

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

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

Whilst travelling recently in Victoria, we noticed that being home educated was generally better accepted than here in NSW. This was reflected in responses made by adults to my 9 year old when he announced that he was a homeschooler, as well as in the booking process for several attractions, including Otway Fly, Flagstaff Hill, and Sovereign Hill. All of these locations were excellent to deal with, and had no minimum number requirements for school bookings such as we have encountered in NSW. This has also been our experience in previous years whilst travelling in QLD. This is significant, as it allows home educated children to access the same resources as their mainstream peers.

I understand that part-time school enrolment is possible in other states in Australia. If this were available in NSW, it may be something our family would consider useful.

(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,

We initially started homeschooling our eldest son when he was 8 years old, failing in school and developing serious behavioural issues. He was in grade 3, and despite testing at the top of the range on psychometric analysis, he still couldn't read at all and was falling further and further behind. We had tried Christian school, public school and Steiner school. We had seen paediatricians, psychologists, psychiatrists, audiologists, optometrists, kinesiologists...you get the idea. For many

years I considered us refugees from the school system. Almost a decade on, we are now philosophical homeschoolers. It changed our lives.

Now 17 years old, my troubled little boy is doing well. Last year he completed a certificate IV at TAFE, and this year he is studying through Newstep – a university preparation course run by the University of . He is doing well academically and socially. He plays music with the

Conservatorium Youth Orchestra. Next year he plans to study sports science at uni. If he had remained in school I have no doubt that he would be illiterate and possibly in trouble with the law.

Homeschooling was ideal for him: he got the truly individualised attention that was needed. He was able to continue to study age appropriate material without the pressure of having to read at an early age. He was able to excel in his areas of interest, such as gymnastics, in which he competed at national level on the NSW state team. He was able to slowly rebuild the sense of self worth that had been stripped from him at school, and catch up academically. Despite his dyslexia, he was able to learn to read.

The following year, his older sister started homeschooling as well. It would have been her fifth grade year. A bright and capable student, she excelled at home in ways that were neither encouraged nor possible within the institutionalised setting. She participated in competitive Rhythmic Gymnastics for many years to State level, and in her early teen years, she competed at a Rhythmic Gymnastics competition in Los Angeles. She had the time and opportunity to sing with the local children's choir, and later to tutor there. She completed exams in cello (grade 8) and musicianship (grade 7), excelling in both. She also learned jazz piano. By the time her peers were completing year 10, she had studied textiles, computing, French, visual art, photography, drama, music, ancient history, modern history, geography, science, year 12 level biology, maths, English, and food technology. In what would have been her year 11 year, she completed a Cert IV in music performance, and gained entrance to University to study music the following year. 12 months ahead of her peers. Now in her second year at University, she has received a scholarship and is achieving distinctions in all her subjects.

Additionally, she is working at a music school teaching piano, teaching cello at the Conservatorium and plays in many different orchestral groups.

Three years ago we began homeschooling our ward, then 6 years old. This child has multiple diagnoses, and the individualised education is benefiting him already. We are not sure what the future holds for him, but we feel very strongly that homeschooling will give him his best chance. Despite his challenges, he has a love of learning and an enquiring mind. The flexibility and individual tuition of home education is facilitating educational and social development that would not be possible in a traditional school setting, where the emphasis would necessarily be on behaviour management.

(ii) financial costs

While I have never calculated the costs of home educating our children, I believe that they would be substantial. Over the years we have purchased text books, computer programs, computers, musical instruments (cello, flute, drum kit, euphonium), a microscope, a wide variety of books both fiction and non-fiction, teaching materials, art and craft supplies, fabrics and sewing machine for textiles. We have provided, at our own expense, individual tuition for each child in music, as well as access to music groups and ensembles. We have paid for gymnastics lessons and competitions, including interstate and international competitions. We have held museum memberships, purchased theatre tickets and arranged many field trips both locally (Sydney, Central Coast and Newcastle) and further afield (Vic, SA, QLD and ACT).

Our children have not been able to access benefits available to their traditionally schooled peers, including receiving free laptops, school music programs, teen dental vouchers and immunisations such as HPV. These have all been provided by us, at our own expense.

We have two children who would have needed special education intervention, and one who most likely would have been classified as gifted and talented. All of these children have needed extra

resources compared with an average student. All of these costs have been borne entirely by us, saving the government tens of thousands of dollars.

