

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Organisation: Hear Our Voices Australia (HOVA)

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Partially Confidential

HEAR OUR VOICES, AUSTRALIA (HOVA)

SUBMISSION TO

**THE NSW PARLIAMENT INQUIRY INTO
HOMESCHOOLING**

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INTRODUCTION

“Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) Article 26 (3)

HOVA

Hear Our Voices, Australia (HOVA) are a team of Australian homeschooling parents supporting homeschoolers to make anonymous submissions to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into homeschooling. Confidentiality is a significant issue for many homeschoolers in NSW (and other states in Australia) wishing to submit information to the Inquiry - particularly for unregistered homeschoolers - and HOVA was formed to create a channel for these submissions to be presented in a way that offered the level of anonymity required.

HOVA advocates the freeing up of the current oppressive registration requirements for homeschoolers in NSW.

HOVA accepted submissions from people who were in support of less onerous regulation of homeschooling in NSW who required anonymity. We undertook to forward their submissions anonymously to the Inquiry and were guided in this protocol by staff from the Inquiry secretariat. We also received named submissions from individuals and organisations who wished to support HOVA by presenting their views as part of our submission. Additionally, HOVA conducted a survey of homeschoolers' attitudes to registration and homeschooling regulation more generally. Information from the HOVA 2014 survey is presented in this submission.

The wellbeing and success of home schooled children

A common objection to homeschooling is that that it can interfere with the wellbeing and future of children in a variety of ways – from restrictions on education and learning potential, to the possibility for child abuse, and a worry home schooled children will find it hard to find a place in the work force, or in higher education, as adolescents and adults.

Merry & Karstan (2010), in a paper investigating home education, define 'wellbeing' as '[wellbeing will] minimally entail basic protections, nourishment, and education. But wellbeing will equally entail the capacity to take up pursuits (e.g. vocations and relationships) that will contribute to a flourishing life.'

However, there is absolutely no published evidence that any of these common objections to home education stand up to scrutiny in the published and peer-reviewed literature.

Addressing the potential for a relationship between homeschooling and child abuse

There is no persuasive evidence that home schooled children are more at risk than schooled children in terms of safety or risk of abuse. A recent study in the USA, Webster (2013) investigated the potential link between home schooling and abuse by interviewing social workers, and states 'Despite the risk factors, the interviews imply that child abuse and homeschooling are not similar enough to suggest a pattern..... it is not clear that abuse is more prevalent than what occurs to children who attend public schools.' The study concludes, 'I examined the relationship between homeschooling and child abuse and found no evidence of their relationship.'

Similarly Kunzman (2005) states 'We do not have data revealing whether the frequency [of child abuse] is greater [for home educated children] than in families whose children are educated in institutional settings.', while Ray (2013), who reviewed a number of studies, states 'There is no research offered that hints that homeschool children are more susceptible to abuse and neglect than others.'

Issues regarding socialisation, academic success, and success as adolescents and adults in the work force or in higher education.

Similarly oft-presented oppositions against home education include a potential for lack of socialisation and a supposed worry about the future of home educated children as adolescents and adults – in terms of how they may adapt to the work force and/or higher education.

However, the majority of published studies demonstrate a positive outcome of home education in terms of all of these factors.

For example, Medlin (2013 – Peabody journal of ed.) reviewed a number of studies on socialisation and home education and states ‘Compared to children attending conventional schools, research suggests that [home schooled children] have higher quality friendships and better relationships with their parents and other adults. They are happy, optimistic, and satisfied with their lives. Their moral reasoning is at least as advanced as that of other children, and they may be more likely to act unselfishly.’ He also found home educated children tended to be advantaged as adolescents and adults, rather than disadvantaged, finding ‘As adolescents, [home schooled children] have a strong sense of social responsibility and exhibit less emotional turmoil and problem behaviors than their peers. Those who go on to college are socially involved and open to new experiences. Adults who were homeschooled as children are civically engaged and functioning competently in every way measured so far.’ Medlin (a professor of psychology at Stetson University) concludes ‘An alarmist view of homeschooling, therefore, is not supported by empirical research.’

In examining the academic performance of homeschooled children, Ray (2004) finds, ‘In study after study, the homeschooled scored, on average, at the 65th to 80th percentile on standardized academic achievement tests in the United States and Canada, compared to the public school average of the 50th percentile.’

Gloeckner & Jones (2013) find, in a review of success of grown home schoolers in higher education, along with attitudes of college admissions officers to homeschooled students, that , ‘[our study] provides evidence that homeschooling is an effective alternative path to college for the children of many families.

Their study also found that of the 55 admissions officers interviewed, approximately 56 percent expected homeschool graduates to be as successful as traditional high school graduates, while nearly a quarter expected them to be more successful.

Dumas, Gates & Schwarzer (2010) reviewed a vast body of research on the success of homeschooled children and conclude that ‘studies demonstrate that, by any measure, homeschooling excels in preparing students to become productive citizens.’ Backed up by peer-reviewed research, they find:

- Homeschooled students perform better than conventionally educated students on standardized academic achievement tests
- Homeschooled students perform well regardless of race or socio-economic status
- Colleges and Universities have recognized the efficacy of homeschooling and recruit homeschooled student
- Homeschooled students perform well in college
- Homeschooling offers effective educational opportunities for students with learning differences
- Studies demonstrate that homeschooled students are well socialized
- Homeschooled students are active leaders and community participants, as well as desirable employees

Perhaps critically, they surmise that **‘research demonstrates that homeschooling serves the states’ interest in education’**.

Similarly, Ray (2013) states ‘The evaluation reveals that proactive opposition to homeschooling and calls for significant state control over homeschooling do not offer any empirical research evidence that homeschooling is bad for individual children, families, neighbourhoods, or the collective good.’ This statement also holds true for those who oppose home education in Australia.

Homeschooling regulations in NSW and Australia

The home education regulations of most states in Australia, and especially New South Wales, require applicants to adhere to state curriculum guidelines. Firstly, state curriculums currently differ considerably – which could cause consternation and difficulties for the many people moving between states. For example South Australia has eight key learning areas home schoolers must cover; Tasmania has four, while New South Wales has seven. In addition, some states are attempting to incorporate aspects/subjects of the proposed national curriculum, despite it not being finished. Subjects and learning areas often have different names between states, and curriculum covers different things; for example, NSW has ‘Science and Technology’ together, while South Australia has ‘Science’ and ‘Technologies’ as separate KLA’s.

These inconsistencies between states, the constant flux of state curriculums and the uncertainty surrounding the unfinished national curriculum all demonstrate the unworkability of requiring homeschoolers to adhere to state curriculum.

Instead, parents should be encouraged to seek out learning resources which can be individualised and tailored to their own childrens learning needs and styles.

The focus on state curriculum, particularly in the more regulated states such as NSW and QLD, also ignores other successful educational styles – these include, but are not limited to, Steiner-Waldorf and Montessori methods, and approaches such as Reggio Emilia, the Sudbury Model and Unschooling.

In particular, an unschooling approach is not recognised as a legitimate approach for home educators in most states. Unschooling is a successful form of home schooling where parents act as learning facilitators, encouraging their child's natural interests and suggesting and providing resources and experiences that will help the child learn through their interests. Curriculum is generally not used, and learning areas are naturally intertwined with each other providing a comprehensive and deep knowledge.

Unschooling is not a new concept, and was introduced by teacher and educational reformer, John Holt, in the 1970's. Holt's ideas led to the Sudbury Model of education. Holt stated,

'... the human animal is a learning animal; we like to learn; we are good at it; we don't need to be shown how or made to do it. What kills the processes are the people interfering with it or trying to regulate it or control it.'

The success of the unschooling approach is borne out through studies of grown unschoolers, who have taken a diversity of jobs and career paths. In a recent study of 75 grown unschooled children, Psychologist Peter Gray found 83% had gone on to some form of higher education, and 44 percent had completed a bachelor's degree or higher or were currently full-time students in a bachelor's program. He also states 'The great majority of respondents who went on to college reported no difficulty doing the academic work. Indeed, most said they were at an academic advantage, primarily because of their high motivation and their high capacity for self-initiative, self-direction, and self-control.'

A summary of his findings can be seen in the table below:

DATA SUMMARY (Based on preliminary analysis)	I. No Schooling. N = 24	II. No Schooling past 6th grade. N = 27	III. Some schooling past 6th grade. N = 24
1. Age: Mdn (range)	24 (18-35)	25 (19-37)	24.5 (18-49)
2. Yrs of schooling+hmschng: Mdn (range)	0 (0-0)	5 (1-7)	8 (1-11)
3. Gender: % Female	19/24 = 79%	20/27 = 74%	19/24 = 79%
4. Some formal higher education	18/24 = 75%	23/27 = 85%	21/24 = 88%
5. Has or working on BA or higher	14/24 = 58%	12/27 = 44%	7/24 = 29%
6. Work matches childhood interests	21/24 = 88%	19/27 = 70%	18/24 = 75%
7. Financially Independent	11/15 = 73%	18/21 = 86%	14/19 = 74%
*8. Job/career in arts/film/theatre/writing	19/24 = 79%	9/27 = 33%	8/24 = 33%
9. Evidence of entrepreneurship	15/24 = 63%	14/27 = 52%	11/24 = 46%
10. Clear "yes" to unschool own child	18/23 = 78%	16/27 = 59%	16/24 = 67%
11. Clear "no" to unschool own child	1/23 = 4%	2/27 = 7%	2/24 = 8%

*Statistically significant difference across groups.

Many parents taking an unschooling approach are likely to be wary of undergoing the registration process, as unschooling is generally not recognised in most state guidelines for home education. However, the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority does recognise this approach, stating:

‘The VRQA will not mandate a curriculum for home schooling nor will it be necessary for home schooling parents to follow a school schedule.’

And,

‘Given the diversity of approaches and pedagogies used by home schooling parents, regular and efficient instruction can take place flexibly, and will vary across home schooling families as a result of tailoring home schooling programs to the child’s individual circumstances.’

This recognition of a more relaxed, non-curriculum approach is likely associated with generally higher rates of registration compliance in Victoria compared to the other Australian states.

Comparison with Homeschooling Regulation in England, UK

The situation in the UK has evolved over time. Nowadays, most home schoolers are in contact with their local authorities. No formal register is kept, but each authority is aware of the home educated children in its area. Most families happily provide information about their educational programmes and many welcome home visits, reporting that their children enjoy meeting the authorised person and chatting about their learning. As it is a voluntary situation, people feel very differently about the process. Being compelled to request permission to home educate is something that many home schoolers feel very strongly against. They believe it is not the state’s permission to grant, indeed it is a human right for a parent to educate their child as they see fit.

It is said that there are large numbers of unregistered homeschoolers in NSW. There is no way of knowing if the numbers are realistic. But experience in the UK leads us to believe that voluntary registration would lead to far greater engagement between the homeschool community and the Board of Studies.

The law in the UK states that;

‘The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable ; a) to his age, ability, and aptitude, and b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.’

The role of the Local Authority, which takes a similar role to the Board of Studies, is this -

‘If it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.’

The phrase, ‘if it appears’, is fundamental to understanding the authority’s role. Just as child protection services do not presume all children are being abused until proven otherwise, the authority presumes home educators are fulfilling their role unless they are given reason to suspect otherwise.

Home educators are not required to register nor give evidence of their educational provision. However, in the case where the authority IS concerned, case law in 1980 established that informal enquiries could be made. At the time Lord Donaldson said,

‘the parents will be under no duty to comply. However it would be sensible for them to do so. If parents give no information or adopt the course of merely stating that they are discharging their duty without giving any details of how they are doing so, the LEA will have to consider and decide whether it ‘appears’ to it that the parents are in breach’.

The law in New South Wales has, at its core, the same principles;

- (a) every child has the right to receive an education,
- (b) the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child’s parents
- (c) it is the duty of the State to ensure that every child receives an education of the highest quality,
- (d) the principal responsibility of the State in the education of children is the provision of public education.

Education is the responsibility of parents, and the state’s prime responsibility is to offer public education.

Of course it is the third point (c), which leads to confusion. It appears that this statement is open to interpretation, how exactly can and should the State dispense this duty? How does one assess if an education is ‘of the highest quality’?

It is important to bear in mind that even amongst experts, there is no unanimous agreement as to what constitutes a proper education. There exist many contending educational philosophies, giving rise to many different styles of education which are reasonable, even though they differ radically amongst themselves. It is a fallacy for anyone to claim that there is only one way to educate a child. In the UK the authorities are required simply to be clear that, ‘adequate education is taking place, such as would convince ‘a reasonable person’, ‘on the balance of probabilities’. This is, in effect, the only reasonable and true assessment that can be made.

And indeed, the principles upon which the NSW Education Act are founded, do not attempt to define a proper education, or the form or content thereof. If a child's education is primarily the parent's responsibility, then it is for the parent to assess the suitability of their child's education. All children learn in different ways and at varying rates, and chronological age has little bearing on the process. It would be wholly inappropriate for example, to seek to impose 'reading and numeracy age' scales on home educated children, not subject to the specific educational methods in state schools. Requiring strict adherence to the school curriculum - which is designed for children in a school setting, with ratios of 20 or more same aged pupils to one teacher, with a spectrum of abilities in each class - does not make any sense at all in a home schooling environment. It is vital that parents and children choose a type of education which is right for them, and it is important that any officials understand and are supportive of many differing approaches or "ways of educating" which are all feasible and legally valid.

The current registration process in NSW is focused on the parent's ability to produce a system for planning, recording, assessing. There is scant attention paid to the actual child, to their learning style, to their individual progress. The huge amount of work required for registration, is extremely time consuming and stressful for most people and detrimental to the sterling job that homeschooling parents are doing.

Authorised Persons in the UK (their equivalent), state that they can tell immediately if a child is being educated or not. They do not concern themselves with the minutiae of the school curriculum, or the parent's planning processes. They recognise that there are many, equally valid, approaches to educational provision. Some parents choose to provide education in a formal and structured manner, following a traditional curriculum and using a fixed timetable that keeps to school hours and terms. Other parents choose to make more informal provision that is responsive to the developing interests of their child. One approach is not necessarily any more efficient or effective than another. The UK government advises authorities to look, if a concern is raised, for the following:

- consistent involvement of parents or other significant carers
- recognition of the child's needs, attitudes and aspirations
- opportunities for the child to be stimulated by their learning experiences
- access to resources/materials required to provide home education for the child - such as
 - paper and pens, books and libraries, arts and crafts materials, physical activity, ICT
- the opportunity for appropriate interaction with other children and other

adults.

These are considered to be the fundamentals that provide for an education of 'the highest quality' and these are the things that the UK authorities look for.

In the end, children are most likely to have a positive home schooling experience when parents and government authorities recognise each other's rights and responsibilities, and work together.

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SUBMISSIONS received by HOVA

HOVA Submission 72. August 5, 2014

5 August 2014

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HOME SCHOOLING INQUIRY

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in the current home school inquiry. I have been home educating my children in New South Wales for the last two years and 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,

My understanding is that, compared to other jurisdictions in Australia as well as New Zealand, New South Wales practices a regulatory but non-supportive role in home schooling through BoSTES.

Home education has a different dynamic to schooling and as such, I would like a body independent of BoSTES set up to oversee home education. This body would include representation of home educators from a variety of home educating philosophies and would report directly to the Minister of Education. Emphasis would be on registration, rather than regulation, and support given to parents to provide the type of learning opportunities that fit best with their family's philosophies as well as the individual needs of each child.

