Submission No 6

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

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Terms of reference of the Inquiry into Home Schooling

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

I have no experience with Home education in other states or territories.

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

(i) outcomes of home schooling including in relation to transition to further study and work

I have seven children all of whom I have home educated. I started homeshooling with my oldest daughter, Sarah, in 1997. Sarah is now 23 and has just completed, with distinction, a Bachelor of Arts at Deakin University. Sarah was home educated from the beginning of year one until the end of year ten. In her last year Sarah had weekly lessons with a local graphic artist and on the basis of the portfolio she assembled, she was able to secure a place at Hornsby TAFE, undertaking a diploma in graphic design. On the strength of her results, Sarah was offered a place at Newcastle University in their teaching program. After one year at Newcastle, Sarah decided to move to Melbourne and continued her studies there but opting to transfer into Arts. All of this she achieved without sitting for any formal school examinations.

My second oldest child, Anna, 20, has been living independently for two and a half years. I educated Anna from kindergarten until the end of year ten. She is now a junior manager at our local book shop and was recently shortlisted for the prestigious ABA Penguin Random House Young Bookseller of the Year. Anna has no formal education apart from a Certificate II in retail which she completed as a traineeship. Despite this she has a great love for literature and she is an efficient worker with engaging communication skills.

My Oldest son, Joseph, 18, is a third year apprentice in the metal fabrication industry. Like Anna, Joseph was educated entirely at home up the end of year ten. As part of his year ten studies, Joseph was enrolled at Gosford TAFE doing the same course as metal fabrication apprentices. On the strength of the skills he acquired in the first six months of this course, he was able to secure part time work which led to the offer of an apprenticeship the following year. He has now completed his three year TAFE course, a year ahead of time. By the age of 20 Joseph will be a completely qualified tradesman. Joseph has also spent many years attending Cadets and earlier this year was awarded Student of Merit at a Promotions Course for NSW Cadets. Joseph is very community

minded. He has been a member of the Rural Fire Service for the last three years, now filling the role of training officer for his brigade.

My younger four children are still being home educated. Two of them have part time jobs at our local McDonalds, where they are well received.

I feel that home education has given my children skill sets that make them highly employable. They are hard-working, they love efficiency and order, they can work independently, they learn quickly and they know how to deal with the community. Home schooling has also given them flexible timetables, allowing them to take work opportunities and complete their school work around paid outside work.

(ii) financial costs

Home schooling families receive no funding beyond the parenting payments available to families through Centrelink. The costs involved in home schooling are varied. In our case the biggest cost is that we are limited to a single income. Other cost include providing all text books, stationary, computers and software; additional costs associated with being at home all day -increased heating and cooling, lighting and water bills; cost associated with having to pay for tuition in areas where I lack training, such as piano; and cost associated with having to travel to access services and resources such as libraries.

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

While we had heard of home schooling, and were interested in it, we decided to send our oldest daughter, Sarah, to our local public school. After one year we found ourselves dissatisfied with our experience of the school system. We felt that our daughter was not nurtured at school, she found many aspects of school confusing and troubling and we felt frustrated by the limitations the school year placed on us as a family. When I started looking into home schooling, the most striking idea that was presented to me was that for a child in kindergarten, all of their academic lessons could easily be covered in two hours. It felt like it took me at least that long to prepare Sarah for school and drop her off, pick her up and help her with her homework. I realised I would much rather spend two hours a day teaching Sarah myself and get her back into the family. We would have the rest of the day to read stories, play games together, go to the park and the library, do cooking and enjoy each other's company. I would be freed from my own school commitments. We could be an independent unit again, doing things together and not fitting into an external time frame.

Although I have no teaching qualifications, I did not find teaching difficult. As the years have progressed and the children's needs have changed, I have had to train myself in many areas. I have had to refresh my maths skills, I've studies various works of literature and periods of history, and made inroads into physics, civics, papermaking and poetry. Teaching forces me to learn and seeing me willing to learn makes learning more attractive to my children.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers,

I have no insights on this point.

(v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children

My children have no special needs. I did not choose to home school because I thought there was some particular about my children.