We have funded our home education ourselves. My husband works full time weekdays and I work weekends, three 10 hour night duty shifts. We have never claimed family tax benefit or similar Centrelink benefits.

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

Our professional and educational background

I am a registered nurse and registered midwife. I work primarily as a midwife in the birthing suite of the local public hospital. I hold a Bachelor of Nursing and Postgraduate Diploma of Midwifery. My husband is a Hospital Scientist. He holds a Bachelor of Medical Science (pathology) and is currently working towards a Master of Medical Science.

Educational philosophy and methods

We believe very strongly that education is important. We believe in lifelong learning, and have striven to pass these values to our children through both education and lifestyle.

We have used a wide variety of methods to home educate our children. Much of this has been due to their disparate learning styles. It became obvious to us early on that while our daughter learned easily from reading, text books and more traditional approaches, our son needed more auditory input and opportunity engage physically in his learning. Our youngest requires large amounts of sensory input in order to attend to and retain his education. At various times we have used: living books, unit studies, lapbooking, projects, audio books, individual tuition, group lessons, excursions, text books, computer programs, online learning, multimedia resources and hands-on manipulatives.

v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children

Our family consist of three very different students:

1. 18 year old daughter, who would most likely have been identified as gifted, although we never had her tested. We chose not to follow this route, as I believe that all children have natural gifting. It is the responsibility of the educator to uncover and develop these. Additionally, we chose not to accelerate her learning, although the opportunity to do so presented itself repeatedly. We chose instead to give her a much broader educational experience that is possible for many students, covering more subjects and more topics within each subject. Despite this, she graduated home education and commenced university one year early.
2. 17 year old son, diagnosed with Irlen Syndrome (dyslexia) and anxiety disorder. This child was removed from school in crisis at age 8. It took many months for him to overcome his aversion to books and learning. He never recovered from his aversion to schools, and no amount of resources or funding would have made school acceptable to him. Prior to removing him from school, we had tried public, Christian and Steiner schools. We worked with the schools, often spending large amounts of time at the school, as well as having one day every week at home for almost the first two years of his schooling. We had consulted with medical experts from a range of fields. We even tried medicating him, which caused further deterioration in school behaviour due to excessive sedation.
3. 9 year old ward, diagnosed with ADHD, Autism spectrum disorder, PTSD, RAD, anxiety, learning difficulty, sleep difficulty. This child came into our family at age 6 via a kinship placement. The combination of trauma, ADHD and autism is very complex. This child lacks the capacity to process his life experiences in the same way that a neurotypical child could. While access to resources within the school system, or part-time enrolment may be of

benefit to this child at some time in the future, this is not the case currently. This child has an uneven cognitive profile, and this along with the complex interaction of his diagnoses means that he does not fit well in any part of the current education system. A secure, family based environment with individual attention is the best learning environment for this child for the foreseeable future. According to Downey (2007) "Recovery from trauma will occur best in the context of healing relationships", a perfect description of home education. Duvall, Delquadri and Ward (2004) found that home educated students with ADHD were academically engaged about twice as often as their public school peers, and that the key variable was student to teacher ratios. Our own experience is consistent with this. Furthermore, this child voluntarily removes himself from environments such as playgrounds when there are large groups of children present. It is likely that traditional schooling would be a very stressful experience for him. This was the case in his first year of schooling, during which significant behavioural problems led to punitive measures by the school. Home education provides increased flexibility, access to modified teaching strategies and individualised tuition, alongside reduction in anxiety. Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010) suggest that this allows children on the autism spectrum to make improvements in confidence and social skills, alongside academic progress. Again, our own experience is consistent with this.

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

Over the years, we have had firsthand experience in Christian school, Public school, and Steiner School. We have accessed distance education and been registered home schoolers.

Each of the schools our children attended were staffed with excellent, caring and qualified teachers. I believe that each of them did the very best job that they could do. However, even with the

assistance of a teacher's aide, they were not able to teach my son to read and write. I did that. While my daughter was a good student, she did not excel. Yet at home she did. During his brief time at school, our youngest was forbidden from ever going on excursions due to behavioural problems. Yet we regularly make field trips to museums, theatres, zoos, and historic sites to provide opportunities for learning in context. This is, in fact, how he learns best.