(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,

Since embarking on our home education journey, my children's lives have opened up in many ways. They have benefited both academically and socially in ways that I feel will positively influence their attitude and ability to continue learning throughout their lives as well as pursue meaningful careers.

Having previously suffered anxiety problems whilst at school, my eldest daughter is now an enthusiastic member of her public speaking group and participates fully during workshops and excursions.

She is comfortable communicating with a wide variety of people both outside and within the home

education community, has several close friends and a good number of friendly acquaintances with whom she shares different interests.

Academically, she adapts well to different learning situations. As well as attending general excursions and workshops, she regularly attends programs run for gifted children and attends workshops and excursions aimed at high school level. She has also attended workshops at various university departments, which she thoroughly enjoyed. Through these experiences and her positive relationships with a number of adults other than us in her life, she has many people she can look to as examples of what is possible in terms of continuing her education and finding work for which she is passionate. She is also gaining experience with examination practices having taken part in both the NAPLAN and ICAS examinations by her own choice.

My youngest daughter, also gifted, is almost six and has not been to day care, preschool or school. She is socially confident and gets on well with boys and girls of all ages. She attends excursions, shows and workshops, including full day workshops without me.

Judging by my both of my daughters' confidence in participating in events, their friendships, their wide range of interests and general self-motivation to learn, I feel that they are more than able to not only excel in the next steps of their education but also be considerate, involved members of the wider community.

(ii) financial costs,

Thanks to my husband's job, we are currently financially stable enough to provide our children with a wide range of resources and experiences. Whilst it has been my own choice to be at home with my children, it does mean that for the coming years I will be unable to make any significant financial contribution towards our future savings and a home of our own. I am also unable to build up any form of

superannuation. It also leaves us quite vulnerable if my husband's employment status changes for any reason.

The amount of money we spend on our children varies each term but as an example, last term we spent close to \$1500 on our eldest daughter and about a quarter of that on our youngest. This included various classes, exam fees, holiday workshops, membership fees, subscriptions, books, internet access, fuel costs (we drive to numerous places each week) and general supplies such as paper, printing ink and stationery. These costs will rise as my youngest daughter takes part in more activities and becomes old enough to attend our local gifted program, which costs approximately \$300 per child.

Home educators are often given school rates for certain things, however there are times when this is not the case. For example, when my daughter took part in UNSW's ICAS exams this year, we were required to pay three times the amount school students were charged for each exam as our "school" had less than three students taking part in the exams.

The Department for Education and Communities is saving thousands of dollars each year due to our children not attending a school. They are also receiving money from our taxes that they are using to educate children other than our own and additionally, they do not have to pay anything towards catering for the extra educational needs of our children, who are gifted.

Our family is currently able to afford a wide range of activities and experiences for our children and we would prefer to cover these costs ourselves; however, it is possible that circumstances could change where we may require additional assistance to cover our basic costs. I am sure that there are home educating families who could already do with financial assistance and I would like this to be seriously looked into considering how much the government spends on the education of all other children in Australia. It is not just a choice to home educate, it is a right and our children are no less deserving of the investment that the government puts into the education of schooled children.

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

We are a Christian family although we currently do not belong to any particular denomination. My husband is university educated and works as an IT consultant. I studied electronics at a tertiary college and worked in that field as well as in a variety of other jobs overseas before having my children. We are both interested in continuing our own education on a part time basis.

My husband and I have always been open to facilitating our children's education at home but respected our eldest child's wish to go to school. In our travels and in our quest to find a good educational fit for her, we have experienced different schooling philosophies, having attended Montessori, Steiner and democratic schools. The only place she did not feel high anxiety was in a Steiner kindergarten. We found that whilst each school's philosophies appeared to match our own, they found it difficult to put these into practice due to a number of factors. These included the ratio of children to teachers, other parent's lack of agreement with the school philosophy, and sometimes an apparent lack of teacher agreement with the school philosophy. We finally decided to home educate our daughter when both her school and her teacher refused to accept and work with us regarding her needs as a gifted child. This included ignoring the assessing psychologist's recommendations and retaining a somewhat dogmatic view that their personal opinions of my daughter's abilities and needs superseded the opinions of her parents, the psychologist and scientific literature.

My daughter was by no means a problem child; she was a "good girl" at school but brought home all of her fears and frustration to us at the end of each day. I decided that childhood was too short to try to find another school to fit her and began looking seriously, at what home education could offer her. I love spending time with my children and we have found a wonderful and supportive community that meets their needs better than we could have hoped.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers,

Our family decided to register with BoSTES, as we did not feel comfortable working outside of the law. It does not mean that we agree with the current registration requirements, these alone do not motivate us to educate our children any better and in some ways they hinder us. The unregistered home educators who we spend time with are dedicated to their children's education. They have a variety of philosophies that range from schooling at home to radical

unschooling. Almost all would register if registration requirements were less onerous. I know of one family who stopped renewing their registration around the time the 2013 Information Packet changes came in due to feeling overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork they would need to do.

I would also like to add that unregistered children are restricted from accessing a significant number of educational offerings. By making registration requirements less onerous, these children would have more options open to them, as is their right. Their parent's decision to be unregistered should not affect what they are able to access.

(v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children,

Our education style is somewhat eclectic, leaning towards natural learning as much as possible and I see my role as facilitator rather than teacher. I do not need training as a teacher to educate my own children. I am perfectly capable of understanding and extending the curriculum guidelines and I have extensive knowledge of my children's personalities, needs and abilities, which all contribute to how they learn. I enjoy finding resources that best cater to their style of learning and have been astounded by just how much is on offer. I have discovered that many other home educators have a wealth of high quality information and resources to share. They also share recommendations for good tutors and work hard to find interesting learning opportunities. Many share their expertise with any interested children and there are multiple opportunities for group learning.

My children have a wide range of interests and are open to trying most things. They tend to delve deeply into subjects that interest them and independently discover how things relate to each other. I read extensively on the subject of gifted education and use what I learn to help with my children's learning. I believe that my children were born with an intrinsic motivation to learn and do my best to facilitate this.

I watched my eldest daughter start to lose her confidence and motivation to learn at school and strongly feel that home educating her is bringing out her best and preserving her love of learning.

Having never been to school, my youngest daughter has been able to follow her interests with no requirements to "tick boxes" and I have

found it interesting to watch her learning journey unfold. So far, I have been able to fully follow natural learning with her by providing a rich environment combined with responding to her interests and questions. She reads at a level above her peer group, fearlessly pursues mathematics without prompting, gets deeply absorbed in art and has a wide variety of other interests. In short, she more than ticks the educational boxes required for her stage.

I am certain that at this point, school, even in the form of an opportunity class, cannot fully meet my children's academic, social and emotional needs.

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

I found very quickly that home educating our children does not mean that my children are isolated at home most of the time. For example, this term's weekly and fortnightly activities outside of our home include drama, fitness group, gymnastics, Girl Guides, public speaking, ballet, piano, ukulele group and two different social group meetings.

Excursions are plentiful and meaningful. We have the time to explore things relevant to each child and they have time to really see and process the places that we are visiting. At school, our daughter went on one excursion each term and due to the large number of children attending, there was little time or freedom for her to explore anything other than the set plan for the excursion. The home education community offers many wonderful group excursions where we have the benefit of exploring with friends but still having the flexibility to cater for individual interests. We also attend many performances at the Opera House and other theatres, some of which have related workshops for the children.

I keep learning and activities as relevant as possible to each child and am able to adjust things as needed. An example would be mathematics for my eldest daughter. She is able to think mathematically but becomes easily stressed with basic operations. I have been able to try a variety of methods and resources to help and just recently she has blossomed and it has become her favourite subject. In contrast, to make any changes at school required meetings and waiting periods and even then, the promised changes did not happen. In home educating, if a particular teacher does not

suit a child, we are able to find a new one without any huge adjustments to our lives or other activities.

By having a variety of friends and social groups, our children are not reliant on one particular friendship or group setting for their social needs. If there is an issue with a friend and we are unable to work it out, or if we do not quite “click” with a group, the children still have other friends and groups to which they belong. In these social settings, parents are on hand (although not hovering!) if intervention is needed. In addition, spending a full afternoon or morning with either a special friend or a group of friends is quite different to a having a little time between lessons and at lunchtime at school.

I was somewhat disturbed with the wording of the 2013 Information Package that suggested that the all key learning areas should occur in the home. This would be very restrictive, reduce our children’s educational opportunities and play to the stereotypical image of a child isolated at home with lots of bookwork that many people still seem to hold! BoSTES addressing this in their Question and Answer document is not enough confirmation that we can incorporate the wider community into our educational activities.

I am also in disagreement with the BoSTES refusal to register children when they are going on holiday for longer periods and the requirement that families register with a distance education provider for that period. A holiday is an extension of the learning environment for home educators and I think it would disturb my children’s ability to learn from such an experience if they were expected to spend much of their time following a distance education program that would likely not be relevant to their surroundings. Many schools are supportive of children taking longer breaks to travel, as they know that travelling gives many opportunities to introduce and extend knowledge.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

I found the registration process to be quite stressful as I found little clarity regarding how much detail to include in the education plan. Each home educator I spoke to was given different requirement details from their Authorised Person.

Also stressful was that once we had made the decision that it was in our daughters best interests to leave her school, we faced a wait of up to three months to be registered. The thought of going back to school was extremely stressful to my daughter and so we enrolled in her in a distance education program while we waited for our appointment with BoSTES. I would highly recommend the implementation of an interim registration period as well as more support and consistent information regarding putting the education plan together for parents who need it.

We were extremely fortunate to be visited by an experienced Authorised Person who had a good understanding of gifted children and their needs. She was professional, friendly and gave us a couple of resource ideas.

We also had her visit for our registration renewal and again she was professional and seemed genuinely interested in my daughter's work and achievements. I will add that the weeks leading up to the registration renewal were incredibly stressful for both myself and my daughter as the 2013 Information Package had recently come out and reports of unexpectedly harsh renewal visits, including from our own Authorised Person were being shared within the community.

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

Our Authorised Person clearly had a lot of experience with both home educators and gifted children. I understand from other people's experiences that this is not always the case, especially with new Authorised Persons. It makes sense to me that all Authorised Persons should have a genuine interest in home education, be trained in the different methods of home education and have a supportive attitude towards the families they are visiting.

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

I think that the current syllabuses are useful as a basic guideline of what most children can be expected to know at different stages of their development. However, I am not certain that they differ much to what we tend to cover naturally.

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

Ensuring children's welfare is something that concerns me in general and I have thought a lot about in the context of home educating. I do not claim to have any real insight into it although it occurs to me that parents are trusted with their children's welfare, safety and wellbeing for the first, most formative years of their life without having compulsory checks every year or two.

Each week, my children spend time with a number of responsible adults both within and outside of the home education community as well as attend regular dentist, orthodontist and doctor appointments each year. I am not convinced that seeing an Authorised Person even as often as every three or six months, let alone yearly or every two years would prevent or reveal an abusive situation.

In child protection, parents are assumed to be doing the right thing by their children. Intervention only occurs when someone good has reason to believe that a child is at risk. I do not see why it should be any different with education.

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

In New South Wales, there is clearly less trust in parents' abilities and motivations to home educate their children than in other states and territories. Being responsible for our children's education is our duty and our right and we take this very seriously. As such, extensive consultation with us regarding regulation should be a given.

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

Home educated children and their parents deserve as much support and access to resources as schoolchildren and teachers do. This is currently not the case, for example, gifted education workshops, TVET courses, Open High School and support groups for children with disabilities.

One thing that my youngest daughter was unable to access this last year was the Premiers Reading Challenge as they will not accept anyone without a certificate of registration. She was not yet old enough to be registered and as such, missed out on something she wanted to take part in having listened to her older sister discussing her own participation in the challenge. Schoolchildren of the same

age as her were able to take part so it seems a little counterproductive to encouraging young home educated readers.

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

As stated in the first term of reference in this document, I believe that a body independent of BoSTES be set up to oversee home educating in Australia and that this body should include good representation from a cross section of home educators.

Failing that, I think that there should be at least one member of BoSTES to represent the home education community. This person should be nominated by a variety of home education groups or communities to ensure that the views of as many home educators as possible are represented.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my submission.

HOVA Submission 71. August 5, 2014

Hello. I am a ten year old child, home educating in New South Wales. I left school two years ago because I felt I wasn't getting enough of a challenge and my needs weren't being met. I am writing this because I feel that not enough people know what the home educating world is actually like.

There are many ideas about home educators that are going around at the moment in the general community but most of them are actually completely wrong.

For example, many people presume that home educators don't socialise much. In fact I once met someone who thought that home educating meant sitting in your room doing school work all day and never going anywhere. Actually most home-school children get the opportunity to socialise much more than schoolchildren do! All the home educators that I know, myself included, have a schedule full of workshops, activities and social groups whereas at school you go to the same place every day with the same children. Home school children do not only have many opportunities to socialise they are

good at it too. I have found that home-school children are open and inclusive. I have many more friends now than I ever did in the school community and pretty much everyone I know has many friends too. Another thing that I have noticed is that people in the home-school community generally seem to get along with each other. There is of course the occasional argument but as home-school parents are understanding and supportive, we always resolve the problem with their assistance.

There is also a presumption that home school children run wild doing whatever they want. Actually many home school parents are just as expectant of appropriate behaviour from their children as parents who send their children to school.

Home educating has changed my life in a positive way. One of my favourite things about it is that you can work at whatever level you feel comfortable with and if you stumble across something your find interesting you can look into that thing more deeply. This makes learning things more interesting and at times much easier.

Whilst following the basic requirements of the curriculum I can follow my interests extensively. Home educating also gives me a chance to learn life skills as well as Maths, English, Science, History and other subjects (of course, those subjects are life skills too).

I hope that this submission has given you an idea of what the home school world is really like and how home-educating has benefited my life and that of many other children. Please think about this information before making any decisions about home educators.

Thank you.

HOVA Submission 70. August 19, 2014

The Director
Select Committee on Home Schooling
Parliament House
'Macquarie Street

I am writing this submission in relation to the current inquiry into Home Schooling.

1. (a) The background of home schooling including comparison of practices with other jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand

I am a parent of four children who have all been homeschooled. My oldest two went to school for a few years before coming home, but the younger two have never been to school. We follow an unschooling approach to home education, believing that learning is intrinsic to human nature, and that teaching and curriculum are not essential to a successful education.

Our children are free to pursue their interests, passions and hobbies, and in the process of doing so (fully supported by myself and my husband), they learn all sorts of tools and absorb information more readily and with greater longevity than what is commonly seen with school children following a mandated curriculum.

As an unschooling parent, I am a researcher, an observer, a facilitator, a provider, a partner. We discuss, we play, we explore, we discover, we learn. We thrive.

Learning is a totally natural part of my children's lives. It isn't something that is burdensome, but rather is deeply interwoven into the very fabric of their days. And nights. It isn't something that is separate to life. It is a byproduct of living an interesting life with parents alongside who are interested in their endeavours, and who also introduce new ideas, opportunities and people into their lives. They are free to choose topics of interest to them, and activities to pursue in accordance with their interests.

Homeschooling, and in particular unschooling, doesn't look much like school, and it doesn't only happen at home. We are actively engaged in both the homeschooling community and the wider society. My children have participated in activities such as ice skating and roller skating, archery, gymnastics and trampolining, art classes, music lessons, drama classes and community theatre, youth groups, Taekwondo and karate, surfing and bodyboarding to name but a few. We frequently visit museums and science centres, art galleries, theatre productions, libraries, botanic gardens and

nature reserves, We are also involved in social justice action, such as doing the World Vision 40hr Famine, the RSPCA Cupcake Day fundraiser, etc.

