

Submission
No 189

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 8/08/2014

Partially Confidential

Primary Carers' Interests are Primary, Total and Immediate

Dear Committee,

My submission might be taken as comment upon the preambles or motivations of those involved in this inquiry into home schooling in NSW.

On behalf of my husband and myself, I would like to address this issue:

Primary Carers' Interests are Primary, Total and Immediate

Introduction – my experience

I am a home schooling parent, with a nursing degree, and with a husband who has completed two thirds of a teaching degree, and who also has tertiary units in maths, physics, chemistry, genetics, history, philosophy, languages, sociology, politics, journalism and more. His role is mostly advisory, but he has asked me to pass on to you that he regards my teaching abilities to be completely adequate. He points out that not only have I taught children a new language successfully, but the objective assessments also prove that our home schooling is succeeding.

We have five children in home schooling at present. Three of these went to a local school for two years after some years of home schooling. The school reports praised the students for their courtesy and good behaviour. The Naplan results were more than satisfactory with the two older students who had done more home schooling pushing out the top of the graphs in most areas. Other assessment such as violin and drama have also shown good results – AMEB A's for drama for the three students doing this and a mix of A and B for violin.

We have chosen to go back exclusively to home schooling for a variety of reasons, including the unique family experience, and opportunities for students to begin specialising and advancing in chosen subjects at a greater pace than formal schooling allows.

Our budget on curriculum is around \$2000 a year, with many resources being used by the younger children. If these children were in school, total tax payer spending would certainly be significant.

Primary Carers' Interests are Primary, Total and Immediate

Remember what happened during the infamous Los Angeles' riots, when normally law abiding people raided stores, and days later handed stolen items back? In the midst of the free grab, they didn't want to miss out. Later they stopped to think who the property by rights belonged to.

We are concerned that the decisions around the education of home schooled children might be seen as somewhat up for grabs, that the question of ownership, of who has primacy and whose position is secondary might be put aside, if the focus of the committee is too narrowly upon the question of how these children should be taught.

Parents' interests in their children's education is primary because parents are the primary carers' of their children. They did not derive this primacy from the government, just as the children's being did not derive from an act of a government department.

As primary carers, parents' interest in the qualifications of those they delegate to is total – they may choose this school or that, they may refuse to let a stranger or acquaintance into their house with their children because they are not totally satisfied with them.

Parents' interests are properly immediate, not derived. Their children were not derived from elsewhere, unless they have come from adoption and in which case the primacy has been ceded in their favour.

Governments, departments and teachers are not the primary carers of children, they are secondary carers, who ideally will meet the standards expected by the primary care givers. The interest they have should not properly be total – in the first place they should be interested in the job they do, in whether they are doing a good job for the parents, recognising that they are not first but second in regard to rights and responsibilities around the children's education and broader development (values, safety, diet, growth in dreams, courage etc). This can take some self restraint – it's not their business what philosophy or religion or culture or full set of values the children grow up with – and this boundary at certain times may need extra self discipline for some carers who have trouble maintaining perspective.

Governments, acting on behalf of parents, work to make sure that publicly accredited schools which the parents may delegate teaching to will satisfy that part of the total interests of the parents that they are delegating.

If secondary carers involved in education were to forget that they are secondary, they might develop a total interest, and see the parents as encroaching into their territory, as failing in the role of secondary carers. That is an inversion of reality - and a tempting one – with so many possibilities. But it is not right.

Governments, departments and schools are not primary but rather secondary carers. Their interests are not rightly total, are not properly immediate, should always be seen in reference to the primacy of parents as the primary carers.

Extra points in brief

Since home schooling parents do not delegate curriculum decisions, governments and education departments should take a minimalist approach, as is exercised in other jurisdictions, recognising that they are not serving the parents when they are too particular.

The work in mapping our curriculum choices to NSW government choices for schools, while doable, seems to be based on an inversion of who is primary carer. This task takes time that I want to spend in teaching, and while schools have taxpayer dollars in plenty to cover this task, we receive nothing, even while we are saving tax payers thousands upon thousands per student.