Distance education was an interesting experience for us. We applied for distance education on medical grounds for our son when he was removed from school in May. We did not receive any communication from the distance education school until September of that year. Unfortunately, distance education was no more successful for my son than public school had been – it was in fact just like school at home. And with this approach, the behavioural problems that had occurred at school then began in earnest at home. This was a very stressful time for us all. Despite the fact that no lesson planning or record keeping was required from me, and that we had access to qualified teachers, administering distance education was much more work than home educating my son. Home education gave us the flexibility to tailor his education to his learning style, and to take advantage of his interests. Despite many conversations with the teacher at the distance school, they were unable to modify his program successfully. The result was a student who was unable to learn.

It is my experience that most members of the community have no real concept of what home education actually looks like. I am regularly asked who gives me the material to teach, or if my children are socialised. The answers are a) no one *gives* me the teaching materials – I write them or purchase them and b) of course they are socialised. In fact, I would argue that they have a richer social experience than a school student who is relegated to same age peers within the school system. My children have the opportunity to interact with people of all ages and across many different settings. While there is no average day in our homeschool, I will attempt to describe it as best I can:

Our day begins with breakfast and hygiene, as in all families. There have been periods when this is followed by a waterfront walk or bike ride, alone or with friends. Currently, we begin with *Me Moves*, an anxiety reduction and focus enhancing exercise program.

Lessons begin when we are all ready. In the past, this may have meant one student practising a musical instrument or having a music lesson with their tutor in our home. Another older student would have been completing maths at this time either using the *Thinkwell* program on the computer or using a textbook. I would be working at the table with the youngest, usually on maths, using games, manipulative materials and text books. Currently, we use the Imaths program, which was written for the Australian Curriculum and is an investigations based approach.

Lessons continue in this manner, with the children using various spaces in our home and differing materials for most of the morning. In addition to music and maths, we would complete English and a unit study. A unit study is a cross-curricular unit focusing on a particular topic, and involves learning across many KLA's. We read books, watch documentaries, create projects, do experiments and cook foods from other places and times. Breaks are taken by each student on their own schedule, according to their individual needs. I work with the older students when the youngest is playing or having morning tea. As the children grow older, my role changes from that of tutor to facilitator. Now, the older children have graduated to university, and I have only one student at home.

After lunch, we are often out. At various times, the children have participated in group activities within the homeschool community, such as writing class, drama class, music class, Shakespeare group, choir, sport, ice-skating, surfing, art. These groups have always included children of varying ages, and the opportunity for play as well as learning. They have participated in group lessons that were outsourced, provided by community groups such as the Riding for the Disabled, Regional Youth Support Service, Bell Shakespeare and the NSW Art Gallery. They have had individual tuition for various musical instruments in our home, or provided by the tutor, or at the Conservatorium of Music. This is also the time we devote to therapy for our special needs students.

This has included behavioural optometry, psychology, occupational therapy, and group therapy provided by the local health service. We visit the library regularly, and the special needs toy library. We visit playgrounds and beaches, shops and friends homes.

After school hours, they have participated in extracurricular activities alongside their school attending peers. This has included gymnastics, tennis, swimming, rugby union, ice skating, youth orchestra, big band, chamber orchestra, choir, cricket and little athletics.

In their free time, our older children have performed with the Musical Society alongside their father. They have both volunteered their time in community projects; my daughter in sewing for theatrical productions and my son in assisting in drama groups for students with disabilities.

We regularly take time out from this schedule to make full day field trips to places such as Taronga Zoo, the Hunter Wetlands, the Powerhouse museum, the Reptile Park and the Australian Museum. We continue to learn when on holidays, visiting national parks, museums, Parliament house and the like. We find that learning has become our lifestyle, and even in the car the children read, sing, knit or listen to audio books or history lectures. We discuss all manner of things as we travel or at our dinner table. We read maps together and write travel journals. Our children have interacted with people of all ages and a wide variety of abilities.

It has been our experience that our children have been more socially accepted in home education than in mainstream education. I believe this is due to the higher adult to child ratios within the home education community, as well as the lack of emphasis on uniformity. Each person is accepted as an individual, without comparison to a predetermined group standard.