We have found home based learning to be an enjoyable, productive, successful and totally valid form of education.

(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

My two older children (18 and 20) are now moving out into the workforce and tertiary study. They have both completed Certificate 2 and 3 courses at TAFE. They have also both been in part-time employment since the age of 14, regularly receiving promotions and recognition at their places of employment. My oldest is now also completing university studies with a view to studying medicine.

Both of my boys, when at TAFE, made interesting observations, when comparing themselves to other students there who had come from the school system. My boys were there because they wanted to be. It was totally their choice, and they were committed, interested, engaged and successful. The majority of the other students seemed much more passive, disinterested and disengaged, and they did the bare minimum to get through.

I have found from my own experience and that of many others, that when children are raised in an unschooling environment, they typically transition easily into adult life, including study, employment and entrepreneurship. They are not the burden on society that some people expect they may be.

ii) financial costs

Spending twenty years so far at home with my children full-time has obviously reduced our financial income, but it is a price we are more than willing to pay. Budgeting our single income between six family members is a learning experience in and of itself, for both us and our children.

We enjoy easy access to a wide variety of community based resources as indicated above, and also a multitude of resources within our home and the internet, and feel no inclination at all to seek access to school resources.

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

Homeschoolers come from a wide variety of family backgrounds, socioeconomic groups and educational levels.

In our family, my husband has a masters' degree and will be beginning his PhD in 2015. He only completed Year 10 at school, but successfully commenced university studies as a young "mature age" student. I completed my HSC, applied and was accepted to university twice, but chose instead to be a stay at home mother. What I have learned in the process of researching how children learn, investigating various approaches to learning at home, developing an understanding of child development and personality, and everything else required as a facilitator of my children's education, is almost certainly equivalent to one or more university degrees!

There are families where both parents are university qualified, and others with no tertiary level studies at all, yet everyone I have met is providing a well resourced and successful learning environment for their children at home.

In the age of the internet, there is no limit to the support and information available to any parent wishing to home educate their children.

Our motivation for home education was initially to provide an alternative to a large city school for one of our children, who was struggling after having previously only attended a small rural school. We were confident that bringing him home would help to increase his confidence, both socially and academically, and that proved to be true. With all of our children, we have observed that their learning flourishes at home, family relationships deepens, and their social circle increases through contact with the large community of homeschoolers as well as all sorts of other members of society through community based groups and interacting in the community on a daily basis.

Being able to provide an individualised learning environment for each of our children has far surpassed what could have been provided in a school setting, in our opinion. Our children are not only surviving, but thriving.

Whilst we appreciate that the majority of families will choose to outsource their children's learning to the school system, we have been delighted to be able to provide a homebase for their learning.

Most homeschooling families that we come in contact with express motivations including:

- A high value on time together as a family
- A belief that individualised learning at home is superior to classroom based learning at school
- A belief that socialisation is more effective and positive outside of the school system, than within it, due to the increased ratio of adult to child, and also the time spent in society, mixing with people of all ages and from all walks of life, rather than in a school, mixing with children of the same age and often from a similar socio economic background.
- Dissatisfaction with their school experience.
- A confidence in their ability to provide a successful educational environment for their children.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers

I will address this more fully below, but for now I will say that I believe the primary reasons for people choosing not to register include:

- A belief, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that can be given to their children"
- A confidence in their ability to provide that education without government oversight
- Frustration with the arduous, stressful nature of the registration process, particularly that in NSW.
- A belief that the time and stress spent complying with registration is not helpful to their homeschooling.

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

(c) Regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

When we first started homeschooling, we were living in NSW, but we have recently relocated to Victoria. Having experienced both registration systems, I have some observations that may help to understand the reasons for so many homeschoolers in NSW choosing not to register.

HOMESCHOOLING IN NSW:

When we were in NSW, we were privy to many discussions amongst registered homeschoolers regarding their immense frustration and overwhelm with the system. Only one or two spoke positively about the registration process! Some seemed to endure it, believing it was a necessary evil that allowed them to home educate their children, some complied out of obligation to obtain their single parent pension, but the majority by far found it immensely stressful and something that took away from the time they would have otherwise spent getting on with providing a wonderful environment in which their children could learn and flourish.

I also listened to those who had chosen not to register. Some were homeschooling traditionally, and others were unschooling, yet there were a few consistent beliefs amongst them; beliefs I also share:

1. In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, It is a parent's duty, responsibility and privilege to oversee their children's education. It is a government's responsibility to provide schools.
2. Parents are, more than anyone else, the most likely to be committed to their children's wellbeing and welfare. It begins with the early days of a child's life, when a parent delights in every new stage of growth and learning, and it simply never stops. The concern felt by governments to provide a good education system for society pales into insignificance when

compared to the concern a parent feels for their own child. There are obviously some parents who are neglectful or abusive, but I am yet to meet one of those amongst the hundreds of homeschooling families I know. Homeschooling families are typically passionate about the well being and education of their children.

3. The registration process causes great stress, due to the requirement to adhere to curriculum and to write programs akin to what happens in schools. Homes are not schools. What is appropriate for a teacher in charge of the education of other people's children is quite different from what is appropriate for a parent overseeing the education of their own children. The red tape and bureaucracy of the registration system belongs in schools, not homes. It does not equip parents to homeschool more effectively.
4. The homeschooling community, both in person and online, is a wonderful resource for new or uncertain home educators. There is no need for Authorised Persons, trained in the school system, to insist on overseeing learning that happens in homes. The school system and home-based-learning are as different as an aquarium and the open ocean.
5. The quality of grown homeschoolers and unschoolers is testament to the above facts.

The homeschooling community is a wonderfully supportive environment that provides much reassurance for those new to homeschooling, and others who are more seasoned but going through a time where they need more support. Homeschoolers typically discuss things that their children are interested in learning about, asking for ideas of helpful resources and other ideas. They typically discuss strategies and ideas for living more effective and enjoyable lives of learning with their children.

Much conversation time, however, is also spent discussing the difficulties and stresses of the registration system. If those difficulties were removed, there would be more time spent discussing ways of increasing the learning opportunities in our children's lives, rather than spending so much time discussing and stressing about how to jump through the registration hoops and hurdles.

Parents do not benefit from or require government oversight and regulation to inspire them to provide a wonderful learning

environment for their children. The few who apparently appreciate the registration system would easily find the same benefits from within the homeschooling community, or from the provision of **optional access** to BOSTES or similar.

It is the requirement to be “approved” for something that is our constitutional right that lies at the bottom of people’s refusal to register, along with a confidence in their ability to deliver a high standard of education for their own children, and the stress of going through the registration process.

HOMESCHOOLING IN VICTORIA:

What I have experienced in Victoria is in stark contrast to the stress and overwhelm felt in NSW regarding the registration system.

Homeschoolers in Victoria typically speak highly of the registration process here; in fact I haven’t yet heard a complaint, and I also haven’t heard of anyone who has chosen not to comply. It is so easy to register that the majority of people do so without hesitation.

My observation leads me to believe that most parents would prefer not to register at all, and they certainly do not want home inspections, excessive paperwork and arduous oversight by government officials. They simply want to get on with providing homeschooling for their children.

I believe that more homeschoolers in NSW would register if the registration system in NSW was less onerous and burdensome, as it is in Victoria and in many other parts of the world.

Out of interest, I collected some information from homeschoolers in other countries and states, to find out what their registration system was like and how they felt about it. As expected,

HOMESCHOOLING AROUND THE WORLD:

Out of interest, I asked in an international unschooling group about their experiences of homeschooling law in a variety of states and countries, and also how the homeschooling laws affected them. The people from the states and countries with the least regulation were the ones who wrote positively and were more likely to comply

with registration. Having known these people online for many years, I can attest to the quality of learning that their children are experiencing. In fact, I would suggest that the learning is better when the regulations are reduced, because instead of focusing so much on meeting government regulations for registration, they are able to spend that time focusing on their own children's learning needs.

Here are some of the answers I received:

"In Texas ~ Homeschools are Private Schools. Just like any other private school ~ we do not have to follow the Board of Education's (BOE) mandates on scope, sequence, testing, attendance, etc. There is no registering. No testing. No attendance. No record keeping. The law states that:

- *The instruction must be bona fide (i.e., not a sham).

- *The curriculum must be in visual form (e.g., books, workbooks, video monitor).

- *The curriculum must include the five basic subjects of reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and good citizenship."

"In Oklahoma there are no requirements for registration or testing.

https://www.ochec.com/Categories.aspx?Id=Oklahoma_Law"

"California just considers homeschools to be private schools. You go online and register your "private school" once a year in October. That's it. You're left alone. It's pretty nice."

"I believe Nebraska only requires a yearly letter of intent. However, it seems the states that consider homeschools private non-accredited schools are less likely to interfere. Kansas requires a one-time registration as a private school. Then you are pretty much left alone."

“In the UK we don't even have to be known to any authority. Our law simply states that parents must ensure that their child receive a full time education from the September before their 6th birthday, "at school or otherwise", and furthermore provides no means of assessment or checks unless the state are given evidence that an education is not being provided (at which point they issue a legal demand to satisfy that provision is in place, and an "educational philosophy" document is almost always considered satisfactory).”

“In AZ, all we have to do is file an intent to homeschool, once, and that's it. No testing, no yearly checking in, no evaluations.”

“Here in BC, Canada, our laws are awesome. According to the school act, homeschooling parents have to register their kids with a school (which is just a form stating the kids names and birthdates), and then provide an "educational program." That's it. No tests or assessments, and no need to follow the "provincial learning outcomes" that the public schools follow. The government does not say anything about what the "educational program" must look like, either. This is the link to the school act (section 12 and 13 are about homeschooling, on page 27):

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/.../revisedstatutescontents.pdf>”

“Here in NE we just file paperwork starting the year a child turns 6 saying we want to homeschool, name our 'school', and include either the curriculum we are using or a list of grade-appropriate goals for the year (many of us use the world book lists).”

“In Indiana, you register with the department of education at age 7. The only thing required is that you keep a record of attendance and have "school" 180 days a year.”

“In Arizona we have to file an intent to homeschool the year they would have otherwise gone to K or when you take them

out of school if they were already in, then nothing else. No testing, no record keeping.”

“In Ontario, if your kids have never gone to school, you don't have to do anything. No one checks up on you. You don't have to report.

If your children have gone to school and you withdraw them, you must write a letter of intent to homeschool each year and give it to the school board. But then that's it. No reporting. No checking up.

The freedom is amazing and I doubt we'll ever live elsewhere as long as our kids are school aged.”

“Iowa just passed a law that loosened the regulations for homeschoolers - that might be a good state to look into as it is the most recent.”

http://wcfcourier.com/news/local/education/new-law-relaxes-oversight-of-home-schooling-for-iowa-families/article_114b2eac-739d-562a-858f-75472e271aa4.html

<http://www.the-niche.org/starthomeschooling/knowthelawrules.html>

In summary, I believe that the simpler a registration process is, the more likely it is for families to comply. A simple letter of intent to home educate would enable the education department to keep a more accurate register of homeschoolers, because more homeschoolers would be likely to comply with the system.

The provision of **optional** support and assistance by BOSTES for those desiring it would mean that families new to homeschooling and unaware of the support and information available within the homeschooling community, could access it, and those confident of their approach or finding that support elsewhere, would be able to get on with their job, freeing up BOSTES to focus on keeping an up to date register, and providing good information and support to those who desire it. Ideally, BOSTES would direct new homeschoolers to organisations and groups within the

homeschooling community, to enable them to find connections and support from those who are also home educating.

ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons

Authorised persons are trained in the school method, and not equipped to assess or understand home based learning. Even home educators themselves vary so greatly in style and approach, that it would be impossible for any homeschool parent to adequately assess another family's program, particularly when the registration requirements are currently so arduous and school-like.

I do not believe it should be common practice for home educators to receive visits in their homes from authorised persons. Home visits should only occur when there is cause to suspect neglect or other issues warranting investigation.

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

I do not believe that a syllabus set up by a state or nation can ever adequately cover all of the learning needs of individual children, and that families opting out of the school system should be free to provide an education for their children based on their individual needs and preferences.

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

I do not believe that a homeschooling registration system has any positive impact on the safety, wellbeing and welfare of homeschooled children

In my experience, as stated earlier, homeschooling parents are typically nurturing and supportive of their children's wellbeing. The majority of families mix socially with other homeschooling families in their area, and also in sporting teams and other community based events and activities, and also with their extended family. Any possible abuse or neglect would almost certainly be picked up and reported, and could then be followed up by the appropriate governing body.

In summary, I believe home education to be a viable and positive experience for the families who choose to opt out of the school system, and I do not believe that the current registration system in NSW is helpful.

HOVA Submission 69. August 17, 2014.

I am writing to put forward my support for home education and my belief in the inalienable right we have as human citizens, to choose the style of education that is tailored best to our unique children.

My children are thriving in their homeschooling environment. I am in absolute awe at their zest for life and learning. Living big lives everyday.

My children are involved in Science out of school classes, Ninjitsu, Dance, Art, a wide variety of social events and meets. They are active, healthy, strong and safe.

Learning at our own pace we live our lives based on communication and a commitment to attentive parenting, discovering resources, making plans, using the wonderful events put on by artists, councils, community.

We are involved in community projects, we live an active life where every subject imaginable is covered, explored and attended too.

The connected lives we live with each other that allows freedom to explore what is important for us and come to integrate skills as we are ready and able is important to us.

I feel that a blanket enforced curriculum would be both stifling and invasive to our home life, to our thriving in learning and our freedom to delve deeply into topics as we do now.

I am committed to a bright future where all forms of home education are respected, nurtured, encouraged and able to be carried out with integrity from both the parents and governing bodies.

I have the best interests of my children at heart and I am wholly committed to their development has whole beings.

Thank you

"If unschooling can't work in the real world, nothing at all can. People will say "How will they learn algebra in the real world?" Is there algebra in the real world? If not, why should it be learned? If so, why should it be separated artificially from its actual uses? "Why?" should always be the question that

comes before "What?" and "How?" There is a Sesame Street book called Grover and the Everything in the Whole Wide World Museum. There is a "things under the sea" room and "things in the sky" room, but still each room is just a room in a museum, no windows, everything out of context. Then he opens a big door marked "everything else in the whole wide world" and goes out into the sunshine. There is unschooling. "

www.sandradodd.com/unschooling

HOVA Submission 68. August 17, 2014.

Submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly Select Committee Inquiry into Home Schooling

We are a professional couple with two children who are home educating in NSW. Between us we hold Bachelor of Science (Honours) and Post Graduate level qualifications in the fields of Science and Psychology and have built successful careers in our respective professions.

Our decision to home educate has meant stepping back from our careers to support our children's learning and consequently means a reduced income for the family, and certainly a significant change in living arrangements as a result. It is a decision we have made after lengthy and careful consideration and rigorous review of the available research into the way children learn and the long-term outcomes for home educated children.

We know many home educating families, both here in Australia, and in other parts of the world and have examined and considered the many and varied approaches they take to the process of educating their children. We have developed our own eclectic system based on our research and on the observation of practical application of these methods in different home environments, coupled with what works most effectively for our family.

Our method is primarily child-led, focused around the child's own interests. Our role is to support their learning by providing access to materials and resources to deepen their understanding of those interests and to broaden the topics to cover the full spectrum of learning areas over time. We do not 'teach' in any conventional sense of the word, but rather facilitate learning. We do not do 'school-at-home'.

We also plan to embark on long-term travel around Australia within the next couple of years. We believe travel will enhance and deepen understanding of all subject areas, by bringing them alive in an accessible real-life context.

