representation of home schoolers within Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BoSTES), and

We believe a positive improvement for the future would be the inclusion of home schooling representation within BoSTES. This would encourage open and transparent communication through all education options within NSW. Home schooling representation would help BoSTES gain a greater understanding of home schooling needs especially in relation to the registration process and requirements. Representation would potentially assist in the dissemination of information within the home schooling community.

(f) any other related matter.

The commitment required in terms of time and financial resources should not be underestimated or undervalued. Home schooling is not for everyone, or even all children in a family, just as the public or independent schooling options do not meet the needs of all families or all children. However, home schooling should be a practical option for families who require an alternative to traditional schooling options to provide an appropriate education outcome for their family and child/ren.

Home schooling has provided our family with the opportunity for our son to mix with a wide range of people from a variety of walks of life. Personally selected resources and excursions specific to our son's interests and needs have enhanced our son's learning. Our son loves to learn and works well as part of a team and on his own.

We thank the inquiry for the opportunity to provide a submission and their time in undertaking this inquiry.

Regards,

B Semtner M Semtner

Bernie & Marion Semtner