(vi) comparison of home schooling to school education including distance education

In some ways, our personal home school is not so different to regular school. We start at nine, use some text books and follow a time table. Some of the differences are in the atmosphere. We tend to sit in the lounge room wearing comfortable clothes and no shoes. Even with four students, I am much more accessible to my students than an average classroom teacher. I arrange my time table to ensure that I can give each student some one on one time during the course of the day. As I only have one student at any given level, I can progress the student at his or her own pace without disrupting anyone else. I can also accelerate a student in one KLA while slowing down in another. If one child is reading well but is poor in maths, I can accommodate that. I am not tied to a certain grade or stage. A child that would be too sick to go to school might be well enough to do some home school work for part of the day at least. Another really positive aspect of home education is the very fact that the children are home a lot of the time. They have a much greater understanding of what goes into running a house. They help with the washing and the cooking and the drying up, with collecting wood, going shopping and caring for younger siblings. They also have to rely on one another for company for a greater part of the day than regular school families. This helps to build stronger bonds between siblings, who at school would barely see each other in the course of the day. We do get out and do things with other families, but a lot of the time we are a self-sufficient unit. I have been very gratified to see the fruits of this with my older children, especially the girls who have left home. They remain in close contact with the other children and take an active interest in all of them.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

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

I have been home schooling my children since the beginning of 1997. Until recently I have found the Board of Studies officers (Authorised Persons) to be very helpful, well informed and encouraging. It has never been their job to help put together a program of study or a system for record keeping, but I very often found these officers to be looking to pull the most out of my programs, to find links and cross overs. When I said we were going to be doing bush walks, the Authorised Person noted that that could be put down as science and PH/PE and if we took pencil and paper and made sketches, well, that would be art as well. In the last few years, I have noticed a definite change in attitude with an increased emphasis on meeting syllabus outcomes rather than just covering the Key Learning Areas. This is problematic for home schoolers, particularly those with three or four students as the outcomes are quite numerous, and unlike a regular teacher, we might have to be keeping up with outcomes across three or four different years, for all the Key Learning Areas. Just to give an idea of the work involved, I've have pasted below the table I prepared for my youngest son, Peter, to be registered at the end of last year. The first column I copied from the Board of Studies curriculum. The "how to cover them" and "Progress" columns are my work. This is just one KLA for one of my four students. Not only was it a huge job, but it was also a complete waste of time. I have not used this information once. It has not helped me to assess my son and I will not be using it to make plans for further study. I do not expect anyone to read this table. I have added it to help people to visualize what is actually involved in meeting the Board's curriculum.

Maths Stage One

Outcomes	How to cover them	Progress
Whole Numbers 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • applies place value, informally, to count, order, read and represent two- and three-digit numbers MA1-4NA	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* recognises plus, minus and equals symbols. Understands how to you a number line.	Competent but on going
	By using a calculator, ruler, and tape measure; number lines, buttons and Cuisenaire rods to aid addition and subtraction	Competent but ongoing
	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book*	Competent but ongoing

Number and Algebra		
Whole Numbers 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • applies place value, informally, to count, order, read and represent two- and three-digit numbers MA1-4NA	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* recognises plus, minus and equals symbols. Understands how to use a number line.	Competent but ongoin
	By using a calculator, ruler, and tape measure; number lines, buttons and Cuisenaire rods to aid addition and subtraction	Competent but ongoing
	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,*	Competent but ongoing
Addition and Subtraction 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • uses a range of strategies and informal recording methods for addition and subtraction involving one- and two-digit numbers MA1-5NA	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* recognises plus, minus and equals symbols. Understands how to use a number line.	Competent
	By using a calculator, ruler, and tape measure; number lines, buttons and Cuisenaire rods to aid addition and subtraction	Competent
	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning strategies such as 4+9=3+10 and 2x3=3+3. By using number planes and dots to assist with addition and subtraction. Extra addition practice using the text *Jigsaw Addition*	Ongoing
Addition and Subtraction 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language,	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* recognises plus, minus and equals symbols. Understands how to use a number line.	Competent

actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • uses a range of strategies and informal recording methods for addition and subtraction involving one- and two-digit numbers MA1-5NA	By using a calculator, ruler, and tape measure; number lines, buttons and Cuisenaire rods to aid addition and subtraction	Competent but ongoing
	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning strategies such as 4+9=3+10 and 2x3=3+3. By using number planes and dots to assist with addition and subtraction	Ongoing
Multiplication and Division 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses a range of mental strategies and concrete materials for multiplication and division MA1-6NA	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* recognises plus, minus and equals symbols. Understands how to use a number line to count by ones, twos, threes, fours and fives.	Ongoing
	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning that multiplication is equal to a series of addition. By using rods and buttons to visualise groups.	Ongoing
Multiplication and Division 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • uses a range of mental strategies and concrete materials for multiplication and division MA1-6NA	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* recognises plus, minus and equals symbols. Understands how to use a number line to count by ones, twos, threes, fours and fives..	Ongoing
	By using a calculator, ruler, and tape measure; number lines, buttons and Cuisenaire rods to multiplication and division.	Ongoing
	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning that multiplication is equal to a series of addition. By using rods and buttons to visualise groups.	Ongoing

Fractions and Decimals 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • represents and models halves, quarters and eighths MA1-7NA	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* to recognise the fraction symbols for halves, thirds, quarters and eighths	Ongoing
	By using concrete example such as cutting up fruit or dividing counters	Ongoing
Fractions and Decimals 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • represents and models halves, quarters and eighths MA1-7NA	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* to recognise the fraction symbols for halves, thirds, quarters and eighths	Ongoing
	By using a calculator, ruler, and tape measure; number lines, buttons and Cuisenaire rods to aid division and multiplication.	Ongoing
	By using concrete example such as cutting up fruit or dividing counters	Ongoing
Patterns and Algebra 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • creates, represents and continues a variety of patterns with numbers and objects MA1-8NA	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning to recognize and follow patterns.	Ongoing
	By using concrete objects, such as coloured blocks and Cuisenaire rods to model patterns.	Ongoing
Patterns and Algebra 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language,	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning to recognise and follow patterns	Ongoing

actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • creates, represents and continues a variety of patterns with numbers and objects MA1-8NA	By using concrete objects, such as coloured blocks and Cuisenaire rods to model patterns.	Ongoing
Measurement and Geometry		
Length 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • measures, records, compares and estimates lengths and distances using uniform informal units, metres and centimetres MA1-9MG	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning about measuring and comparing lengths	Competent
	By using a, ruler, and tape measure; and Cuisenaire rods to measure various objects, primarily in centimetres but also in hand spans and foot steps.	Ongoing
Length 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • measures, records, compares and estimates lengths and distances using uniform informal units, metres and centimetres MA1-9MG	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* and carrying out exercises relating to length.	Competent
	By using a, ruler, and tape measure; and Cuisenaire rods to measure various objects, primarily in centimetres but also in hand spans and foot steps.	Ongoing

Area 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • measures, records, compares and estimates areas using uniform informal units MA1-10MG	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning to compare areas and to measure them in terms of Cuisenaire rods	On going
Area 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • measures, records, compares and estimates areas using uniform informal units MA1-10MG	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning to compare areas and to measure them in terms of Cuisenaire rods	Ongoing
Volume and Capacity 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • measures, records, compares and estimates volumes and capacities using uniform informal units MA1-11MG	By playing with water or sand and containers of varying sizes and describing volume in terms of greater and less and then introducing the concept of a litre	Ongoing
	By using one smaller container to measure the capacity of larger containers. Using a tally system to record results.	Limited work so far

Volume and Capacity 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • measures, records, compares and estimates volumes and capacities using uniform informal units MA1-11MG	By playing with water or sand and containers of varying sizes and describing volume in terms of greater and less and then introducing the concept of a litre	Ongoing
	By using one smaller container to measure the capacity of larger containers. Using a tally system to record results.	Limited work so far
Mass 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • measures, records, compares and estimates the masses of objects using uniform informal units MA1-12MG	By talking about what is heavy and what is light. By comparing the weights of various everyday objects and by using an equal arm balance to compare the weights of smaller things	Competent
		Limited work on recording
Mass 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM	By talking about what is heavy and what is light. By comparing the weights of various everyday objects and by using an equal arm balance to compare the weights of smaller things	Competent
		Limited work on recording

• measures, records, compares and estimates the masses of objects using uniform informal units MA1-12MG		
Time 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • describes, compares and orders durations of events, and reads half- and quarter-hour time MA1-13MG	By talking about what the time is and what activities we do at what particular times	Competent
	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning to distinguish between the hands on a clock and to tell time to the hour and half hour and to understand what the two hands tell the viewer.	Ongoing, student still confused about what the long hand is conveying.
Time 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • describes, compares and orders durations of events, and reads half- and quarter-hour time MA1-13MG	By talking about what the time is and what activities we do at what particular times	Competent
	Justifies appropriateness of activities by recounting the time, for example knowing form the clock that it is not bed time	Still lacking natural understanding of the passage of time
	By working through *Miquon Maths , yellow book,* student is learning to distinguish between the hands on a clock and to tell time to the hour and half hour and to understand what the two hands tell the viewer.	