We are not registered and will not be registering unless the current requirements are changed dramatically. We are more than satisfied with the

quality of education we are providing for our children and are confident of our ability to measure their progress and development over time. Our children are active in the wider community and are involved in music, sporting groups and general day-to-day interactions. We are active in home education groups and the home education community within our area. All of these activities are an important part of their lives and their education and they are confident, outgoing and able to interact socially with people of all ages, backgrounds and social situations.

Oversight by the state is intrusive and unnecessary and shows a complete lack of understanding of the home education process. The current requirements are onerous and detract from our ability to facilitate our children's education, while contributing nothing of value. We believe our time is best spent supporting our children's learning and finding the resources they need to pursue their interests.

The current registration and reporting requirements would consume a significant amount of our time that we believe is far better spent in supporting our children's learning.

The existing requirement to follow the state curriculum hampers the natural learning process we use and interferes with the children's ability to follow their own interests. We are confident that our children will achieve a well-rounded, comprehensive understanding of all subject areas over the course of their education. It will be developed at their own pace, in line with their own ability and development. It is unlikely to occur at the corresponding time and pace of the state curriculum.

We are aware that there is no provision for travelling families to register, except by distance education. Distance education or purchased curriculums are not consistent with our educational philosophy or approach. Even should we choose to register now, while we are living in the one place, this would invariably create problems for us when we eventually choose to live on the road. We have no desire to create difficulties and obstacles to our children's education now or in the future when these can be avoided by not registering.

Lastly, we have heard numerous reports from other home-school families of the inconsistency of many of the APs. While we know that some are excellent, supportive and have a good understanding of different home education approaches, many are reported to be judgmental and ignorant of home education practices and the ways in which they differ from school-based education. We have heard many reports and seen some alarming statistics of short approvals or of rejected applications. We have heard many alarming reports of families advised by APs to withdraw their applications (undoubtedly because these applications will then not appear in the statistics as rejections). We are not prepared to risk the possibility of our application being rejected. This would be devastating to us as a family and harmful to our children's education. Our decision to home educate has not been taken lightly and comes at a huge financial and time commitment and our freedom to educate

our children according to our own philosophy and methods is far too important to take that chance.

If NSW were to move to a registration system like that of Victoria where an annual notice of intent to home educate is sufficient then we would consider registering. We would need to be certain that we will be free to educate our children according to our methods and philosophy, that we will be free of state oversight and that this will not change in the future.

We are in close contact with many home educators around the world. The current intrusive legislation in NSW casts Australia, and the state of NSW in a very poor light within the international home education community and is entirely inappropriate and inconsistent with a modern, liberal democracy.

We sincerely hope that NSW will take the opportunity to scrap this draconian legislation and replace it with a more appropriate, tolerable system of

registration that supports and protects home educators. rather than driving us underground.

Here is some further reading for anyone interested in learning more about some of the many and diverse different approaches to home education:

Rothermel, P., Home Education Rationales, practices and outcomes,
Retrieved 17 August 2014 from
<http://pjrothermel.com/Research/Researchpaper/BERAworkingpaper.htm>

Gray, P., Freedom to Learn – the roles of play and curiosity as foundations for learning (multiple articles), Retrieved 17 August 2014 from
<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn>

Thomas, A., How children learn at home, London, Bloomsbury, 2008

HOVA Submission 67. August 14, 2014.

Hi, I'm 11 years old and I have been homeschooled my whole life. My main hobbies include acting, basketball, music and film making. I am very passionate about animal rights, refugees, the environment and keeping my dog healthy and safe.

I am homeschooling in Victoria now, but from the ages of four until eleven, I was homeschooling in NSW, so most of my friends are still living there.

It is quite heartbreaking to think about how tricky homeschooling is in NSW for my friends, that they are having a hard time feeling free to learn the way they want to, and lots of their parents get really stressed about registering. It is much better in Victoria!

I do lots of homeschooling activities including drama, ten pin bowling, roller skating and park days. We also often do one-off excursions like going to the Museum, the Science Centre and so on. Last week we went to the Botanic Gardens where we did an Indigenous workshop learning about bush foods and how aboriginals lived. We've done lots of other things too, like archery, ice skating, homeschool camps, rock climbing, trampolining, gymnastics, nature studies at an Australian reserve, farm tours, historical re-enactment days, medieval fairs and so many other things I can hardly remember! I have also done fund raising for the RSPCA and World Vision.

I also do things in the community. At the moment, as well as my homeschool drama class, I am going to two other drama classes as well (I really like drama, remember)! One of them is a screen acting class, which I'm really excited about, because I'm hoping to be a famous actress one day. I also go to a fun youth group with lots of new friends. We are also starting to get involved in helping asylum seekers who have recently come to live in this amazing country.

Here is why I think homeschooling is good.

1: It's a fun way to learn and sometimes I get to learn things with my friends and our parents and if I need a break for a bit, I can have it because it's not a strict thing. I get to learn the things I want to learn, because my mum lets me choose. We're Unschooling and it is really good to be able to learn what I want to learn, rather than a teacher deciding what I should be taught.

2: It's nice to be able to be myself instead of trying to be like everyone else.

3: I think it's good that I can wear whatever clothes I want, because that way I can be more original and express myself.

4: I get to have friends who are all different ages and usually I'm actually friends with my friend's mums too, because they're very nice and actually quite fun to hang out with.

Thank you for your time and I hope you take this message into consideration.

HOVA Submission 66. August 12, 2014.

As a resident of NSW and a mother of two children being home schooled, I welcomed the news that there was to be an inquiry into homeschooling in this state. I had not intended to write a submission at first as I believed that all backgrounds and points of view would be amply covered by others. In reading the submissions to date, I realized that my circumstances and view-point are probably not well represented, although I believe there to be many people in a

similar position to my own.

I hope to be able to express the reasons and circumstances behind our family being, what would be termed, unregistered unschoolers or natural learners.

Prior to having children, had someone described unschooling to me, I would have imagined it to be the province of alternative-thinking, fringe-dwelling, anti-establishment people. I am a general primary trained teacher who has worked with school-aged children for 22 years. I work part time and feel certain that my employers, co-workers and those who entrust their children to my care would consider me to be a respectable, hard-working, conscientious person. My husband and I are dedicated parents, holding our children's care, upbringing and education paramount. We would do whatever was within our means to ensure the best possible outcomes and opportunities for our children. In short, we are nothing like the type of person I would have previously imagined would have subscribed to an unregistered, unschooling pathway.

How we arrived at our chosen pathway begins like this:

As our eldest son approached school age, it became increasingly clear to my husband and me that he would have difficulty fitting into the current school system and would likely find himself struggling to learn without an individualized learning programme.

We subsequently enrolled him in distance education, believing that his needs would be better catered for and valued the fact that he could stay at home while he was still so young. The distance education provider had us perform a diagnostic test which revealed that while our son was cognitively ready to begin schooling, there was an overall immaturity which meant that we were advised to begin with a pre-school programme. This matched our own assessment of our son who was late in reaching virtually every milestone since birth.

We subsequently discontinued distance education as it was apparent to us that our son was not ready for formal learning. One great disadvantage of school, in our view, is its limitations in being able to cater to any great extent to individual needs and differences. Unless a child has a diagnosed disability or learning difficulty, which is not the case with our son, then the options are limited in meeting the varying differences in maturity, capability, learning styles and interests. Those whose development is in step with the current curriculum requirements in a classroom are at an advantage. Those whose development is not, are at a distinct disadvantage. The children in the latter category frequently begin to suffer from a poor self-concept and self-esteem as they experience that they are unable to keep step with the majority of their peers. Once a child believes him or herself to be a poor learner, which often is not the truth, it can severely impact upon their enjoyment of learning and their ability to progress in accordance with their true potential. This in turn can lead

to behavioural problems as a child struggles with low self-esteem and so a vicious cycle begins.

Our reading and exploration led us to the area of natural learning or what is often termed “unschooling”. The further we researched, the more we felt certain that this style would bring about the best outcomes for our son. We could build learning around his interests thereby ensuring that he would be a willing participant and be engaged in learning things as they were relevant and interesting to him. This maximizes learning and is an advantage available to home schoolers and particularly natural learners in a way that is not possible in a school setting.

Through natural learning, we would be able to nurture and preserve our children’s love of learning, which is intrinsic in every child but often smothered through the stress of being forced to learn that which a child is neither interested in nor ready developmentally to learn. Concepts and themes can be introduced when a child is ready and receptive and not prematurely which causes confusion and engenders a sense of incompetence in a child. Curriculum imposed which is out of step with a child’s natural interests and stage of development risks separating a child from his/her inborn love of learning, resulting in making learning a chore and a struggle.

Those very advantages which can be richly delivered through natural learning are almost completely incompatible with the measuring tools of conventional schooling. Children learning at their own pace, subjects being chosen as they meet a child’s interests and needs cannot be measured against a fixed set of learning outcomes which must be met in a conventional school setting where there is no choice but to educate via a fixed curriculum. The very advantage of natural learning cannot be attained if such measuring devices are enforced. Natural learning is not “school at home”. It does not need to be and it can aspire to be something else. Children allowed to follow their own interests have the opportunity to develop a naturally enquiring mind. If parents are responsive and observant, they can offer opportunities to their developing child which capture the interests as they arise. Subjects often blend into one another and there is no need to artificially segment them. As such, measurement against a fixed curriculum is difficult and inappropriate as a means of measuring a child’s learning. A flexible outlook and open minded observation is needed to determine that a child engaged in natural learning is progressing and gaining skills and knowledge.

We researched families and literature on the subject of natural learning extensively. Testimonies showed time and again that children who were unschooled grew into well-adjusted adults, many of whom entered tertiary education as well as creative and innovative pursuits. We have embarked upon this pathway well informed and convinced of its positive outcomes. As we are passionate about providing what we believe is the best learning environment for our children, we have found ourselves in the difficult position of believing that we need to remain unregistered. This way we can pursue

natural learning in a way which we could not do in all likelihood under the current system of registration which would require us to prove learning outcomes against a rigid set of outcomes which must be achieved to show success, taking little account of a child's readiness. It would require us to artificially segment learning which is occurring in a natural, organic way.

As parents, we have experienced success in our working and academic lives as well as being creative and individual thinkers. We have no intention of allowing our children to be ill equipped for any path they may choose in life. Any preconceived notions that unregistered unschoolers are parents who uphold low standards for their children are simply not born out in our case and in the case of many others who we have had the privilege to have contact with.

To conclude, the tools with which we are asked to measure and record our children's learning do not suit the philosophy of natural learning and indeed are at odds with it. They are not sympathetic to the well-proven natural learning style. If parents in NSW have the right to home school their children and embrace natural learning with its proven positive outcomes, then the methods of registration and assessment must reflect an acceptance of this rather than is currently the case. The measuring tool needs to be flexible enough to meet all acceptable learning styles and not just those which are more traditional.

HOVA Submission 65. August 8, 2014.

I went to school in NSW from kindergarten to the end of year 2. I left because I was being bullied badly every day. My parents were intending to transfer me to another primary school, but decided to do homeschooling for a while so I could have some time to recover. We knew another family who were doing homeschooling, and it was working well for them.

I benefitted greatly; emotionally and physically, after commencing homeschooling. I had hardly ever eaten my lunch at school due to bullying so I was very underweight. Homeschooling resurrected this, and gave me the freedom to feel that I wasn't about to be ambushed by bullying wherever I walked.

My parents were not strict about me doing school work, and after a year or so I was unschooling, and continued with unschooling through the end of my 'school years'. This educational method gave me the freedom to pursue my current passions and explore new ones, unhindered by other obligations.

If I hadn't been Unschooler, I don't think I would have had the time or energy to truly pursue my passions, which have now developed into my career. I was living in a small rural community, travel and flexibility were necessities, if I was

to have new opportunities. Unschooling opened the world up wide for me, even though my parents' income was very low.

I am now in a stable and successful position. I was accepted at 18 years of age into a highly competitive post-graduate course which I successfully completed, and currently at 20 years old I am employed as a specialist teacher in primary and high schools in the city in which I now live.

HOVA Submission 64. August 6, 2014

I am registered in Vic but reading the NSW requirements even being a trained teacher I would not be wanting to register. My time would be better spent with my children than trying to keep government happy. As a trained teacher in the government system I found the paperwork and accountability meant teachers were not having the time to prepare all the amazing lessons and experiences they used to. Too much time is spent on paperwork at the expense of the education. Hence I am not teaching anymore and my children are not in the system. They receive a better individualised education in their home and in their community.

HOVA Submission 63. August 8, 2014.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HOME SCHOOLING INQUIRY

Summary

This submission is from the perspective of someone who was not home educated and does not home educate but has contact with families who do. My experience has shown me that the negative stereotype of home educators reinforced by the media and some education 'experts' cannot be further from the truth. The registering process needs to be simplified and those administering it need to have an understanding of educating children and be better informed about why people choose to home educate. The families I have come in contact with provide their children a huge variety of educational, recreational and social opportunities and are very engaged in the community. A study on how Australian home educated children fare as adults is overdue.

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

(b) the current context of home schooling in New South Wales including:

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

Before coming into contact with people who home educate I was unaware of their motivation except a vague idea of strict religious reasons or anti-school sentiments. However, now knowing families who home educate I am aware that this is not the case. The parents have chosen to home educate as they believe it is the best option for their children. The children enjoy learning at their own pace and participate in a wide range of activities with other home educated children, school children and adults from a wide variety of backgrounds.

I was educated at a government school and graduated from university. I enjoyed most aspects of formal schooling, adapted well to the system and was able to perform at a level that was considered acceptable, however, two of my siblings were less 'successful'. Both are bright and creative but at school they failed to perform at a generalised predetermined level based on a strict syllabus and definition of success and so suffered the confidence crushing humiliation of repeating a year. Now, as adults, this continues to negatively impact their self-esteem. Home education gives parents the option to nurture and encourage their children's unique educational development and this, in my experience, is the main motivator to home educate.

I am horrified by the stereotyping and myths about home education that the media seem intent on portraying. Perhaps it makes for a more sensational story to highlight how 'different and strange' these people are by pushing the myth that children are at home all day having no contact with the outside world. In my experience, this could not be further from the truth. Home educators have provided great detail about the myriad activities their children participate in out of the home but this is conveniently ignored for the sake of a good story. The stories inevitably include the opinion of an educational

‘expert’ who comments on the negative impacts of isolating these children thus perpetuating the myth.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

I am aware of the concern some parents have about registering because of the lack of understanding of home schooling by some authorised persons. Educating authorised persons about why people home school and dispelling the myths and stereotypes surrounding it would improve the experience for everyone. Surely a thorough understanding of education in general and home education should be a prerequisite for those responsible for monitoring it.

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

The home educated children I have come into contact with are on the whole happy, confident, well-mannered and creative individuals. I have been particularly impressed with their ability to communicate effectively with people of all ages, not just their peers. They are not isolated at home and have the benefit of interaction with a wide variety of people from many different backgrounds.

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

It is understandable that home educators would want a member representing them on the Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards considering it is responsible for the regulation of home education in NSW. I am really surprised that this is not already the case as there is representation from religious schools, independent schools, the indigenous community etc. It is not logical or reasonable that home educators be excluded from representation.

(f) any other related matter.

