

**Submission
No 30**

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

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Date received: 15/07/2014

The Director
Select Committee on Home Schooling
Parliament House
Macquarie street
Sydney NSW 2000

This is a submission in favour of home-schooling of children, in response to the NSW Parliament Select Committee on Home Schooling's Inquiry into home schooling.

With reference to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference (ToR):

ToR 1. (b). (iii). Demographics and motivation of parents to home-school their children

My husband and I schooled our daughter at home from the age of 7 years through to her graduating high school at age 17. I cannot speak highly enough of the benefits of teaching ones child/children from the perspective of ones own values and standards, both in the academic field and morally.

My husband and I chose to remove our youngest daughter from the NSW public school system in 1994 after becoming very frustrated with the level of academic stimulus that was available for our gifted child at the time. Even after testing and consultation with teacher and headmaster which resulted in an advisor's recommendation for her to be fast tracked a grade, the system still failed her. She was offered no extra stimulus whatsoever by the school, and I was treated with contempt for even requesting help.

The following year we began educating her at home where I was able to provide an accelerated curriculum, which also suited our Christian values, in an environment that enabled her to progress at the level to which she was suited.

At the time others expressed concern that she would not be appropriately socialized, however this was not the case. My daughter found friendships with her peers and other home schooling children of all ages. In fact she was not limited to friendships with those her own age and her maturity allowed her to relate to people of all ages. She also attended an annual Student Convention with other homeschoolers from NSW where her academic and creative gifting was showcased and developed.

My daughter received one on one teaching from myself as a committed parent and with input from her father and two adult siblings. In this environment she grew into a very grounded, wise, compassionate and intelligent person, without the stresses of negative peer pressures that we see are so rife in schools.

May I add that this home schooler was also chosen to carry the Olympic Torch in NSW in September 2000. This honor was afforded to her in recognition of her service to the community. One such example is that she recognised a need in our local community for a youth tennis club, which she founded and ran for the children in the town. She also regularly fund raised for World Vision, completing the 40hour Famine for 10 years from age 8 to 18. Additionally, at age 15, she spent her entire summer holidays volunteering at an orphanage in Northern Thailand, and was invited to attend World Vision's Youth Leadership Convention in Sydney.

ToR 1. (b). (i). Outcomes of home schooling including in relation to transition to further study and work

Despite raising my daughter in a small country town, upon entry to the workforce after school she was offered the first job she applied for, in central Sydney no less. Again despite concerns from well-meaning onlookers, she thrived in the work environment, managing long days in the office and several modes of public transport to and from work. After a short, but very successful career in several corporate offices, at age 22 she accepted a voluntary redundancy. With the confidence and grounding to see this redundancy as a new opportunity, she pursued overseas volunteer positions, of which she was awarded two highly competitive AusAID volunteer roles, firstly with the Australian Ambassadors for Development and later with the Australian Volunteers for International Development.

Concurrent with her fulltime work as a volunteer, my daughter commenced study towards her Bachelor Degree in International Aid and Development from an Australian University, as an external

student. During the course of this study she received an Australian Government funded scholarship to study in Indonesia. She has recently completed her degree and done very well. It is obvious to us that the discipline required for home schooling has given her the personal responsibility and accountability characteristics that has been required for her to achieve a university degree without the support and assistance that is given to students studying internally.

My older daughter was so impressed with the home education of her younger sister that now she is home-schooling her 4 children, and exceedingly successfully.

I reiterate, I consider home-schooling one's children to be an incredibly rewarding experience, both for the child/children and the parent/parents. I concede that I am not a qualified teacher, but my intense desire to ensure my daughter had the highest level of education available to her as a home-schooler was the driving factor with her education.

Teaching does not take place only at the school desk, but it is a 'whole-of-life' experience. My daughter's education continued at every level and in all aspects of her life, often without her even being aware. Now she is reaping the rewards of a very successful career in International Aid and Development.

I am aware that today some parents are choosing not to register for home schooling their child/children with the NSW Government because of the heavy stresses on time and effort required to fulfill long term curriculum planning.

Furthermore, I believe having to register ones child/children in order to receive the Schoolkids bonus that other Australian children are entitled to receive, is both unfair and unjust.

No parent takes the decision to home-school lightly. Usually the mother forgoes her career for what she sees as a higher call on her life ie home-schooling her children, thus reducing the family income considerably. This sacrifice is considered worthy of the eventual outcome, with children largely raised free from the pressures that most young people are assailed with in schools today, including peer pressure, drugs, binge drinking etc.

ToR 1. (c). (v). appropriateness of the current regulatory scheme and ways in which it could be improved.

My recommendation for improving the NSW regulatory scheme would be to recognise that parents who choose to home school their children are doing so out of a love and concern for those children. Rather than treating the parents as incompetent and careless, the system should recognise the parents' deep desire to forgo other family benefits (ie another wage earner) to provide such one on one education for their children. Whilst parents may not all be qualified teachers, there are resources available to ensure students receive a well rounded education, the likes of which I don't believe is always attained in the school system.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission, and your interest in the NSW home schooling community.

Kind regards,

Mrs. Robyn Thomas