Three-Dimensional Space 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM	By talking about some basic solids such as spheres and cubes	Competent
• sorts, describes, represents and recognises familiar three-dimensional objects, including cones, cubes, cylinders, spheres and prisms MA1-14MG	By introducing mathematical names to already familiar shapes and finding examples of them	Limited work so far
Three-Dimensional Space 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • sorts, describes, represents and recognises familiar three-dimensional objects, including cones, cubes, cylinders, spheres and prisms MA1-14MG	By introducing mathematical names to already familiar shapes and finding examples of them By introducing mathematical names to already familiar shapes and finding examples of them	Competent Limited work so far
Two-Dimensional Space 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • manipulates, sorts, represents, describes and explores two-dimensional shapes, including quadrilaterals, pentagons, hexagons and octagons MA1-15MG	By talking about shapes, naming them and drawing them and considering properties such as number of corners/ sides	Ongoing

Two-Dimensional Space 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • manipulates, sorts, represents, describes and explores two-dimensional shapes, including quadrilaterals, pentagons, hexagons and octagons MA1-15MG	By talking about shapes, naming them and drawing them and considering properties such as number of corners/ sides	Ongoing
Position 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • represents and describes the positions of objects in everyday situations and on maps MA1-16MG	By talking about where things are including up, down, left, right, first, second, third, etc. By introducing maps and explaining how to get information from them	Competent Ongoing
Position 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • represents and describes the positions of objects in everyday situations and on maps MA1-16MG	By talking about where things are including up, down, left, right, first, second, third, etc. By introducing maps and explaining how to get information from them	Competent Ongoing
Statistics and Probability		

Data 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • gathers and organises data, displays data in lists, tables and picture graphs, and interprets the results MA1-17SP	By introducing the idea of a tally table to collect data, to be able then to use the information to make comparisons. By introducing the idea of graphs and explaining how to make one and how to gather information from one.	Ongoing
Data 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • uses objects, diagrams and technology to explore mathematical problems MA1-2WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained MA1-3WM • gathers and organises data, displays data in lists, tables and picture graphs, and interprets the results MA1-17SP	By introducing the idea of a tally table to collect data, to be able then to use the information to make comparisons. By introducing the idea of graphs and explaining how to make one and how to gather information from one.	Limited work so far
Chance 1 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • supports conclusions by explaining or demonstrating how answers were obtained	By talking about the likelihood of everyday occurrences, introducing the terminology on probability such as certain, uncertain, likely and unlikely. By doing experiments with coin tossing and recoding data	Competent Limited work so far

MA1-3WM • recognises and describes the element of chance in everyday events MA1-18SP		
Chance 2 • describes mathematical situations and methods using everyday and some mathematical language, actions, materials, diagrams and symbols MA1-1WM • recognises and describes the element of chance in everyday events MA1-18SP	By talking about the likelihood of everyday occurrences, introducing the terminology on probability such as certain, uncertain, likely and unlikely. By doing experiments with coin tossing and recoding data.	Competent Limited work so far

(ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons

In my experience, what makes a good Authorised Person (AP) is their attitude and their understanding of home education. One of the first APs that I met assured me that he was familiar with most of the curriculums and teaching philosophies used by home educators and if he found out about a new one, he was keen to find out more. He clearly loved the whole idea of homeschooling and was interested in my plans. Not all APs are like this. Some people have come away from their initial visit feeling that the AP was actively hostile to home education and was looking for ways to reject their application.

It can be a very intimidating experience to have a stranger in your house who has the advantage of authority over you. I think the training of Aps needs to cover this. I also feel there needs to be a written report of the meeting, signed off by both parties with full explanations of any problems the AP has with the application. I have heard of cases where the AP has rejected an application on the basis of the educator not having a time table and then denying it when a more experience home educator has questioned him about it. We need transparency and we need to be protected against inconsistent and/or baseless success/ rejection criteria.