I understand that research on how home educated children fare as adults has been conducted in other countries but not in Australia. It is time for this kind of study to be done here. If the results show that these children fare at least as well as school educated children then fewer resources can be put into monitoring home educators and can be redirected towards assisting families to home school. After all they are already saving taxpayers' money by bearing the majority of education costs themselves. If, on the other hand, the research finds that there are areas of concern then this can be addressed with targeted programs of assistance. Gathering facts about the consequences of home education is overdue and needs to be done in order to replace the negative myths and anecdotes that surround it.

HOVA Submission 62. August 8, 2014

I have home educated my own children for several years. Here are a few of my thoughts regarding regulation of the practice.

Changing the rules for home educators without widespread consultation with home educators is not a suitable practice. Regulations governing home education must line up with legislation. Legislation and regulation must only be implemented after widespread consultation with those involved and careful consideration. The rights of parents must be an important consideration.

It is my firm opinion that no one need make a recommendation for any parent to educate their own. That is a family choice. Not a business choice. Not a government choice. Parental responsibilities and rights are undermined by the implementation of such measures as a system that assumes a position of authority over parents. Government exists to keep things fair for us. Government is there to serve the interests of the people of a nation. To protect. To represent. Not to have us serve its ideals.

I just want to be able to educate my children without having the stress of someone looking over my shoulder who has been, in my opinion, been given in error the right to say yay or nay to my choices - my informed and well-considered philosophies and choices.

I have chosen to not register because I do not submit to the idea of an over-arching governmental department having a final authority over inherent parental authority. That goes against my values.

I have no doubt that I would, hypothetically speaking, be a successful applicant should I ever choose to change my mind and register. I know how to plan and prepare. I know how to fill out forms. I know how to report. I know how to submit paperwork. I know how to be gracious and diplomatic and answer questions. I am glad though that I don't have to fit this into my life on someone else's schedule. The extra time this affords me gives me freedom to be free of unnecessary deadline stress and gives optimal opportunity for real learning to take place.

I plan. I prepare. I teach. I observe. I record. I am very happy with what works for us.

Thank you for taking the time to read these thoughts.

HOVA Submission 61. August 8, 2014.

We are thankful that this opportunity for submissions from the home school community. In all of my years of home schooling I have found that the concept has been so well received by the communities in which we have lived. I would certainly never suggest that it is a lifestyle for everyone, but it has been a great experience for our family.

The education of the "whole" child has been the single most important aspect of this process for our family. Character development has been the foundation for us, with academics and physical abilities built on that base.

Our family has been home-schooling for 17 years. Currently we have 2 children studying at home. Our older children, 20 and 17, have completed their studies and are actively involved in full time jobs as well as serving in their local church. Our younger children, 11 and 9, continue with their studies.

We continue to be involved in regular local home school support group activities.

B (i) outcomes of homeschooling including in relation to transition to further study and work

-my two oldest children currently 20 and 17, have both transitioned into TAFE study and then the workplace seamlessly. Regarding their time in TAFE some of the comments from their tutors included:

"their work is always done well before deadlines"

"their work was always presented creatively and thoroughly, and was used as an example to students twice their age."

"They went above and beyond when contributing in group assignments."

"They work really well independently but were never afraid to ask for help or clarification if needed."

Both of our girls have moved into the workplace with no difficulty. Their employers have commented on the great asset they are to their business and work team.

(ii) financial costs

We have been homeschooling for 17 years. During this time I have not worked at all, so my husband has been the sole bread winner for our family. Had I been employed in my trained field of business management, our family income would have been far higher. It was our choice to make our family our highest priority. We have needed to be more financially careful than many of our peers, but would not change what we have done.

(iii) demographics and motivation

For a large part of our homeschooling experience my husband was a pastor of a church. Our homeschooling journey suited our ministry lifestyle because the children were actively involved in church life. One of the deciding factors for me in homeschooling was listening to the lamenting of several close friends at a playgroup whose children were about to start school. Their comments were:

“He won’t be mine anymore after tomorrow.”

“I’ll have to spend every afternoon undoing all the bad behaviour he has learned during the day.”

I knew at that point that I wanted something different from that for my children. Sure they still encounter and exhibit bad behaviour, but we work through it together without it being the something unpleasant that is rushed into the short time I have with them.

I have always struggled with the argument that there can be forms of abuse in the homeschooling lifestyle. All homeschoolers we have been involved with have always had the best interests of their children at heart. I’m sure that similar to abuse in the traditional system families, it could happen. In general, though, I think of how, in keeping my children at home, we can:

- * read together;
- * go for walks;
- * enjoy the beauty of the country of Australia and learn about trees, plants, animals, weather, etc, in the process;
- * learn about the world by making foods from around the world and having parties for family and friends where we play games and learn about different countries;
- * look for ways to contribute to our community by helping neighbours or making meals for the sick or needy.

How could this be considered abuse any more than parents who have their children and then drop them at child care from 6 am to 6 pm? Or drop them to before school care until school time, then school and after school care

afterwards. The only quality time parents get with their children is the brief time from 6 – 7:30 or so when they are tired and miserable. Having the time to just enjoy my children and be with them, and them with me, has been the biggest challenge but the greatest joy of my life.

(iv) extent and reasons for unregistered homeschoolers

Our family is currently unregistered for personal reasons. I have no problem with our local AP as a person, but they did exhibit some unethical behaviour and for that reason I will not register until they are no longer the AP. The person was giving information about the education of some children who were involved in a marriage breakdown. The information given was not given in a professional context, but just on social occasions. This unprofessional conduct caused great suffering to the family and particularly the children involved.

Even though I have been unregistered for 4 years, I am aware that the process has become much more complicated which is a pity. I can only comment on the fact that in the past I was registered for about 10 years (2000-2010). During that time I found it to be a painless and positive experience. Our AP at the time was thorough in his inspection, but came prepared to encourage me and make suggestions of changes or improvements. His comment at the time was “I can tell within minutes of entering a house if everything is okay. When kids are bright and enthusiastic and filled with interesting stories of the things they are working on. Then I know that this family is on the right track, so all I have to do is make sure I’m doing everything I can to equip them in that.”

I believe it would be a valuable to have some home school parents (perhaps even ones who are trained teachers) consulting with the board of studies regarding the registration process. I feel that this could help to streamline the process of registration so that rather than it being a separate and isolated ordeal for home school families to deal with, it could become a part of their planning, implementing and record keeping.

(vi) comparison of homeschooling to school education

The things I love about homeschooling which I believe set it apart from school education are:

***freedom to change**

Over the 17 years I have homeschooled my children I have used a huge array of educational curricula, tools and programmes. We have changed regularly to keep ourselves enjoying the process and to cater for the differences in the ways our 4 children learn.

***freedom to develop relationships with multi-age groups**

All of our children have mixed for educational activities with children from 1-18 throughout their entire educational experience. The value of this in their lives is immeasurable. They have learned from the older ones, and been nurtured

by them when they were younger. As they grew they became the leaders who mentored and encouraged the younger ones.

***freedom to stick at things until they are mastered**

Often there have been “schooling” concepts such as long division, or diagramming sentences which our children have really struggled with. In a traditional school setting they would be pushed on, or they would fail. We just stick at it, over and over again, and using lots of different techniques until they finally master it. I believe this has made them people who will persevere even when things are hard.

***freedom to find learning opportunities wherever we are**

We have enjoyed so many annual family holidays where we tie in 4 or 5 educational experiences or tours. This has been a great highlight for our children to see that life is learning and it is lots of fun!

In conclusion, I am so thankful for the opportunity I have had to teach my children at home. Developing their character first, then filling their minds and challenging their growing bodies. I have no problem with the traditional education system, but for us, doing it the way we have chosen has really worked. My greatest desire and the reason for writing this submission is to ask for your understanding that the majority of families who choose homeschooling as a lifestyle are looking toward the greatest interests of their children and their family. I think it is beneficial to have some system of registration which encourages those genuine families (which I believe would be most of them!!) in their homeschooling journey. Maybe it is different from the norm, but we are striving to raise children who will be valuable members of society, who are creative and can think outside the box. I believe this is not so different from most traditional system families, but we have just chosen to do it a different way.

HOVA Submission 60. August 8, 2014.

I was Homeschooled all the way from K to year 11, I completed a Certificate 3 in child services at TAFE when I was 16. I am currently employed as a Certificate 3 Early Childcare educator at our local community preschool. I also have a part-time job as a babysitter with many regular clients. I am currently saving to purchase a car.

I am [Name], and I am 17 years old.

How did I end up here? How did I get such an enormous jump-start in life? I was homeschooled. Homeschooling has benefited my life in a dramatic way. Homeschooling has given me the time to pursue my own interests in both hobbies and education. I love to read, swim, listen to music, plan activities and functions, photography, travel, and hanging out with friends (I am a very social person so I have friends from homeschool, church and schools).

While being homeschooled I was able to learn at my own pace and in accordance with my abilities. I learned by seeing and experiencing things rather than just reading about it in workbook or just filling in blanks. I escaped most of the negative and harmful influences and pressures that I might have received from peers. I gained from my parents' character, and morals and a close home schooling and church community with which we have been actively involved.

Homeschool doesn't guarantee perfection but then neither does the traditional school system! I know that for me, at 17 people often comment how confident and balanced and enthusiastic I am. I just love life in all of its shapes and sizes. I'm excited about what challenges and opportunities will open up to me each day when I take my head off my pillow in the morning.

So all in all homeschooling was great for me! And I wouldn't change a thing! The Department of Education has a standardized system, but that system does not necessarily work for every child.

Yours Truly.

HOVA Submission 59. August 8, 2014.

I live in New South Wales and am writing to express my views on home education.

I home educated my son as he was unable to attend school (he has developmental delays and issues with anxiety). I found it to be a nurturing experience for him and he progressed very well. He attended school for the first time when he was 10 and could read and write.

I was disappointed, however that he wasn't able to access support which is available to students at school.

I know many children who are educated at home and on the whole they seem to be very well-adjusted and polite.

My son now attends school but if I hadn't educated him at home in the early years, I don't think he would have coped at school.

Another point I would like to make is that I feel it would be beneficial to have a member representing home educators on the Board of Studies.

Thank you.

HOVA Submission 58. August 8, 2014.

We have seven children. Five of our children had varied experience of homeschooling from 6 months to 9 1/2 years. Two of our children were educated solely at school. I guess the draw-card for us re: homeschooling was the benefit of being able to teach our children our faith at a more in depth way than that we had experienced in the school setting. The added bonus was the developing of greater family bonds. Siblings learning to enjoy each other's company because these are the friends they are mostly with. The family unit being enhanced.

It is obvious some of our children are more academic than others. Being able to cater for the needs of individual children, be it advanced or remedial work has been a particular blessing. Catering for the various learning styles has enabled our children to learn at their own pace. We believe, because of our emphasis on good education, our children have developed a love of learning.

So far we have a son working with young people with disabilities, one who has finished an Environmental Science degree, one studying philosophy and theology and one studying law. The last three are now in school.

Parents are the first and foremost educators of their children. Whether they decide to educate at home or at school that decision should be theirs. It is our responsibility as loving parents, to educate our children as we see best.

Laws and regulations making it harder for children to be educated at home places an unnecessary burden on parents who just want the best for their children. If we want to see the family unit restored and a better society for future families, seriously consider making legislation easier for homeschooling parents.

Thankyou for your time.

HOVA Submission 57. August 8, 2014

We have been home-schooling our children for 7 years and having 5 young children, we still have many years to go. We originally started because our oldest daughter, who is highly gifted (as assessed by a Developmental Psychologist) was not being academically challenged at school. We tried a private school and a Montessori school, and neither had the available time to invest in extending her. Their priorities were average and below average students (and I can understand that). Furthermore, our daughter changed from being an articulate, confident and well-behaved child, into a withdrawn and unmotivated child who had learned from other children in her class, how to be disrespectful to adults. Furthermore, she had to cope with a lot of bullying at both schools. We were obviously really unhappy about what school was teaching our daughter. We withdrew her from school at age 5.

Within months, our little girl was happy again. She was polite and respectful again and thriving academically. After completing all her morning jobs, she would throw herself into her bookwork, loved writing biographies on people that inspired her, devoured Science and History books and spent a lot of time researching the answers for the many questions she had about the world, and doing projects on some. She also loved playing the piano, listening to classical music, doing puzzles and hours of imaginative play.

Our daughter was able to take a major role in a play she was involved with, because her confidence had returned. She also enjoyed all the public speaking opportunities that were available to her, through our home-schooling network. Most of the children in our home-schooling circle were also very intelligent, well-behaved and gentle, and so our children made lots of close friends very quickly. Those friendships have been lasting and our children are still close friends with them today.

We loved that we were able to learn organic gardening through lessons at an organic farm. The children learned how to make soil from household refuse via composting and a worm farm, how to reduce salinity in soils by planting trees, and how hard it is to dig in a sapling tree and keep it alive during summer. They learned which trees are fire resistant and which ones make good 'bush tucker'.

We did weekly lessons with a Naturalist at a local lake studying the wetlands habitat, wildlife, bush tucker and aboriginal history. The children built Mia Mias based on their research on the topic, and painted themselves with aboriginal style rock paint. We did water sampling lessons at the lake and with the Swan River Trust and studied invertebrates and water pollution.

We did excursions to a post office; to a bee farm and watched honey being produced and learned about the life cycle of bees; to a wildlife park to learn about wildlife conservation; an Emergency Services exhibition and sports carnival. They went to music lessons, dancing lessons, drama lessons, Latin lessons and a 'Thinking Games' class. We had speakers from various backgrounds come and give talks to our home-school co-op.

This was all just in the first year of home-schooling. Seven years later, we are still ever increasing our learning. All our 5 children are intelligent, respectful, kind people. They are well liked and socially mature. They get on well with people of all ages and take on responsibility readily. Not only are they doing well academically, but they have a heart of service in our home and the broader community. They work hard and are efficient and capable for their ages.

Home-schooling has blessed them with the best foundation possible. They are taught by their parents, who love them, and do whatever it takes to do best by them. We are not limited by the school budget because we prioritise education in our family and spend whatever it takes. Our children are emotionally secure because they have a strong relationship and spend many

hours each day being given attention by their mother and father and the siblings who love them. They have had a broad range of experiences and have spent time with a broad range of people, and thus they have great general knowledge.

Our oldest daughter has now almost written her first book on the settlement of Western Australia (and ultimately Northam) through the eyes of the children in one of the families that settled here from England. It will be a 200 page novel for 9-12 year old readers. It is based on her own extensive research and our family history. We are expecting to self-publish it this year. She is already networking with other published authors and gaining support and inside knowledge.

In my opinion, home-schooling produces the kind of people that this country needs. Conversely, when we see the conduct of the teenagers at shopping centres, and all the vandalism they produce, we can see that schooling does not necessarily produce a better result.

Thank you HOVA for your effort with this.

HOVA Submission 56. August 7, 2014

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HOME SCHOOLING INQUIRY

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

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

I have home schooled my children for the past 4 1/2 years. We lived in New Zealand during the first 4 and currently reside in NSW.

In New Zealand, home schoolers are required to register with the government. In order to receive a 'Certificate of Exemption from Enrolment at a Registered School', applicants submit certain documentation to the Ministry of Education. If the documentation is acceptable, an Exemption Certificate is issued. A separate application and certificate is required for each child in a family. The exemption is valid while the child is of school age. To maintain exemption status, the parent is required to complete a 6-monthly statutory declaration stating, "My child was taught at least as regularly and well as (if they were) in a registered school". Normally, no visit is involved at any stage. Visits are only ever made to families suspected of not fulfilling their obligation.

Furthermore, an optional Home Schooling Allowance is paid per child, in 6-monthly instalments. This is not means tested. The annual amount exceeds \$700 for the first child in the family, and is slightly less for siblings.

