

**Submission  
No 122**

## **INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING**

**Name:** Ms Laura Chegwidden

**Date received:** 11/08/2014

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To the Home Education Inquiry:

My name is Laura. I'm an 18-year old university student who was previously homeschooled, from year 5 through to beginning my tertiary studies. I'm currently studying a Bachelor of Music (performance and composition), just beginning my second year of studies this semester. I wouldn't be studying this bachelor if I hadn't been homeschooled.

My mother made the decision to homeschool me after all other school formats (public, private and alternative) had failed to nurture my interest and passion for learning. I started in a private school, Wagga Wagga Christian College, where I learned to read all the school level readers from kindergarten to year 2 in the first half of my kindergarten year. The school Couldn't keep up and as a result my mother started bringing me books home from the library and nurturing my passion for reading from a young age, something the school had not managed to achieve. I was also bullied at the school, incidents where I was spat on and called names by the other children were not uncommon for me to report to my mother, who would report it to the teachers, who claimed that 'such a thing doesn't happen at this school'. Bullying and a lack of educational support were two of the main reasons this school did not work.

In year 3, we moved to the Central Coast, and I began school at East Gosford Public School. The bullying there was horrendous, and again teachers denied the possibility of such harassment. I lasted half a year before I transferred to the Central Coast Rudolph Steiner School. This was my last school, I was there until the first week of Year 5, in which My mother pulled me out of school for my own benefit. The Central Coast Rudolph steiner was by far the best school we had tried, but still failed to challenge me academically in any way and while bullying was less frequent, my brother and I were both targets for being different and smart, and also having strong beliefs and values that we held through thick and thin. Needless to say, the school didn't work out, and my mother made the decision to homeschool us, something that she had quietly considered for years but didn't know where to begin.

We begun by meeting other homeschoolers on the central coast. The community there is wonderful and accepting of everyone, no matter age, race, religion or capacity to learn. My mother taught me all the basics of school, following the curriculum we learnt maths, English, history, geography, and science, along with many other interesting subjects such as sewing, computer skills, and the subject that has since become my main passion, music. Without the restrictions of school hours, I was able to fit in lessons and practice, along with theory skills without sacrificing things such as socializing and schoolwork, as many children who attempt to do music often do. If I was at highschool and had attempted to study and play as much as I was, I would have been up until 11pm every night. Many of my musical friends were put in this situation of school all day, 2 hours homework, 3 hours practice, lessons, orchestras, and then attempting to find time to fit in their childhood, relaxing with friends and having fun. I was fortunate that my mother's wisdom in homeschooling me allowed me to fit in all the things my friends struggled to complete outside of school and yet

still have hours in a day left to create clothes, ride bikes with my friends and generally enjoy my life.

When I was 16 I started and completed a Certificate IV in Music Performance through our local conservatorium, the Central Coast Conservatorium. This qualification was my basis of application to my current studies, the Bachelor of Music at Newcastle University. I began these studies in the second half of 2013, at the age of 17. It is safe to say that had I remained at school, I would not have begun my university studies so soon, and I would not have a Certificate IV in Music Performance, which, unlike the HSC, stands alone as a qualification and has helped me to successfully apply for several teaching jobs, which I now work in alongside my university studies. I have been teaching piano at Anna's School of Music, in Redhead NSW since August last year, alongside my university studies, and I recently became a cello teacher at the Central Coast Conservatorium, exactly a year after I completed my studies as a student there.

Homeschooling may not be for everyone, but it needs to be an available option for those school doesn't work for. Restricting the teaching methods of homeschoolers and requiring onerous registration paperwork and documentation does not allow for the multiple teaching and learning styles of homeschoolers, and often detracts from quality of education if the educating parent is spending all their time filling out paperwork instead of working with their child/ren and can also cause stress that makes the home situation worse instead of better. Stress caused by bullying can be replaced by the stress of extensively documenting every activity the child does, and lack of parental attention due to this paperwork is also a problem.

I sincerely hope the NSW parliament reconsiders the recent changes to the way home educators are registered so that children like me do not continue to suffer in the school system.

Thank you, Laura Chegwidden.

Homeschool Graduate 2013, Chegwidden Family Homeschool.

Certificate IV in Music Performance 2012, Central Coast Conservatorium.

Bachelor of Music (Cello Performance and Composition), Newcastle Conservatorium,  
Second year of study.