When we renewed our home education registration in 2012, I discovered that the goal posts had been shifted with no notice or consultation. I was informed by the Authorised Person (AP) that activities that took place outside the home “did not count” towards our home education program. This was in direct disagreement with the previous AP’s who had encouraged the use of community

resources, group learning and social opportunities. Furthermore, this AP expressed displeasure that none of my children were working at one particular year level across all their subjects. I was shocked by this; my gifted student was ahead in most areas, my older son – very bright but with dyslexia and anxiety - was ahead of his age peers in some areas and behind in some areas and on par in others, and my youngest had only been with our family for one year, and as previously identified has many diagnosed special needs and previous social and educational deprivation. All of these attitudes were formalised in the 2013 Handbook for AP's. This kind of change with no consultation with key stakeholders demonstrates the BoSTES fundamental lack of respect for and understanding of the nature of home education.

I believe that a range of educational options is essential. All families, all children, are different, with unique needs and abilities. When we reduce the options available, our community loses. No single system, no matter how excellent it may be, can possibly meet all the needs of every child and family.

We need more options, not less. Homeschool students should be able to access TVET courses alongside their mainstream peers. Families who are travelling should be able to register for home education rather than being given the single option of distance education. If part time school enrolment were an option, as in some other Australian states, it is possible that many more homeschoolers would willingly engage with 'the system'. And registration requirements should not be unnecessarily onerous. Choice and flexibility will benefit our students – all our students. And ultimately, all Australians.

For our family, home education has been, by far, the most positive and productive educational experience. This is despite the very different needs and abilities of each of our children.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

(ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons

I have been continuously registered for home education since 2005. In that time, I have experienced a gradual shifting in the attitudes of the AP's. Prior to 2012, I had always found the registration visit to be affirming. It was a positive experience that I prepared for with confidence. The AP's were knowledgeable on a variety of subject areas, and my children and I were happy to show and discuss our learning experiences. In particular, the early registration visits were helpful as I was able to discuss openly areas which I was unsure of how to approach, and the AP and I collaboratively found solutions. For example, I was initially unsure how to keep records of evidence of learning, and had very little to show in this area. The AP suggested a particular format, which I then used. I believe that if this conversation were to occur in today's regulatory environment, I would simply be advised to withdraw my application.

Recently, I have had registration visits in 2011, 2012 and 2014. The visit in 2011 occurred soon after our youngest child was added to our family. There were many unknown factors at that time. The AP recognised this, along with this child's special needs. The AP also acknowledged that as a long term home educator, I had many skills and a history of providing a quality educational program. Together, we agreed on an initial 12 month registration period, to allow time to adjust and to bring his registration in line with that of the older children. As in previous years, this was a positive and affirming registration visit.

Just 12 months later, we experienced our most unpleasant registration. This was an AP previously unknown to me. I had expected follow up regarding our youngest child, especially given the conversations I had with the AP in 2011. This did not occur, with the AP focusing heavily on my eldest child. This was to be the last registration for both of my older children.

The AP who visited us in 2012 was officious and inflexible. She was focused on comparing my students to age peers at school, rather than assessing the quality of the educational program I was providing. She told me that learning which occurred out of our home, or was not taught by me, “did not count towards our program”. The AP took issue with the fact that my children were not working at a single year level each. She did not take into consideration special needs. She told me that learning could not occur simultaneously in more than one KLA, even if the learning activity was clearly covering both. In particular, she disapproved of our approach to History and English, which was combined. She disapproved of the fact that my eldest daughter had not studied science for almost 12 months at that point, regardless of the fact that she had already completed a biology course which was equivalent to year 12 standard. She completely dismissed the cert IV in music performance that my eldest child was completing that year. As it occurred outside the home, it did not count! The AP was very focused on my eldest child, then aged 16 years. She claimed that this was in preparation for requesting the year 10 completion certificate; however I had not applied for that, I had applied to renew registration for my three children. In fact it had been my intention to later apply for that certificate; however as a direct result of this interaction I did not apply.

The 2012 registration was thoroughly unpleasant. Rather than affirming and helpful, it was an adversarial process. For the first time ever, I found myself arguing with the AP. The end result, 2 years registration, was satisfactory. However, I believe that had this type of registration process occurred earlier in my homeschooling journey, I would not have been able to achieve that outcome. Furthermore, it is most likely that I would have simply chosen not to participate in future registrations.