While in New Zealand, I felt the general attitude of the government was that of acceptance, trust and support for home schooling families. This was evidenced by:

- * A financial allowance.
- * Long registration period.
- * Freedom for parents to choose curriculum best suited to the child and to follow interests as they developed.
- * No ongoing, regular evaluations.
- * “The One Day School” program, designed for gifted students of registered schools, was also open to home educated students who qualified.
- * Home schooled students were invited to join inter-school cross-country events.

While enjoying a relatively lower level of government regulation than in NSW, I still was passionate about providing my children with the best education possible in a safe, structured and nurturing environment.

As a home-educator, I was dedicated to teaching my children all of the ‘Key Learning Areas’ to prepare them for a wide range of opportunities in the future. It is a deep love and commitment to them and their future success as adults, that drive me to provide a well-rounded, quality education.

(b) the current context of home schooling in New South Wales including:

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

Our family consists of a husband and wife with four children, aged 10, 8, 6 and 3. My husband has fulltime employment earning \$100K p.a.. I hold a B.Sc.(Hons) from an Australian University and have the major responsibility for our children’s education.

There are many reasons why we home-educate our children.

The benefits include:

- * Tailoring educational programs to each child’s interests.
- * Using teaching methods which cater for each child’s learning style.

- * Each child learns at a rate appropriate for their aptitude in each learning area, rather than their age level.
- * To promote learning as a lifestyle. It occurs in and out of dedicated lessons; any day, any time, and any place.
- * Time to develop strong family relationships.
- * Children benefit from 1:4 teacher to student ratio. All their questions can be discussed and each child's progress is closely monitored.
- * Training in character, life-skills and our family's values.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers,

Our decision not to register was based on information obtained from registered home schoolers who were unsatisfied with the process. Their reasons included the inconsistency between Approved Persons. Some AP's were supportive while others seemed to lack an adequate understanding of home schooling. We consider home schooling to be a parental right which we did not want to see jeopardised by a visit from an inappropriately trained AP.

We also believe it should not be a home schooling requirement to strictly follow the NSW Syllabus. There are many recognised curriculums available which provide for a quality education.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

The process regarding a change of home schooling address is inappropriate. It requires a special AP visit to assess the new home for its suitability for home schooling registration.

We are extremely capable of choosing a suitable home for our home schooling family without the authorisation of an AP. We have succeeded in doing this several times due to relocation for employment. It is insulting to suggest that a parent who has proven their commitment to their child by successful registration, would not consider their child's needs when finding a home.

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

Our home schooling provides an environment where our children feel safe and secure. They are generally happy children who enjoy learning and family life, without fear of bullying or negative peer pressure. They are free to be themselves and discover their uniqueness.

They are not at all isolated, but participate in regular supervised activities outside the home such as sport, social and church groups.

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

We believe it would be appropriate for BoSTES to include a representative from the home education community. This would allow the board to make more informed decisions regarding the thousands of home schooling students within NSW.

HOVA Submission 55. August 7, 2014

Outcomes of Homeschooling including in relation to Further study and work

I home schooled my son for three years from 4th grade to 6th grade. In year seven he commenced High School. He had no trouble transitioning to school at all. Considering he didn't know anyone before hand he was able to make friends quickly. Academically our son was above average and had no trouble with any of his subjects, excelling in many of them. He is still doing very well now that he is in year nine. Homeschooling helped him be able to study and research independently. He also has a lot of confidence in social situations, he is able to converse easily with both his peers and teachers.

We are so glad that the opportunity to homeschool was open to us when we found that our local school was not able to manage the bullying situation that our son was experiencing. We were also very grateful to the extensive homeschooling community that provided not only social opportunities for our son, but also a wide range of resources to help us continue to educate him at home and in the community. It is great that he was able to come home and learn, feel safe in a familiar environment and develop the self-confidence to take him out into the world to continue his learning in an institutional environment.

HOVA Submission 54. August 7, 2014.

Summary: This submission centres largely around the belief in the need for a more simplified and straightforward approach to the registration process for home education in NSW. It also serves to address some false stereotypes and myths around the reasons people choose to home educate and rebukes those myths and stereotypes. The importance of having members on the

BOSTES who represent the home educating community and the importance of having suitably qualified AP's are also addressed. The nature of home education and the ways and extent to which home educators engage with the broader community while carrying out the day to day activities of home education are also addressed.

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

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

I have come into contact with hundreds of home educating families in the 13 years I have been involved with the community and although it is not a universal wish, it is a very prevalent wish that the home education registration procedure be pared down and simplified. It made me wonder if a simple registration procedure is an excessive or unreasonable request. In pondering that question, I looked at some of the procedures in other states and other countries.

I understand that New Zealand and Victoria, among others, have straightforward processes for registration and believe moving to those kinds of systems would be a change for the better for New South Wales. It would not only simplify matters for already busy home educating families, but would also serve to re-direct scarce resources of man power and money to more effective, helpful and productive services which could be accessed by home educators in lieu of access to the myriad resources available to schools which home educators are currently unable to access.

I believe the powers given to the BOSTES in terms of the circumstances under which they may deny long registration periods (giving three months or six months, rather than two years) are excessive and that the focus of the Authorised Person can sometimes turn to the minute of administrative detail rather than to the overall quality of education in it's broadest sense - the physical, emotional, psychological and intellectual development of a child.

Although this inquiry refers to other jurisdictions within Australia and New Zealand, I came across this reference to home education registration in the UK and felt it important to include it here as a model for what is reasonable, possible and viable in terms of the State's requirement for home education. I was struck by the number of assertions about what, as a home educating family "You do not need..." to do. This contrasts so sharply with the "You must..." wording of the NSW registration guidelines:

"Under Section 7 of the 1996 education act, parents are responsible for ensuring that their children receive an education suitable to their age ability and aptitude, as well as any special needs he or she may have. The following home-schooling rules apply in England and Wales:

You do not need the permission of an LEA (Local Education Authority) to home educate a child (unless the child attends a special needs school).

You do not have to hold any particular qualifications to home educate your child.

There are no predetermined hours or times that you must tutor your child at home.

You do not have to conform to the National Curriculum.

You can home educate a child with special needs.

Home educated children are not required to undertake examinations or SATs".

(Source: lawandparents.co.uk)

(b) the current context of home schooling in New South Wales including:

(ii) financial costs,

I am university educated but chose to forego a career in order to raise my children. In order to home educate we not only choose to get by on one income we also choose to bear all the costs associated with educating our children. The costs incurred include paying tutors and teachers of group classes, sports' training, artistic endeavours, buying books and other resources, visiting museums and art galleries etc. I feel there is nothing I could choose to do that would be more important or better contribute to the society I live in than to take responsibility to raise my children myself in partnership with my husband and my community. I do not see the sense in having someone pay me to work out of the home while the government (or my husband and I if we chose private school education) pays someone else to educate our children. In giving up paid employment in order to raise my children myself, I give up extra income while at the same time saving the government the cost of educating my children. In purely economic terms, supporting and encouraging home educators in a spirit of co-operation seems to be the only logical approach, yet the current atmosphere surrounding home education seems to be one of antagonism and suspicion with little financial or other support provided.

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

I am concerned that choosing to home educate may be seen as an overarching rejection of public education. I support universal public education and my choice to home educate is not borne of any specific discontent or dissatisfaction with the other education options available in this state, but was a decision made before my children reached school age, based on observation of home educating families here and abroad and on extensive study of the literature available. My husband is a University Professor who has a special interest in the changing nature of education and believes that children educated well at home emerge well equipped to deal with the rapidly-changing challenges of life in the 21st Century. Our reasons for home educating are multi-faceted and I fear that the stereotypical view that people home educate because they are anti-government, anti-establishment, or anti-school is far too prevalent. Most home educators understand and appreciate

that home education is not the best option for all children, but believe it to be a better option for our children. We wish for a broader acceptance of it as a valuable and viable option for those who do choose it.

Far from the stereotypical view of home education placing limits on our children's interactions, it allows us to operate in the community at large, actively participating in varying environments with our children, with their peers, with children of various ages and with a range of adults. Home education is somewhat of a misnomer given that much of our education takes place outside the home with groups of home educators, after hours with other school children in sporting classes, drama classes, volunteering projects etc. Home educators generally choose to educate their children because it allows us to access the richness and variety of skills, talents, interests and passions of people from all walks of life within our community who are willing to share those skills etc. with our children.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers,

I would, by almost every measure, be considered a very conventional, law abiding citizen, not having had so much as a parking fine in my 47 years, yet I am not a registered home educator. I choose this path of civil disobedience extremely uneasily because I am not a law-breaker. I understand we have laws to protect us and to protect others. I do not need the threat of a speeding fine to keep me from speeding because I understand that not speeding keeps me, my passengers and other motorists and pedestrians safe. I understand the law and do not need to have a police officer around to my house once every two years or even more frequently (if they happen to be particularly concerned about my ability to comprehend and follow the law) to remind me of the laws around speeding.

The point I am making is there are laws which are perfectly reasonable, but the way they are enacted is not always appropriate. I believe the way the regulation process for home education is carried out is an inappropriate enactment of the law that states that home education is a legal right of every family in NSW. It is enacted in an unnecessarily intrusive and heavy-handed way, which makes for an atmosphere of either anxiety or evasiveness depending on whether a family chooses to register or not register, respectively.

I cannot subject myself and my children to the scrutiny required by the BOSTES to fulfil the registration requirements. It is not because I fear I will be found to not be doing the absolute best for my children. It is not because I fear I will be accused of not fully appreciating what is best for my children. It is not because I fear my husband and I could not jointly create a programme with all the appropriate "eduspeak" to convince the Authorised Person of our suitability to home educate. It is partly, and ironically, that we could create such a programme to present to the AP that I prefer not to. I prefer not to be forced into a situation where I have to lie to be approved. In the case of home education, I find myself forced into a situation where I have to choose between lying to be accepted or breaking the law to be truthful. The most

recent BOSTES guidelines put what my husband and I understand to be best for our children (based on years of serious thought, research, experience and negotiation with our children and the unconditional love we have for them which dictates all that we do) at odds with what those who enact the law believe is best for our children. Home educators are sometimes accused of being arrogant for asserting they know what is best for their children, that they could not possibly have the "skills" necessary to do what is best for their children, even that we don't understand the expertise required to teach. I would say those critics could not possibly understand the degree of thought, consideration, time, effort and soul searching that is required to commit to a course of action that is seen as so unconventional. They also fail to acknowledge that we are very happy and willing to seek out professionals to teach or coach our children in areas we may have difficulty covering ourselves.

I believe the registration process has become so onerous that I suspect a hidden agenda - that of discouraging families from home educating because it would be so much easier to just put our children in school thus easing the burden on the BOSTES to oversee our registration. Despite this, we doggedly and steadfastly prefer to home educate. Despite the lack of funding, despite the sacrifice in income, we doggedly prefer to home educate. Despite the lack of down time, despite the immensity of the responsibility, despite the negativity associated with doing the unconventional, we still doggedly prefer to home educate. Despite carrying the burden of the knowledge that as otherwise law-abiding citizens we are breaking the law, we steadfastly prefer to home educate. We will continue to home educate, registered or otherwise, but we would prefer to register under a system that more appropriately enacts the law.

If carried out according to the words of the BOSTES document the home educating parent could be spending more time on administrative affairs than on interacting with/educating our children. Scrutinising every aspect of a child's life and learning, compartmentalising everything into boxes that can be ticked may be the way to administer education on a mass scale but it is highly ineffective and pointless in a home education setting. The failure to understand the fundamental differences between state-based education and home-based education clearly comes through in the document.

Home educators who have not registered in the past due to overly bureaucratic, counter-intuitive processes are even less likely to register now. If the guidelines could have changed so quickly with so little consultation with home educators from the last set of guidelines to the current, then what can we expect of future documents? If the current document is not retracted, what precedent does this set? What is the limit on the powers of the BOSTES? What chance is there that those most knowledgeable and most invested in home education will ever get a say in how best to administer home education? If we register under the current guidelines and get approved, is there a chance things will change without warning and we won't be approved next time around?

(v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children,

While home education is a very effective way of meeting the special needs of certain children, not all home educated children have any particular special needs. I think this is an important point to make. Home education, for those of us who are highly committed to it, is not a question of "Why?" but "Why not?" Not a matter of school not meeting our needs but of us being willing, able and very happy to meet our own children's needs ourselves. Our children's educational needs are like those of any other children's needs - to be encouraged and directed, to be challenged and nurtured to be free to explore and discover and think. We can do this within a very flexible framework or with more organised curricula. In either case, the freedom to do this without fear or impediment and with access to support and resources are fundamental and universal needs.

I do not think a child or a home educating family needs a visit to their home from an Authorised Person from the BOSTES to properly and effectively function as an educational unit. I think properly trained AP's could be a valuable resource which home educators could voluntarily seek assistance from if and when they need to. This would be a much more helpful and effective use of the AP's and their time. It would give support to those who require it while not imposing upon those who do not.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

As already stated elsewhere, I believe the most effective way to reduce the number of unregistered home educators is to move to a more streamlined system of registration akin to those currently operating in places like New Zealand, Victoria, the UK, etc.

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

I am disturbed by the apparent trend towards the employment/deployment of Authorised Persons who have administrative experience with BOSTES but very little experience of real-world education. This is a disturbing feature because the AP's who have years of experience in all aspects of education - private, public, special education and home education are passionate about education as a nurturing, co-operative process and they encourage, support and commend home educators for the incredible effort and dedication we put into our children's education.

Those AP's love education and are enthusiastic when they see it working well and this is so wonderful for parents who instinctively know they are doing the best for their child by home educating, but who occasionally may falter in their confidence because they have chosen a course so different from the mainstream. These positive meetings with co-operative-minded AP's can be a really rewarding and affirming experience for home educators. On the other hand, as stated earlier, the bureaucratic approach to home education where

the home educator feels scrutinised and berated for not dotting all the "i"s and crossing all the "t"s, where they must have a thoroughly prepared programme which they must strictly adhere to for fear of being penalised with a reduction in their registration period, followed by an often equally harsh review makes for an atmosphere of anxiety and evasiveness.

I think it is essential that AP's have some training in the unique nature of education delivered in the home and how it differs from education delivered en masse. There are so many myths and misunderstandings about home education in the community at large and it is a shame that some AP's carry these pre-conceived notions with them when they meet with a family. This is not a good place to be coming from. At the very least, an interest in the true nature of home schooling and the motivations behind a family's decision to home school must surely be a pre-requisite for the job of AP.

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

Another reason for not registering for home education is the issue of a fundamental philosophical difference between what and how a home educating family and the state feel is important for a child to learn. We feel what is taught in school can easily be learned when necessary given the motivation and application of effort to the task when required. We do not feel it is essential that all children learn all the same things all at the same ages. We also feel that home education allows our children to learn extremely valuable skills and life-lessons that simply cannot be learned in the context of a timed school period.

Strict adherence to a syllabus in the home education environment can be an impediment to learning not a tool for directing learning, in my experience. It is an artificial way to compartmentalise life and make everything a task rather than a discovery. Home educated children are offered the freedom to develop their ability to think, choose, discern and discover. Interference from a system that is so fundamentally at odds with this philosophy makes it impossible for those with this philosophical position to register under the current circumstances.