APs also need to have a greater understanding and sympathy for the reasons that people have for wanting to home school. If a child has been removed from school because of trauma then the AP needs to understand the needs of that child and not have unrealistic expectations of what that child is able to achieve in the short term, and ensure that their visit does not add to the child's trauma.

If home schooling is a legal option, home schoolers should not be undermined by the officials who have charge over them.

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

Combined with (i) above

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

I have been home educating for over 17 years and have mixed with many, many other home educators. Everyone has an individual approach to their teaching. Some people, like me, are structured with formal lesson times, some not so strict, some completely free flowing, but the common ground for all of them has been a great and genuine care for their children, especially for their emotional wellbeing. Sometimes I feel surprised at how unschool-like some home educators are with their teaching but then I look at the final outcomes and see that my natural learning, unschooling friends have produced entirely competent young adults, for example, one has a son who, by the age of twenty, has a Diploma and a Bachelor of Information Technology and has a full time technology support position at a private Sydney school. He is a courteous, well balanced, honest, caring young man, entirely capable of moving independently in the adult world.

There is an idea in teaching philosophy which states that you cannot teach a child unless his/her emotional needs have been met. This is what home schooling is about. Most home educators I know take education seriously but even those who seem a more relaxed are still achieving that most important of goals: meeting their children's emotional needs. Everything else flows on from that.

I am aware that there are some members of the public who equate home schooling with child abuse. I can only put this down to ignorance. Is there any evidence that there is a higher level of abuse among homeschoolers than among the general public? I think there should be evidence put forward before such slurs are given out. People talk of potential child abuse happening in homes but what about the real abuse happening in schools. People dismiss bullying but we have children in our home schooling group who were suicidal because of the bullying they were subjected to at school and who still suffer from anxiety because of it. Are schools then better at meeting children's emotional needs? In some cases it appears they are not. If we as a community are seriously concerned about child abuse we should look at the real cases and start making it easier for parents to remove their children from such abusive situations.

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

I am happy to have home education regulated. I would like to see a return to more flexible assessments of teacher programs. I would like to be visited by an AP who has enough experience to see that a program is valid even if it does not follow the Board's curriculum. I like having a basic framework to follow. I am happy to follow the Key Learning Areas, to have Australian content and encourage the use of technology. I am not happy to follow an unproven curriculum that involves a ridiculous amount of time in paper work. I would like some way of recording what happens during an AP visit, especially for new applicants and a written explanation of the APs decision.

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

Despite being a legal option for parents, home education is completely unsupported. We receive no funding and we denied access to resources and educational program such as TVET courses, Open High School, School Sports Programs, Hospital School programs and support programs for students with a disability. It feel like the government is saying, "Well, homeschool if you like but from now on your children are no longer our concern, you're on your own." Our older children are also denied family payments after they turn sixteen because they are not working towards their HSC, an award that is denied us. For single income families this is significant. In our case we lost approximately $200 a fortnight in terminated family payment when our son turned 16. Even though I am teaching him year eleven work, the same as he would be learning at his age in school, still my child is excluded. Even a child who went to school with no interest in learning, would be eligible simply by being enrolled.

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

Any minority group needs to be represented by the authority that governs them. How else are their needs to be understood and met. Home schooling may not be popular but it is a valid, legal choice and while that is so, it needs to be taken seriously and not surrounded by willful ignorance. If it was better understood it would be seen not only as a valid choice but in some cases the most appropriate form of schooling. If we are serious about the wellbeing of our children we should be exploring all options and be willing to promote home education when it is the best fit.

(f) any other related matter

As a final point, I would like to share some interesting findings that have come out of a recent study carried out the University of Columbia, Canada and has been reported in *The International Journal on Mathematics Education.* The first point of interest is the finding that students learn more when a topic is presented in a more practical manner, for example, with small group discussions and quizzes, than they do in a formal lecture room setting. The second really interesting finding was that this holds true even when the lecturer is somewhat inexperienced. What I take from this is that it doesn't matter if some home educators are not very well educated themselves, what is more important is the way education is delivered. Home schoolers, with their small class size are probably in a better position to implement active learning approaches than an average school teacher who might have over twenty students in a class.