Our most recent registration was satisfactory. It occurred earlier this year, in the midst of lobbying against the changes to the regulations that I had experienced before they were even formalised. It was clear to me that our 2014 AP was new. It was clear to the AP that I had prepared extensively, and was ready for an adversarial encounter.

I believe that the whole system of AP's needs to be re-evaluated. If we are to persist with this model of registration, then AP's need to be suitably trained. They need to be familiar with many different models of home education, and with special needs and gifted students. Ideally, the AP's are able to act as resource people, able to support home educators and interact with the home education community in a respectful and supportive way.

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

It is my opinion that requiring rigid adherence to the delivery of NSW Syllabuses is unnecessarily restrictive, and does not necessarily guarantee a quality education. Parents should be free to choose the content of teaching material, in the context of a high quality broad educational experience. For example, I often find that the National Curriculum is more useful. It has less jargon, is less proscriptive, more concise and is a more meaningful document. Furthermore, requiring home educators to comply with predetermined arbitrary scope and sequences undermines the individuality and flexibility which is often why home education is so successful. It is also counterproductive to restrict students to a particular level – attempting to enforce regulations that seek to prevent children from moving ahead in some areas or to spend more time on other areas, as required by their abilities. This emphasis on uniformity is often necessary in a school setting; the freedom to meet the child's individual learning needs is one of the most valuable aspects of home education. The use of indicative teaching hours to assess an education program is also inappropriate in the home education context. This is a strategy that has been developed for use in institutional settings. It is nonsense to apply the same timeframes to home education, where the adult to child ratios are very different. It is also necessary to recognise that time devoted to behaviour management, lining up, assembly's, roll-call and other administrative tasks and the like in schools, is learning time in home schools.

In our home school, I have often found that the most meaningful learning occurs in context. I will provide some examples of this:

- Learning about the Eureka stockade and 1850's gold rushes whilst recently travelling in Victoria has been very beneficial for our 9 year old. According to the National Curriculum, this should be taught in year 5. He is currently in year 3.
- We visited the Australian War Memorial with all three students in 2012, as part of history studies for my senior students. However the youngest, then 7 years old, learned much more than anticipated from this visit and we have since provided more education around this. Although his retention is often patchy due to his special needs, he has retained almost all of this due to a high interest level. This far exceeds history for grade 1 in any syllabus document.
- When he was younger, my older son was fascinated by medieval history. We therefore spent an extended amount of time exploring this. There is no room in the primary school syllabus for history such as this. Additionally, this unit of study also facilitated learning in other areas, such as European geography, visual arts, music, culture, English, food technology. When children are engaged, they learn more.

The regulations around senior students have also proved problematic. It seems that AP's have interpreted the regulations to mean that a student cannot be registered for senior secondary schooling unless the subjects being taught are in accordance with HSC syllabus. It has been my experience that the result of this is that students are unable to be registered for years 11 and 12. This is a ridiculous situation. It is unacceptable to require home educated students to study the exact same material and then deny them access to the examinations. Either the requirement needs to be altered so that the educational program is assessed for quality with no need for strict adherence to HSC syllabuses, or home educated students should be allowed to book in to take the HSC exams alongside their mainstream peers, and receive the same certification. The way senior students are registered for home education needs to be re-evaluated.

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

As described above, we first began home schooling due to the difficulties which our son was experiencing at school. The schools were unable to meet his educational needs due to dyslexia. He developed anxiety secondary to this. As his behaviour then escalated out of control, the only strategy of the schools was to send him home. At the age of 6 in public school, he had repeated and lengthy periods of suspension. No educational material was provided. Basically, school was unable to meet his needs, which then impacted on his mental health, resulting in deteriorating behaviour. He was therefore punished. And the punishment was withholding education!

In the homeschool environment, our son was able to heal. He was able to receive the help he needed, both educationally and psychologically. As his level of safety increased, his levels of anxiety began to decrease. He was then able to start learning again. I believe that if he had been forced to remain in school, the result would have been dire; at best illiteracy, and at worst delinquency or suicide. I will always be grateful that we had the option of legally home educating him. It has given him a chance at life.

Our youngest child came to us after being severely neglected and abused. He had attended childcare and public school. Yet the system failed him; it did not protect him from significant trauma. He is now home educated. He also is much happier in this environment. The provision of a stable carer and environment helps to address his attachment disorder and anxiety. One to one tuition helps improve his attention span, which is extremely short. He interacts with many different people every week, many of whom are mandatory reporters.