A National Curriculum is a programme developed for delivering content in a manageable form to a large group of children in a classroom and that it is not necessarily the best way to educate a child and certainly not applicable in a home environment where you generally have a ratio of one adult to up to three or more children and where children have almost unlimited access to resources within the community. The unprecedented advances in technology which allow anyone to access material and information/advice from experts in any field from almost anywhere in the world makes it even more effective to develop an individualised programme of study/ research/enquiry for children educated at home. I therefore do not think it at all unreasonable to consider removing the curriculum requirement from the NSW system of home education registration.

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

wellbeing

I believe that a child educated in the home is under the care of the person/people most invested in their physical, emotional, intellectual and psychological development and well-being. While I do not come to this position from a personal fear of other methods of education - public or private - I feel I need to state this given it is one of the terms of reference of the inquiry.

There is one recurring theme in the media and elsewhere about home education and the safety of the child which I would specifically like to address in this section.

There seems to be a notion that stricter regulation of home schooling would lead to less child abuse. This position is quite absurd. Taken to its logical conclusion, we would need to regulate the home life of schooled children as well. What this line of argument implies is that school children are safe because they are at school (a regulated environment) while home schooled children are not safe because they are at home (an unregulated environment). Stricter regulation of home education can only be truly justified if this approach were to be applied across the board to the extent that schooled children's time in the home in the hours and days between school times be strictly regulated. Is the presumption that parents of children who go to school can be trusted after hours, but parents of home educated children can not be trusted at all?

The notion that children are more at risk of abuse because they are not at school ignores the statistics on abuse that takes place at school and is based on a completely false, broadly-held myth that home educated children do not have enough contact with other children and adults to be visible enough for abuse to be noticed and reported. While some child abusers may claim to be home educators as a smokescreen for their abusiveness, the vast majority of home educators are not child abusers. A fundamental requirement of home education is that you enjoy being with your children, that you choose to be with your children. It seems logical to me that those who abuse their children would be only too happy to avail themselves of the school system because it decreases the amount of time required of them to be caring and responsible for their children. Stricter regulation of genuine home educators to crack down on child abusers is like shooting bullets to kill mosquitoes. It misses the target and is totally excessive.

To illustrate to extent of the average home educated child's visibility and involvement within the broader community, I outline below a collated list of my three children's weekly activities. This list does not include other activities which we also participate in on a less frequent basis, such as special events, excursions, performances, competitions, holidays, social events, fund-raising events etc:

Monday: Visits from/by homeschooled friends and parents/ Play with neighbourhood friends

Tuesday: Science workshop (run by paid professional science educator) with home educators from around Sydney for older two children. Play in the park & attendance at council-run play group with home educated children and children from the local community for younger child.
After school martial arts class with school friends

Wednesday: Dance/Choir/Theatre Sports/Drama. Each class is taught by a different professional teacher.
Approximately 40 families attend - the children have structured class time and free play time.
Afternoon soccer training with school friends. Visits from/to neighbourhood friends.

Thursday: Home school support group (with a membership of 60 families, with a combined total of about 150 children) in local park - workshops, classes from art to debating, shows, performances etc. run by parents or professional teachers.
Martial arts class with school friends
Music and singing lessons.

Friday: Soccer with professional soccer coach.
Film/Television Production Workshop

Saturday: Martial arts class.

Sunday: Soccer. Play dates.

Home educators are required to demonstrate that their children are visible in the community and not socially isolated, yet the current guidelines have the power to force home educators to do a disproportionate amount of their home educating in the home, thus significantly limiting the opportunities for community and social engagement. This is a fundamental paradox that is written into the document and it needs to properly addressed and re-assessed.

(f) any other related matter.

I expect the submissions to this inquiry will be written based on the priorities each parent/family has identified would make their efforts to home educate their children more effective. I hope that accepting and nurturing our differences is what ultimately unifies us as home educators and as a community. I am grateful that I live in a democracy that makes home education a legal option and I hope that the result of this inquiry will be that it will become an even better option for those who need or choose to undertake it.

HOVA Submission 53. August 6, 2014.

First, I would like to thank the homeschooling parents of HOVA for making it possible for homeschooling families, especially unregistered and unschooling families, to make anonymous submissions to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Homeschooling. HOVA are an inspiring group of people doing a great deal of work, all voluntarily, in the hope it will benefit children and families in the long run as government and the public generally become more aware of homeschooling and the systemic difficulties facing homeschooling families, particularly in NSW.

The fact that an organisation such as HOVA needed to be formed to allow many homeschoolers access to the Inquiry speaks volumes about how homeschoolers, particularly unregistered and unschooling homeschoolers, are typically marginalised rather than supported by government processes, which results in challenges for these families and impacts negatively on the very children whose interests government claim to be concerned about.

I have many years of parenting experience, and my eldest child is now an adult. Although I have been registered for homeschooling in NSW in the past, I am currently an unregistered homeschooler in NSW. My husband and I follow an unschooling approach regarding our children's learning. We have many homeschooling friends who have taken an unschooling approach and their adult children have gone on easily to employment or tertiary study. My eldest child was never homeschooled. My other children have all homeschooled, and my youngest have only homeschooled. Since I began homeschooling my children have all had the choice to homeschool or to attend school.

My homeschooled children are happy, learning well, hold down part-time jobs, have completed TAFE study, have ambitions that include tertiary study and have many friends who unschool, homeschool and attend school. I only wish that I had been aware of homeschooling as a legitimate and positive option for my children's learning earlier. I believe that it is remiss of governments to provide informational material to parents about their responsibilities under the law relating to children's education that does not include the option of homeschooling.

If a family chooses to homeschool, it is unacceptable and wrong that a government should determine how, when and what these children 'learn' according to that government's pre-determined curriculum, then be permitted to measure how well parents carry out that government's instructions. As if children are empty vessels to be filled with knowledge of any government's choosing. This is an archaic and damaging way of looking at children AND looking at learning.

Our children have choices about how and what they learn. They are respected as the wonderful individuals they are. Our children who have attended school have at times experienced what it is NOT to be respected within the school system, to have choices taken away (even choices about

going to the bathroom) and how this impacts learning negatively. They have experienced boredom and bullying first and second hand, from students and teachers. They have seen friends and other students suffer under labels such as 'remedial', 'gifted' etc that they carry with them sometimes throughout their lives.

As a family we have made the decision to live on one income so that we can homeschool, and we do this happily, it is no sacrifice. We are grateful every day to be able to share our lives and spend time with our children during their younger years.

Every family should have the right to choose to provide an alternative living and learning environment for their child such as homeschooling - in particular unschooling - without first being assessed as worthy by a government body.

HOVA Submission 52. August 6, 2014.

I am a home educating mother in Victoria, Australia. We have been homeschooling for over 6 years and I have 6 children aged from two to eleven years of age.

I have found the Victorian registration system to be very straight forward and not intimidating at all. It takes up very little of my time which gives me more time to spend home educating my children. I have heard about the registration system in NSW and if I had to submit an application like that, I would find it overwhelming and unnecessary. I can understand why so many in NSW choose not to register.

My children love learning about world history, world geography and all things scientific. They are reading their way through our local library, often borrowing 30 books each week.

They are thriving and happy and we enjoy mixing with a variety of different people, including homeschool groups, extended family, neighbourhood children and others in society.

I was home educated as an older child. I loved the freedom to work at my own pace. I found I was much more productive at home than I had ever been in a classroom full of distractions. Having the freedom to dig deeper into subjects that I was interested in was another bonus of home education.

Last year my husband and I took our children on a nine week camping trip around the eastern half of Australia. Our children learnt so much more than what we ever could have planned, from Aboriginal history and culture, to the importance of working as a team, from the diversity of Australia's native wildlife, to the why's of variation of petrol prices and groceries in different parts

of the country. We could never have anticipated just how and when all their learning would take place.

I personally know home educated children who have attended uni or TAFE and are now adults living successful, fulfilling lives. They include a primary school teacher, a mechanic, a chef and a computer engineer. I also know at least six home educated young adults who are currently studying at university.

We find home education to be a wonderful way to live and learn as a family and are thankful to be living in Victoria, due to the ease of registration here.

HOVA Submission 51. August 6, 2014.

To whom it may concern,

There is confusion that Education = Schooling (including school registration methods, curriculum and systems. My conclusion on this matter based on personal research is Education is Compulsory but Schooling is not.

Home education is an intrinsic element of families and having children. I would like that this is recognized and made protected by law by the Australian Government.

Our family value an organic, holistic and synergistic approach in life. Home education, like natural birthing and breastfeeding are simply natural expressions of how one may CHOOSE to go about living and in this case in having a family.

A little about me, I am a Chinese woman in my late 30s born in Fiji and attended 3 years of Uni at UTS studying a Bachelor of Applied Science in Physics. I stopped due to starting my family then. My eldest will turn 18 in November and is doing his HSC right now. He intends to study law. I am also an Energy Healer and have had clinical success with my clients around physical health issues such as back pain and injuries where a physio and chiro have not been successful for years.

I choose to home educate due to our family values.

RE REGISTRATION

I started this year around February. [Daughter] was registered by her 6th birthday in June this year. I was satisfied with the registration process. The authorized representative happened to mention, it was necessary to regulate these matters because a lot of children could fall through the “cracks”. The fact is people fall through the cracks EVERYWHERE in life. Children who are sent to schools go through 12 years of schooling and some never learn a thing! Is this a problem of the school? In some cases it’s really due to the family issues such as alcoholism etc. These kinds of families do exist and they are NOT to be confused with people who choose to home educate. In fact home education is work and a commitment.

Wishlist: I would prefer Registration be OPTIONAL and with as little regulation as possible.

CURRICULUM

Within Math & English alone, [daughter] understands and can do addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. She can comprehend the four different kinds of equations verbally and translate them into written mathematical formulas. She can read 2, 3 and 4 letter syllables and therefore can read any word. She is able to write and recall 2, 3 and 4 letter words. I prefer to have my own curriculum and method of educating her and that is a natural holistic and synergistic method. I am extremely unhappy about having to adhere to the curriculum for many reasons. Everyone learns differently. I prefer an OPEN SOURCE method of learning where the child INITIATES the subject of learning. In today’s world we have access to SO MUCH information, we teach ourselves ANYTHING IF and WHEN we WANT to.

I believe with open source learning, by the time [daughter] is in Year 7 she will have pretty much achieved a Year 10 student’s objective / outcome due to the nature of holistic and synergistic approach – you end up ticking all the boxes.

Wishlist: It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure their child is sufficiently educated that or something better. Magic happens when one is in Open Source learning!

RE CHILDRENS SAFETY

It is as good as schooled children because we live in communities and are surrounded by people. If a child is being abused, family members, neighbours and friends are always amongst the first to know. Walls and people have eyes and ears.

To say that home educated children are more susceptible to abuse would mean that there is a higher percentage of abused children in isolated country areas, and this is simply NOT true!

A family who will abuse their children will abuse them and these families occur in regular schooling systems as much as anywhere else.

Families who abuse their children may often not send their children to school at all. These families are usually problem families and it's less likely they will go to the lengths of "registering" their child.

HOME EDUCATION LIFE:

Is fun for my daughter and I. It involves abit more work. For us, what works well even though we are an open source learner is to have a system. We do our lessons at least 4 times a week in the morning and it can be anywhere from 2 – 3 hours. We do meetup with other home schoolers in the community. [Daughter] has extracurricular activities like any school child – doing dancing, swimming, chinese lessons, and ice skating. She has a close group of friends.

Below is an extract of the law in regards to home education in the United Kingdom. Source: <http://home-ed.info>

Home education and the law

Home education is legal throughout the UK, although the laws in the four countries of the UK (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) are not exactly the same.

According to the 1996 education act in England and Wales, it is **parents** (not the state) who are responsible for providing their children's education 'in school or otherwise'. Their education must be suitable for the age, ability and aptitude of each child. The same wording is used in Northern Ireland. Scottish law says that 'every child has a right to an education, and it is the duty of the parent of every school age child to provide that education, either by sending the child to school, or by other means.'

My personal wish list items are:

1. Education is the responsibility of parents who may decide to provide their children's education in school or otherwise

2. Registration be OPTIONAL
3. It is up to each family to ensure that their children receive appropriate education.
4. That Home Educators have access to Educational Support Services which are currently available to those in the school system such as access to the hospital school, travel passes, TAFE, TvET courses, part-time schooling, school libraries etc.

And at the very least if not the above, then:

1. That an independent body be set up to oversee Homeschooling (made up of home educators and others) – a body which is directly responsible to the Minister of Education (not through the Board of Studies).
2. That Registration is based on a new Information Package through consultation with home educators, under the governance of the above mentioned Independent Advisory Body. (That it should be registration and not regulation.)
3. That Home Educators have access to Educational Support Services which are currently available to those in the school system such as access to the hospital school, travel passes, TAFE, TvET courses, part-time schooling, school libraries etc.

Yours Sincerely

HOVA Submission 49. August 6, 2014.

We are in Victoria and we unschool. We have 2 daughters about to turn 10 & 7. They both attended kinder & the older one did part-time prep which an absolute disaster as the school principal was so unco-operative.

We actually decided to home school before having children as I am severely chemically sensitive & cannot attend places like schools at all plus school uniforms would be an issue as one of my biggest problems is with textiles.

At that stage there was no Registration here in Victoria. We were very disappointed with the legislation that was brought in by the previous government. However, at this stage, the onus on Vic based HSers is far less than what the legislations actually can require of us. We only need to register annually - which results in automatic acceptance if there are no issues such as shared custody. This is not at all onerous in mho however I am not happy that the legislation actually makes provision for more onerous possibilities if the government/education department decides to enforce it.

Due to other political issues here in Victoria, we were contemplating leaving the state as a last resort measure. We would have liked to go to NSW due to (a) climate and (b) I am originally from there and have lots of relatives there (in Sydney). BUT, the NSW HS regulations make that impossible for me. (Our fall back location is now ACT or maybe SA ... IF we need it.)

I hope this is of some assistance. You are welcome to contact me for further information.

HOVA Submission 48. August 6, 2014.

To whom it may concern,

Re Home Education registration in NSW.

As the mother of young children, as yet too young for registration or schooling, I have been forward planning their education for years. I have a rather unique position of living in the border cities of Albury-Wodonga and when we were looking at buying a house, the registration process for homeschooling was a large motivating factor for us eventually buying in VIC, despite my husband working in NSW.

During my study for B Teach (Sec), I became increasingly frustrated with the difference between the educational research and child psychology I was reading, and the realities of the education system. It was out of this discrepancy that my desire to home educate was born. It is the freedom to treat my child in the manner I deem most suitable, as a loving and invested parent, that is my motivation to make the financial sacrifice and investment of effort required to educate them myself.

To add to this already heavy role the addition of such a rigorous registration process as stands in NSW currently is an overwhelming and disincentifying thought. I understand registration can be used to ensure someone is taking responsibility for the child's education. I believe this is appropriate and good, and I believe Victoria's registration process is sufficient for this purpose. I also believe that simplifying the process in such a way will encourage more of those currently unregistered to register. In my experience most homeschoolers are idealists, not rebels. They believe in democracy and law, and want to obey it as much as possible.

Regards,

HOVA Submission 47. August 6, 2014.

The Director
Select Committee on Home Schooling
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000
4th August 2014

Dear Sirs,

I am writing in response to your call for submissions to the home education inquiry. I will address your terms of reference in order.

1. (a) The background of home schooling including comparison of practices with other jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand

I have been home schooling my daughter for 8 years. My husband and I decided to home educate her for various reasons. In fact, we decided early on to 'try it and see'; always keeping school in mind as an option. It became clear, over time, that our daughter was thriving and none of us saw any reason to change what we were doing. She has always been part of a large home schooling community, and shows a maturity and self-assuredness that is a pleasure to witness in a young child. She is learning well, and most importantly, is happy.

