

**Submission
No 138**

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Organisation: Homeschooling Registration Reform Alliance of N.S.W.
(HRRAN)

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HOMESCHOOLING REGISTRATION REFORM ALLIANCE OF NSW (HRRAN)

SUBMISSION TO THE NSW SELECT COMMITTEE'S
INQUIRY INTO HOMESCHOOLING IN NSW

*Other organisations representing homeschoolers in NSW are lobbying for registration reform for homeschoolers in this state and HRRAN recognises their efforts and supports their right to be heard. We believe that it is important to acknowledge that no one representative group speaks for **all** homeschoolers in NSW. Real and broad consultation can only occur between homeschoolers, regulatory bodies and political representatives when the diversity of homeschoolers as a group is recognised.*

- **The NSW Education Act 1990 clearly states that that the primary responsibility for education resides with the parent, not the state.** (1) A recent NSW parliamentary research service report states that ‘ultimately, much of the division of opinion centres around whether the greatest right and responsibility for a child’s education rests with the state or with parents.’ (2) HRRAN state firmly that **the greatest right and responsibility for a child’s education rests with parents.**

- The assumption of compliance with the law is a basic legal tenet. **Current NSW Office of the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) registration regulations for homeschoolers are unfairly derived from a position where parents are assumed to be non-compliant.** This approach, with its negative associations, has damaged the relationship between homeschoolers and their regulatory body.

BOSTES representatives are working from a negative premise as the current NSW regulatory framework is entirely based on concerns about the dangers of home education and neither understands nor values home education as a legitimate educational choice. The current regulations have created, to a large extent, an adversarial relationship between homeschoolers in NSW and the government body responsible for regulating homeschooling.

The current heavy-handed NSW homeschooling regulations bring no benefit to our children, only intense scrutiny and repeated demands for justification of parent's educational provision by representatives of a state education system that is out of touch with the realities of home education.

- Tightening homeschooling regulation off the back of misplaced views about child protection has shifted focus away from problems within the child welfare system itself. **The spheres of education and child protection need to be recognised as separate.**

The 2003 Queensland Review of Homeschooling found that ‘there is **no** evidence, reputable research or judicial data’ to support the position that **home schooled children are more at risk than children in schools to various forms of child abuse as a result of their *perceived* social isolation.**⁽³⁾

In addition, the Review found that ‘**children who are home schooled are as socially developed as children who attend school** and that ‘throughout the consultation phase of the review and in the formal submissions, there was evidence of interaction among home schooled children on a regular basis both with schooled and other home schooled children. These children participated in the wider community in ways equivalent to their “age peers” and their parents fostered this

socialisation. Equally there was evidence that home schooled children were less peer dependent, more independent at similar age, and quite knowing of their situation and circumstance’.

- Homeschooled children go on to employment and to successful completion of tertiary study. Local and international studies attest to this. (4)

The 2003 Queensland Review found ‘**no** research evidence to support the claim that **the quality of the educational achievement of home-schooled children is inferior to those enrolled in schools**’.

Despite this, a NSW Parliamentary Research Report prepared in August 2013 (9) states that ‘concerns remain about some aspects of home schooling, focusing on the standard of education that may be available to the home schooled child, the impact on the socialisation of the child, and the potential for options to be more limited than for a traditionally schooled child once schooling is complete’.

All of these concerns have been addressed and disproved repeatedly in local and international research, including the research cited in the parliamentary report itself. **Revealingly, the report included the comment ‘not everyone is convinced by the supposed merits of home education’.** (5).

- HRRAN recommend the 2010 document produced by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRAQ) ‘Home Schooling: Support Materials for the Registration of Home Schooling In Victoria’ as an example of the kind of state regulatory system we are advocating.

The Victorian approach to regulation includes policies that allow part-time access for children and young people to the state public school system. HRRAN support this. Clearly a more accessible registration system would assist homeschooled children to access the public education system when desired.

Through our recommendations for change HRRAN are proposing a shift to a regulatory model based on partnership and support with less focus on compliance and control. This shift would benefit all children and young people who homeschool in NSW and their families.

Our research has shown that this is the kind of working model of regulation that homeschoolers in NSW want. (6) Our research also shows that shifting to a model such as the Victorian model may encourage more homeschoolers in NSW to access the benefits of registration and effectively allow the regulatory body in NSW to do it’s job.

REFERENCES

- (1) NSW Education Act 1990 Part 2 Section 4 (b) ‘the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child’s parents’.
- (2) Drabsch, Talina (2013) ‘Home Education in NSW’ NSW Parliamentary Research Service August 2013 *e-brief Issue 7/2013*
- (3) Queensland Government, *Home Schooling Review*, Report. October 2003
- (4) ‘over 21% of home educated students had achieved a degree qualification compared to the national average of 12.05%. A further 50% had gone on to further education of some kind. Overall, the American study shows that 74% of home educated adults took college level courses compared to the national average of 46%.’
Ray, B. (2003) *Homeschooling Grows Up*. Purcellville: Home School Legal Defense Association
- also*
‘students are entering tertiary institutions with ease, small groups have used standardized tests and scored well and student entry into mainstream institutions at all levels is occurring with apparent ease’.
Jackson, G. (2009). ‘*More than One Way to Learn*’: *Home Educated Students’ Transitions Between Home and School*. Unpublished PhD. Clayton, Victoria: Monash University
- (5) Drabsch, Talina (2013) ‘Home Education in NSW’ NSW Parliamentary Research Service August 2013 *e-brief Issue 7/2013 p10*
- (6) Homeschoolers Registration Reform Alliance of NSW (HRRAN) 2013 NSW HOMESCHOOLERS SURVEY: KEY RESULTS (*attached*)

RECOMMENDED READING

Allan, S & Jackson, G. ‘Fundamental elements in examining a child’s right to education: A study of home education research and regulation in Australia’ *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education Vol. 2, Issue 3, July, 2010*.

HRRAN 2013 NSW HOMESCHOOLERS SURVEY: KEY RESULTS

**from 512 completed surveys*

- **94% of respondents support changing the NSW Board of Studies (BOSTES) homeschooling registration regulations to bring them into line with the less restrictive Victorian regulations** and to require ONLY that they: - provide their contact details and the names and ages of the children they are homeschooling and - sign a statement that they will take responsibility for providing their child/ren with an education in accordance with the relevant sections of the NSW Education Act 1990.
- **82% of CURRENTLY UNREGISTERED NSW homeschoolers surveyed would be more likely to consider registering** if the NSW Board of Studies homeschooling regulations ONLY required them to provide the material outlined above.
- NSW homeschoolers surveyed cite the following **concerns about the current registration process:**
 - 80%** are concerned about the time and stress associated with preparation of learning plans and assessment visits from BOSTES staff.
 - 60 %** fear their application will be rejected.
 - 52%** take a natural learning or unstructured approach to homeschooling and fear their application will be rejected on these grounds.
 - 44%** have philosophical objections to the current registration process.
- **42% of survey respondents identified as UNREGISTERED HOMESCHOOLERS in NSW**