

**Submission  
No 25**

## **INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING**

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Yeshe Thubten

*It is my aim through this submission to outline the incongruences in the process of home school registration through The Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES).*

*I will use personal anecdotes and experiences to show that the registration process is unfair due to approval being dependant on the personal preferences of the Approved Person employed by BOSTES to assess families.*

*Additionally I will list my own preferences for how the registration process should be undertaken in order for the committee to understand the impact of the process on home educators.*

It was distance that prompted me to investigate homeschooling as an education option for my daughter. We lived in a remote area, and sending my daughter to school would necessitate three hours a day on a bus. As I saw it, for a just turned 5 year old, who still seemed like a baby to me, this was unacceptable.

At the time (2007) it was difficult to find information about homeschooling options online. It was through an informational website created by another long time homeschooler that I found out the requirements to homeschool in NSW. To this day I don't understand why it is so difficult to find information about homeschooling. As it is a legal right to home school, information should be up front and easily obtainable.

I then began the process of registration. The first time I met with our Approved Person (AP) she made it clear that it was not her job to give advice, or even to provide information. I was to source that myself. It was made clear to me that we are on our own to navigate the often very confusing world of home based learning. This is appalling. That the BoS as it was at that time could not even give me a list of websites to look at or books to read on homeschooling shows laziness at best, and the subversion of home schooling at worst.

My very simple plan was approved and I was to see the AP a year later.

In that year I had had time to research the many different wonderful approaches to education in most part through the internet. I saw over that time that my daughter was averse to sitting for long periods of time engaging in 'book work', so we returned to the more natural style of learning that we were already enjoying before registration. I also found that many learned people had researched and talked and taught and published many articles and books that suggested that young children can learn well, happily and effectively this way.

Then it came time to register again. It took almost two months from the time I received my letter to the time of the actual appointment. In that time I madly scrambled – and I am being honest here – to produce the required "documentation" to prove that my daughter was learning. Because although I can see my daughter is learning, and any decent interviewer could see she is an articulate and well-rounded child, we have to spend many hours writing out every activity every day to show something that is apparent through simple observation.

I also scrambled to write our "plan" for the next year, which was based on the foundation statements provided on the then Board of Studies website. I did this on the advice of another homeschooler. The plan was very much centred on my daughters' love of hands on learning and the many people around her at that time who had their own skills and knowledge to impart.

The registration interview was disheartening and demoralising. The AP automatically dismissed my plan, stating that it was not enough to use the Foundation Statements, although, I know at that time the Information Package said it was an option. She advised me to read all the syllabuses and tailor a comprehensive plan for the next two years. She gave me a six month registration.

It wasn't that the AP was unkind, or even unhelpful. But she was telling me to do what she, as an ex-teacher believed was important to HER. Instead of helping me to encourage the love of learning my child was obviously displaying, she was making me complicate our situation unnecessarily because of her own understandings of how education should be delivered.

It wasn't that the syllabuses were hard to understand, or even irrelevant, or that I couldn't really find the estimated 15 - 20 hours I poured into researching and writing the plan the AP wanted. It was, at the most fundamental level, that what I was required to do was taking away our autonomy to control our own educational experience. Because once a plan is written, it is expected that we should follow it.

But the thing is, home schooling or as I prefer to call it, home-based learning is not a rigid, regimented experience. I didn't have twenty, thirty or even forty children to keep track of. I didn't have to fear that my daughter would miss out, or be left behind. What the AP did, in following her idea of how education should look, was undermine my own understandings of my child and her abilities, psychology, learning styles, interests and limits.

I wrote the plan, as directed by the AP and submitted to her what I thought was better suited to a child in school, in stage two. And it looked very good on paper, ticked all the boxes. She gave us two years and we were all very happy.

And I did not follow that plan once. In the following two years we would have covered absolutely all of the outcomes the plan covered, without the plan. We had spur of the moment opportunities to learn from masters in their field, we had a great big excursion that was planned and executed in two weeks. None of these things were in our "plan".

The following two registrations, I used the same plan. Yes I have altered it to fit the syllabuses, reading them over, spending hours producing a document that is in essence completely meaningless.

BOSTES will not take me at my word that I can provide a decent education for my child. BOSTES cannot train their AP's to be able to assess a family, talk with children, and see that they are thriving educationally or not. And both BOSTES and the Approved Persons are not willing to accept that education at home is FUNDAMENTALLY different to education in schools.

When we are treated as a kind of analogous blob, the AP's and BOSTES are subverting the confidence of parents and guardians, and disregarding the immense effort that the majority of homeschooling parents put in to home educating their children.

By not acknowledging that education can be delivered in many ways and through many methods, BOSTES are restricting and dissuading competent parents from giving their children effective and enjoyable learning experiences, as is their right, not just at home, but in galleries, at concerts, in after school classes, through museums, in temples and churches or at a protest or lectures, and at their grandparents nursing home or a carpenters workshop or a university program about science, or absolutely anywhere and about absolutely everything!

If face to face interviews are necessary – and personally, after the initial interview I don't believe they are necessary – BOSTES must accept any form of documentation regarding work completed and any ideas or plans for the future. The 'five hours of work a day' must be thrown out. The fact that this is even a requirement shows that policy makers at BOSTES have no idea how home schooling works.

Approved Person's must undergo training in the many styles and methods home educators use. They should be educated on how to assess home educators dependant on requirements created **in consultation with home educators**. It should made clear to AP's that their own personal preferences should not influence their decisions regarding approval for home school registration. Or better yet, hire ex-homeschoolers, or people who have had direct contact with homeschooling as our AP's

I think registration through documentation should be reinstated and encouraged for long term home schoolers. However I believe that the simple form as used in Victoria by the VRQA is sufficient enough. If I can bind myself to a legal document that states that I will provide the best education for my child then I will wholeheartedly and most willingly. I would rather spend all my time encouraging and facilitating my daughters educational experience than spend hours on documents that will just end up in the rubbish bin.

Thank you for your time in reading this submission. I am very grateful to all who made this possible, and for advocating for the large number of people who see the value every day that home education has to individuals and the community.