

**Submission  
No 197**

## **INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING**

**Name:** Ms Catherine Little

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8<sup>th</sup> August, 2014

Catherine Little

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HOME SCHOOLING INQUIRY**

My name is Catherine Little. I am currently homeschooling five children between the ages of 6 and 16. This is my eleventh year of homeschooling. I live in Albury on the border of NSW and Victoria and am a contact person for our local cross-border homeschooling group. I have been assisting new homeschoolers for a number of years and would like to offer my observations for this inquiry.

I would like to comment on the following terms of reference:

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

As someone who lives on the border between NSW and Victoria I am in regular contact with homeschoolers on both sides of the border. I have also assisted new homeschoolers living in NSW and Victoria. Since the new Home Education Package was introduced, registration for NSW homeschoolers has become increasingly difficult and time consuming. When counselling new or potential homeschoolers an increasing amount of my time is spent with NSW families completing plans, navigating the Office of the Board of Studies (oBoS) website and preparing for the AP visit. In contrast, my time spent with Victorian families is able to focus on the child/ren and finding resources and homeschooling approaches that will be a good fit for the individual family situation. Victorian families also have the option of part-time homeschooling and part-time enrolment at school which has been a helpful option for some families (and also for some small schools in our region). This option is not available in NSW.

I do not believe that the increasing amount of time homeschoolers in NSW are spending on complying with the registration process improves the quality of homeschooling in NSW over Victoria. Rather, Victorian homeschoolers have more time to spend on teaching their children. New homeschoolers in our homeschool group have found the NSW process intimidating. In our area we have had new homeschoolers given 3 month registrations which we have not seen before. Even 6 month registrations for new homeschoolers have been unusual in the past, yet I do not believe that the quality or commitment of homeschooling in those families was any less.

I have recently been advising new homeschoolers to consider the possibility of moving to Victoria for the purposes of registering for homeschooling. A number of families in rental accommodation or considering which side of the border to purchase a home have been able to make this change.

It is not only new homeschoolers who have found the recent changes difficult. Experienced homeschoolers in our group (including those with teaching qualifications) have found the guidelines very time consuming and difficult. I have found the oBoS website particularly difficult to navigate and feel this is a real barrier to being able to find all the relevant information regarding syllabus statements and outcomes in order to comply with the registration process.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

I do not believe that the current registration process will reduce the number of unregistered homeschoolers. The process is intimidating and carries the real risk now of refusal or very short registration periods. It takes away from time teaching your own children and seems to be incompatible with a number of homeschooling approaches. A registration process that is supportive of homeschooling rather than regulatory only would encourage homeschoolers to register.

(ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons,

I would like to see training of Authorised Persons that includes input from homeschoolers. A Ps come out of the school system and have had little or no experience with homeschoolers. It takes contact with a number of families in their region before they are “educated” about the different approaches to homeschooling and the types of resources used.

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

I was surprised to learn that there was such a broad range of representation on the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards, but that there was no representation for homeschoolers. Representation on the board may have negated the need for a petition in order for homeschoolers to have input into the regulatory process.

Thankyou for the opportunity to contribute my thoughts to this inquiry. I have found homeschooling a wonderful approach for my family over the past 11 years and would like to see registered homeschooling in NSW remain a viable option for other families.

Catherine Little