

Submission  
No 186

## INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for asking for submissions about homeschooling. My husband and I have been homeschooling our 3 children for almost 8 years. We began homeschooling when we left Australia to live in NZ (our two eldest children had been attending state schools in NSW). We weren't sure how long we would be staying in NZ and we didn't want our children to be frequently changing schools, so we thought homeschooling would offer consistency for our children's education. My husband and I have shared roles - at times I've been at home, at others he has been at home. This has provided a wonderful balance for our children to have time with both parents.

After homeschooling in NZ for 3 years, we returned to Australia and were surprised by the high level of accountability of recording our children's progress. It seems that the attitude towards homeschooling here is very different than in NZ. It seems that here in Australia, homeschooling is regarded with suspicion and caution. In NZ homeschooling families are respected. For example, when we arrived in NZ we had to request permission to homeschool, but once it was granted, we were told we would be inspected every 4 yrs by the ministry of education. This inspection would consist of one assessment measure - we would have to show that we had provided an equivalent education to a public school. We were offered support, advice, and curriculum. We were also paid an allowance to assist us!!! (Interestingly, parents in Australia pay twice for their children's education - we pay taxes to fund schools, and then we pay again to purchase our own curriculum). Just before we left NZ, we were informed that the Ministry of Education would no longer be inspecting homeschool families, as they were considered "low risk" and that the Ministry needed to focus it's resources on the needs of schools.

When I compare this attitude to the one in Australia, I find it very different. Here, homeschooling families aren't trusted with their own children. We have to provide tedious records and unrealistic yearly plans. The fact that we are even required to provide these reveals the Board of Studies' ignorance of what homeschooling is really about: tailoring education to children's needs, pursuing the child's interests, learning at the child's own pace. To give you an example of the individualised nature of my children's education, I shall explain the progress of my eldest (now 16yrs old). He is a twice-exceptional verbally gifted learner. For the first year of homeschooling, he found maths so difficult that we decided not to do any. After a year off maths, we approached it again, very gradually and gently. After a couple of years he was 2 years "behind" in maths. We continued to work on character development, and his "overexcitabilities" that are so typical of gifted learners. Once he was more mature (12-13yrs) we intensified his Maths work. He caught up and started to enjoy the challenge of maths. He is now doing the Pathways to Further Education at TAFE. He just completed his Cert 3 (he chose 2 maths subjects: basic and advanced). He received 100% for the basic maths component, and 97% for advanced maths!! How does one fit this into a rigid accountability structure for the Board of Studies??

I am working at the moment as a psychologist and I work 2 days per week with young people (aged 12 to 25yrs). This role has only confirmed my decision to homeschool. Young people in schools are facing social isolation, bullying, learning difficulties, mental health issues, under-age sex, STDs, drug

use, eating disorders and pregnancy. My children are happy, verbally fluent, confident, academically sound, socially competent, and mentally healthy. I think you will find from research overseas (and even research here in Australia) that this comparison is not unusual. Are the stringent guidelines for homeschoolers really necessary? I think you will find that homeschooling parents take their responsibility very seriously and would do ANYTHING to make sure their children are successful in life. I think the government should show more respect, and trust that parents will do the right thing by their children. Shouldn't the government be grateful to us? Aren't we saving them thousands of dollars each year? Aren't we providing them with individually educated, responsible citizens?

Just a final note regarding learning difficulties in children. Some of my work as a psychologist has been doing educational assessments with children. Most of these children were experiencing difficulties at school because of giftedness, dyslexia, dyscalculia, ASD etc. Often when I was writing their reports and giving recommendations to parents and schools, I found myself thinking that every recommendation could be satisfied by homeschooling. One-on-one tutoring, flexible scheduling, pursuing a child's interests, individually paced learning are just some of the recommendations for students with special educational needs. My discussions with parents and professionals often revealed that these needs were not being met within a school environment, and yet, are so naturally met within a homeschooling context. Homeschooling is an ideal choice for many of these students, and yet it is not promoted as a very real option for these families. I would think it is in the government's best interests to help and support families to pursue the option of homeschooling, not to burden them with cumbersome reporting requirement.

Thank you so much for reading this submission.

Yours sincerely

Registered psychologist