

**Submission  
No 134**

## **INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING**

**Organisation:** MissingSchool Inc.

**Date received:** 7/08/2014

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The Director,  
Select Committee on Home Schooling,  
Legislative Council,  
Parliament House,  
Macquarie Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for inviting MissingSchool to respond to the NSW Select Committee Inquiry into Home Schooling.

MissingSchool is a national parent advocacy organisation established to raise awareness of the educational needs of students who miss school because of serious illness or injury, and to work for fair and equitable access to quality education for these students.

It is well recognised that connection to education throughout a period of hospitalisation is important to maintaining student engagement in learning. It provides connection to normalcy and a respite from medical intervention and hospital boredom. It helps to ensure academic continuity, and – critically – gives the student the message that they are expected to recover and that they are worth educating.

Recognising this, a number of hospitals in NSW accommodate Hospital Schools, which operate under the same authority as all other NSW public schools except that they are located in a healthcare space.

MissingSchool understands that children and young people who are home-schooled are routinely excluded from participating in Hospital Schools when they are admitted to hospital for treatment. This has been communicated to us by the parents of home-schooled kids, and confirmed by Hospital School staff.

We understand that one reason given to justify such exclusion is that the home-schooled student's normal learning program can theoretically be delivered by their teacher(s) regardless of where they are located, and that this obviates the need for access to the Hospital School. This overlooks the fact that the student's normal learning resources may not be available to them on a hospital ward, and that their normal teacher may be a parent who has effectively taken leave from their normal work of teaching in order to care for a sick child. It also assumes that the parent has ready access to their child, which is not always the case.

A second reason is that the Hospital School is unable to deliver a program which has been devised by the home school. Assuming that the home school curriculum has been approved by the NSW Board of Studies, it is difficult to identify why the provenance of the curriculum should be problematic; Hospital Schools routinely advertise their ability to support the programs provided by public and independent schools which are accredited by the same Board of Studies.

The state holds ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all children and young people have access to quality education. When a child or young person is under state care (for example, in a public hospital), it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that the

child's educational needs are being met. When it is known that a child or young person is not participating in any approved education program, it is the responsibility of the state to investigate and remove any barriers to the participation of the child or young person in education.

MissingSchool respectfully submits that all children and young people receiving treatment in public hospitals in NSW have a right to continued access to quality education, and that it is discriminatory to deny home-schooled students access to Hospital School services on the basis of their enrolment outside hospital.

Yours sincerely,

Georgina Meyers  
Secretary, MissingSchool Inc.

7 August 2014