I was shocked when I was told that education outside the home was being discouraged, both in my 2012 registration visit, and subsequently in the 2013 information pack. This would seem to be in

direct contradiction of the usual concerns that homeschooled children are cloistered away and therefore at risk of being abused.

My children are not cloistered away. They are in the community. We interact with doctors, psychologists, occupational therapists, social workers, tennis coaches, swimming instructors, music teachers, shop attendants, sporting clubs, church groups, librarians, theatre staff, extended family, and the home education community.

It has been my observation that home schooled children are more accepting of difference. This is due to the presence of many more adults than is possible in a school setting, and due to the lack of emphasis on uniformity. This acceptance, has meant that my special needs students have been able to experience success socially in ways which were simply not possible in the school setting.

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

improved

I am supportive of appropriate regulation. I have always been glad to be a registered home educator. I have utilised our registration to access community resources and concessions. I believe that registration serves to validate this choice to home school, and to protect my children from accusations of truancy. We have moved freely and confidently within our community, and this has promoted learning.

I would like to see a system of registration in NSW which:

- Is supportive rather than critical
- Is collaborative rather than adversarial
- Provides information and resources to home educators
- Is overseen by a body in which home educators are appropriately represented

- Is conducted by people with an intimate knowledge and understanding of what home education is, in its many forms, and what it is not.
- Is inclusive of special needs and gifted/accelerated students
- Is not restricted to a particular syllabus or curriculum, but is assessed for quality and appropriateness across the KLA's
- Is based on student needs, not indicative hours
- Is flexible in delivery, providing choice to families as to mode of registration such as documentation or visit
- Is inclusive of families who are travelling for prolonged periods of time
- Is flexible and inclusive of home educated students in programs to which mainstream students have access, such as TVET courses, immunisations, technology such as the free laptop program, HSC exams, regional sports and swimming carnivals and so on.
- Makes part-time enrolment in school or TAFE alongside home education registration possible
- Is available to students from the beginning of their education up until completion of year 12 or equivalent, regardless of age.

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

The regulatory system in NSW currently offers no support and little information to new homeschoolers. Other states in Australia, such as Tasmania, have support integrated into the process of registration. I believe it would benefit our students to have a system such as this, which eases the transition from school to home school. This is particularly important as children who are withdrawn from school are often in crisis.

I have some personal experience with this. Early on in his Kindergarten year, my elder son was clearly struggling. Although we persisted in working with the school, with medical staff and support measures at home, the situation was deteriorating. I phoned the Department of Education at that

time, and asked about home schooling. As a member of the public, this seemed to be the place to call. The person there told me that “Home schooling is very difficult. Hardly anyone can be registered”. The result of this erroneous information was that we persisted within the system with a child who was clearly not coping, and certainly not learning, for 2 ½ more years. But the time he was eventually withdrawn, his psychological scars were deep. He was convinced he was stupid, that he would never be able to learn, he had severe behavioural problems and he was still at Kindergarten level in most areas, despite having progressed to year 3. Recovery from this took years. This was pain and suffering for our child, and our whole family, which could at least have been minimised with accurate information and a supportive approach.

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

Currently, the situation exists that there are no representatives of home education within the Board of Studies, who are responsible for the regulation of home education in NSW. This situation has facilitated the current regulatory crises. It has caused many home educators, including myself, to lose confidence in the BoSTES. It permits regulatory change with no consultation with major stakeholders. This situation is completely unacceptable. It is discriminatory. In what other area would such a practice be acceptable?

Home educators need to be able to participate in the regulatory process. They need to be appropriately represented. This needs to be a considerable investment and collaboration between home education groups and the BoSTES, not simply a single token representative. Furthermore, all staff whose primary responsibility is in managing regulation of home education should be required to have a demonstrated understanding of, and support for, home education. This is an outcome which could be achieved in collaboration with the home education community.

(f) any other related matter.

Although I have three very different students, I have only one regret regarding homeschooling: that we didn't start it sooner. Homeschooling changed our lives.

It is my hope that we can work together to create more options for our children, rather than restricting their choice. Together, we can equip our children with skills for their futures.

References

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