

## INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

I have been home schooling for two and a half years and I use a predominantly eclectic approach to educate my son. I home school one child.

My son had never been able to function well in the school environment. I finally took him out of school in year 6 because, despite the support our family received from his school's Deputy Principal, the school Counselor and my son's class teacher, my son was not learning and his health was deteriorating because of the social exclusion and teasing he experienced at school. He was sleeping and eating poorly, his weight had dropped to 32 kilos (his height was 1.5m), and he admitted to suicidal thoughts. He was 11 years old.

In the months before we began to home school, our GP had referred my son to a pediatric Psychologist and a pediatric Neuropsychologist for assessment. These specialists recommended that my son begin a course of antidepressant medication, and undertake long term psychotherapy. These interventions became unnecessary when we began to home school.

Home school was been wonderful for our family. My son's psychological health improved from the first day, his depression gradually lifted, and he engaged with the local home school group. We worked to discover the styles of education that complemented my son's learning style, and I consider that we have been very successful. My son is working above his age cohort in every subject, and in Maths, in which he was badly behind, he revised the previous years' work and caught up, with a perfect score in every area. We have also been able to move ahead in English to meet my son's capacity for this challenge.

My son is now able to make decisions rather than merely follow directions. He has increased in confidence, independence and responsibility and learnt to think well of himself. He accepts academic challenges confidently and makes friends easily. Our friends, family and neighbours, who at first questioned our choice to home school, unanimously and wholeheartedly support us now as they see the changes in our son. I had planned to return my son to school for High School, but we have been so successful that we plan to continue to home school.

We recently applied for re-registration and were granted registration for two more years.

Because I home school I am unable to work, but our family have made the decision to accept our reduced financial circumstances as a very reasonable price to pay for the education our son is receiving at home. We also pay for Music lessons, Philosophy classes, and Drama and Science workshops, and attend events organised by the Sydney Home Education Network and by other home educating families.

I was unhappy with the changes to the Guidelines for Registration for Home Schooling that were introduced last August, and very unhappy with the adversarial attitude of the BoSTES staff with whom I spoke when I called for more information. Although the changes are clearly evident, BoSTES has insisted that no changes were made, therefore they didn't have to consult with the home schooling community. Although home schooling families are administered by BoSTES, we are not supported by BoSTES, and do not have a representative on the Board.

I find the current registration process is time consuming and focused on the minutiae of the curriculum contents and outcomes rather than the child's learning. Since a lot of home schooling activities and learning don't leave hard copy, extensive records must be kept – far beyond the requirements for record keeping that a school teacher must meet. This requirement for extensive record keeping is arduous and unreasonable.

I believe the Tasmanian and Victorian models are more supportive of home schooling families and therefore of the education of home schooled children. I am aware that by educating my son at home my family saves the Government thousands of dollars each year, and I am aware that I am doing a much better job of educating my son than the local Government school did. I would still appreciate some support, but no support is available.

Home schoolers need their own independent Board which reports directly to the Minister. This Board should have a support role. Home schoolers need to be on this Board.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to relate my experience and state my views as a home schooler.