My family was living in the UK until last year, when we moved to New South Wales for work. My husband is a well-published researcher working at a University here. When making the decision to accept the position, the state's approach to home education was a major consideration for us. Home education has become a part of our family culture. It's what we do, and it's very important to us that we can continue. It was clear that the regulations in New South Wales were very different to those in the UK, and undergoing changes, but it all seemed workable.

Now we're here, we have been surprised at some of the attitudes to home education. There are many misunderstandings about the process, about the reasons people choose it, and it would seem also about the responsibilities of the state and the parents.

I have no experience of New Zealand or other Australian states, however I will include some information about the UK in case it is of interest. As far as I can understand, the law here is akin to that in the UK.

The law in the UK states;

'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable ; a) to his age, ability, and aptitude, and

*b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school **or otherwise.**'*

The role of the Local Authority, which takes a similar role to the Board of Studies, is;

'If it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.'

The phrase, 'if it appears', is fundamental to understanding the authority's role. Just as child protection services do not presume all children are being abused until proven otherwise, the authority presumes home educators are fulfilling their role unless they are given reason to suspect otherwise.

Home educators are not required to register nor give evidence of their educational provision. However, in the case where the authority IS concerned, case law in 1980 established that informal enquiries could be made. At the time Lord Donaldson said,

'the parents will be under no duty to comply. However it would be sensible for them to do so. If parents give no information or adopt the course of merely stating that they are discharging their duty without giving any details of how they are doing so, the LEA will have to consider and decide whether it 'appears' to it that the parents are in breach'.

The situation in the UK has evolved over time. In practice, most home educators are now in contact with their local authorities. No formal register is kept, but each authority is aware of the home educated children in its area. Most families happily provide information about their educational programmes and many welcome home visits reporting that their children enjoy meeting the authorised person and chatting about their learning. As it is a voluntary thing, people feel very differently about the process. Being compelled to request permission to home educate is something that every home schooler I know feels very strongly against. It is not the state's permission to grant, indeed it is a human right for a parent to educate their child as they see fit.

I have read that there are large numbers of unregistered homeschoolers in NSW. I have no way of knowing if the numbers are realistic. But my experience in the UK leads me to believe that voluntary registration would lead to far greater engagement between the homeschool community and the Board of Studies. Or, at the very least, the removal of the onerous procedure currently in place.

The current registration process is focused entirely on the parent's ability to produce a system for planning, recording, assessing. There is no attention paid to the actual child, to their learning style, to their individual progress. The huge amount of work required for registration, is extremely time consuming and stressful for most people and detrimental to the sterling job that homeschooling parents are doing. Authorised Persons in the UK (their equivalent), state that they can tell immediately if a child is being educated or not. They do not concern themselves with the minutiae of the school

curriculum, or the parent's planning processes. Quite aside from anything else, they are not trained teachers or home educators and cannot lay claim to being able to assess educational programmes. Indeed, if the intention truly were to assess, then the child's work in each KLA would need to be checked each year, a huge amount of work that clearly is not in the remit of the Board

of Studies. Claiming that the current system ensures anything other than a parent's ability to produce vast amounts of documentation, is a nonsense and makes the whole process meaningless.

My suggestion is simple – ask people to register, ask them to confirm that they are home educating, and then leave them alone to get on with it unless or until a concern is raised.

(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

I can only speak of my general and UK experience here. The normal path I saw children following in the UK community, was to start taking their GCSE's at age 12-14. These are the exams which UK school children take at age 15-16. After this they would go on to college and then University. Many children followed alternative paths of course, some taking longer to get there but securing places at art college, dance schools, music academies. Some teenagers go to school, to complete their studies. I also know of someone who earned a mechanic's apprenticeship, another who became a stage make-up artist, and another who became a singer songwriter. The outcomes of home schooled children are as varied and various as those of schooled children. They are certainly not limited in any way, and in most cases I know they are accelerated and with better outcomes.

ii) financial costs

Home education is a choice. The state provides an educational option of school, free and available to all. Most home educators I know feel that having chosen to opt out of the school system, they are not entitled to anything from the state. This is my belief too.

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

We are both educated to degree level, my husband to PHD level. He is an academic researcher. I was an entrepreneur running a large company, before taking on the home education role. We are non religious and in our 40's.

Our motivation is simply that things are going very well and we see no reason to change. We both had more or less positive experiences at school, and are

not 'anti-school'. We began home educating as we felt our daughter was not ready for school at the typical starting age. Once we got going with it, made friends, were impressed by the children we met, impressed by the amazing things parents were doing, started to do amazing things ourselves and watched our daughter grow and grow.....she has absolutely blossomed with home education. She might well have blossomed at school too, but there is no perceivable reason to change things.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers

As I mentioned previously, I would assume the reason for unregistered homeschoolers is that the process is so restrictive and onerous. Home educators are, in my experience, extremely intelligent people who put a huge amount of time and effort into ensuring their children receive the very best education. They are incredibly diverse and there are as many styles of homeschooling as there are homeschoolers. It is not easy to quantify those styles, or to fit unique educational programmes into outcomes designed by someone else. Particularly not outcomes related to school classrooms of 20 or more children. In the UK, those who avoid contact with their local authorities are doing so

because they fear a change in the law that would produce a similar system to the one in place here. Home educators should not have to ask for permission or approval to perform one of their most basic duties, to ensure their children's education. That said, most – in my experience – would be happy to register if that were the extent of it and they were not asked to somehow 'prove' that they were suitable.

v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children

These are really no different to those of schooled children. All children love to learn and have an innate curiosity. This needs to be nurtured, developed, encouraged. All children need to feel respected, valued, loved. All children benefit from a sense of achievement in their accomplishments, and from being helped where they are struggling.

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

A big difference between home schooling and school education, is the ability of homeschooling to cater to the individual child. Even the largest families are in a different world to the class of 25 same aged children. School approaches education in a particular way, largely through necessity. The most gifted children, and those needing the most help, can be and usually are offered extra assistance in schools. But that still leaves a large number of children who are unique and will have differing abilities and learning styles. Teachers must try to accommodate this so that no-one gets left too far behind – this often means boredom for others. It is a compromise, one which many schools

are good at making, but a compromise nevertheless. Repetition seems to be the name of the game, repeating things over and over until every child has caught up. This is not necessary with home schooling. If a child is struggling with something, it can simply be put aside until the child is ready and something else can be covered in its place. Reading is a classic example of this. In schools it is vital that children learn to read, as most future lessons will depend on this skill. Yet many children are not ready for reading until long after starting school. They are made to practise and practise, perhaps labelled as dyslexic, maybe put into a 'special' class, and very probably experience damage to their self esteem. My daughter was not ready to read until she was 8 years old. She simply didn't have the right connections yet. As she is home schooled, this was of no consequence. I was always there to read things to her, and she was still able to learn all the things that school children learn, on a one to one basis, with my support. And when she was ready to read, she started to read.

It's because of things like this that comparing a home education to a school education really doesn't make sense. Trying to insist that home schoolers follow the school curriculum, does a disservice to home schoolers. Whilst an eye may always be kept on the curriculum, and whilst home schoolers are intent that their children receive a rounded education, the common theme amongst all home schoolers is responsiveness to the child. Tailoring an education to a family of children means that each individual child's needs may not be in alignment with the current curriculum, but it also means that their educational needs can be absolutely and fully met over time.

(c) Regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

I've said a lot about this already. It's a parent's duty to educate their child, not the state's. Parents can choose to use a state provided school if they wish, but if they choose not to, that is their right. They should not be told to ask for permission to do something that is within the law.

Furthermore, parents should not be told *how* to educate their children by state officials or by anyone else. Home schoolers are intelligent adults who are heavily engaged and invested in their children and their children's education. They should be treated with the appropriate respect.

If this could be acknowledged, if home schoolers did not feel that they were subject to, 'guilty until proven innocent', then perhaps more people would register. Many people do not register because they fear their educational plans would not be 'approved'. They should not even have to consider this, for it is not the state's place to approve a parent's education of their own children.

ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons

This is really dependent on their purpose. If they are checking that children are following and meeting the school curriculum, then they really should be fully trained teachers. And there should be a lot more of them, because checking each child for this is going to take a lot more time than is currently being applied.

If they are checking that children are not being abused, they should have the appropriate welfare training and clearance required. The legality of them taking on this responsibility should also be checked. It is unfair to place authorised persons into this role without the training and proper clearances – what if they make a mistake? If the government truly believes that all home educators are a welfare risk, then it is the child protection service that they should be sending to their houses, not authorised persons.

If they are checking that parents are indeed educating their children, and are active and engaged in that process, then they should simply be sensible, well educated people with open minds and a willingness to learn. The best AP's in the UK, were those who had visited many families over the years, and built up their experience of the many styles of home education – or who had read about various educational pedagogies and were interested to see them in action.

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

No syllabus covers *everything*. It is a choice, what to include and what not to include. There are some very distinct differences between the UK syllabuses and those of NSW. Not just the History and Geography syllabuses which you would expect to be different. I have noted a strong emphasis on product design and engineering principles here, this is not present in the UK as it is more classically orientated. In China there would be a different emphasis, and different again in Finland. Who is right?

Each country is trying to teach its children the skills they will need to succeed as future adults. Each country changes and adapts its syllabuses continuously. NSW is in the midst of this right now. To expect that home schoolers simply fall into line with whatever syllabus has been deemed appropriate, is once again missing the point of home schooling. Home schoolers want the freedom to teach what they think their children need. Just as the state does, home schoolers constantly reassess what they are teaching, what skills they think will be beneficial to their children, what kind of adults they think will be beneficial to society and the world. Home schoolers have taken an active decision to take responsibility for their children's education; they should be respected for this.

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

Many parents remove their children from school because of bullying, or because of unwanted changes in their child's behaviour. Many parents find that the school system cannot meet the needs of their children with special needs. These parents are clearly concerned with their children's wellbeing and are choosing to put their children first. Some parents find that school is a blessing and a great help to their children. There is a variety of experience depending on the child, the school, and individual teachers.

Home educators do not hide themselves away, on the contrary they make constant efforts to maintain a social life for their children. We are all aware that children at school have 25 peers in their classroom each day, to connect and make friends with – the absence of this means home educators have to take an active role in ensuring their children have social opportunities. We encourage them to make friends with their peers, we also encourage them to get to know the adults that cross their path. All the home educators I have known have placed great importance on their children meeting and conversing with adults in society. We want our children to meet the engineer, the mechanic, the baker, the librarian, the museum curator, the beautician, the fireman, the scientist. It's very much a part of home schooling culture, to widen our children's world, to introduce them to a variety of people and careers and to give them a broad experience.

When you consider that this is an intrinsic part of home schooling, and I saw this both in the UK and here in NSW, it becomes clear that home schooled children are easily as visible in society as school children are. We are in the museums, the libraries, the Saturday clubs and workshops. We're in the parks, in the swimming pools, at the theatre. We're very often in our neighbour's houses, or they in ours as our children play in the garden together.

The idea that registration in some way protects children from being abused, is a fallacy. As is the idea that home schooled children are more at risk from abuse than schooled children. The numbers show clearly that almost all children that have been abused, were attending school. The few that were not at school were not home schooling, they were neither using school nor home schooling. If a child can be at school every day – or be expected at school but not actually be attending – and abuse can still go undetected – one has to wonder at the systems in place for protecting children. To turn and point the finger at home schoolers, and impose heavy regulations on them, is a distraction, a deceit that does not address the fundamental problem. It is disingenuous and not only disrespectful to home schoolers but also disrespectful to abused children who deserve that the failings in the system be properly addressed.

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

I have already addressed this point above. To summarise, parents should not be required to ask for permission to home educate. Parents should be free to use schools, or to not use them. If they do choose to not use schools, that should be that, and it should not lead to any further action. If the government feels it must know who is home schooling, then it can ask, or at worst compel families to register. But that should absolutely be the end of it. There should be no further action required unless there is reason to believe that a child is at risk, or that an education is not being provided at all.

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

As already noted above, most home schooling families recognise that they have made a choice to opt out of the provision that the state offers (school). Support is neither required nor wished for. The 'support' that some might ask for, is in fact already provided – school.

Home schoolers are by nature resourceful – we would not have chosen this path if not! – and we have no need of support over and above that which any family might ask for.

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

The problem with this is that homeschoolers are so diverse, and varied, there is no conceivable way that any one – or ten – home schoolers could lay claim to being representative. Of course home schoolers have some experience of home schooling, but it will be very personal to them and their own experiences. I would be no more comfortable with the current registration process to know that a homeschooler was going to 'assess' me, than I would with an impartial AP.

In practice, it would be highly unprofessional for BoSTES to employ homeschoolers and presume that some kind of standard was then magically being met.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my opinions, and thank you for reading. I very much look forward to the outcome of this Inquiry and hope that common sense will prevail.

Yours Faithfully

A Home Educator.

HOVA Submission 46. August 6, 2014.

I am of the belief that its the parents right and responsibility to educate their children as they see fit as most parents want the best for their children.

Some parents may choose to send their kids to school, others prefer to keep them home and educate them themselves.

We are in Victoria, home educating for the past 3 years with our older children. We are required to register which is okay in itself but to jump through hoops like is required in other states such as NSW for registration, is unfair and unjust to my mind.

My children have learned and experienced many things without school, paperwork doesn't change that. I can only imagine the stress it causes good parents for no benefit.

HOVA Submission 45. August 6, 2014.

I have home educated my 3 children for 9 years. They are very active within the home educating community, where we know & either see regularly or keep up with online at least 90 families across the UK, Australia, Zambia, Germany, Holland & France.

We go to several home ed camps where there are a variety of activities to do, including HESFES, the biggest home ed camp in Europe where 1,800 attend. We go to weekly activities where there can be up to 30 or so children attending & to workshops at museums, art galleries, etc.

My children are also active in the local community & participate in gym, tennis, drama, swimming, badminton, etc. & attend our local church.

People often comment on how well adjusted they are socially & how easily they communicate with adults.

We use a range of resources at home:

Sonlight, Appologia science, & "The Story of the World" from the USA
Enrich-e-matics & Light Educational Ministries (LEM) phonics from Australia
Singapore Maths to name a few, as well as watching documentaries online & using the internet & books to delve into topics in more depth.

Having been a teacher, including a year in NSW, I would not want to limit my children's education to the narrowness of the NSW curriculum.

In the UK we have the freedom to choose how to home educate & what resources to use. This means that we can research thoroughly & discuss with others who have used various resources, before coming to a decision on which the best resources are for our children with their particular needs in mind.

This is not possible in NSW.

In the UK we do not have to register or see a home education officer unless our children have been in school.

I have had the pleasure of meeting with 2 home education officers through my own volition.

They were both helpful & impressed with our resources & the children's enthusiasm for their learning & what they have achieved.

We do not have to submit reams of paperwork.

We have the choice to educate the way we think best suits our children.

As a parent, it is my right to bring my children up, to teach them to walk & talk, to teach them to have good manners, to be polite & helpful.

Surely, this is education?

This is not regulated & yet how many parents are there who are neglecting their children; sending them to school without breakfast, giving them junk food, allowing them to become obese, etc.?

Home educators are in general home educating because they want the best education possible for their children.

This does NOT need to be regulated.

There may be the odd parent who is not doing this with their children's best interests at heart, but that is the case with every aspect of life.

The majority should not be regulated in the way the NSW govt. is doing, just because they want to catch out a very small minority who will probably be too devious to be caught anyway.

Let parents home educate without all these regulations please.

Kind regards,

Australian UK home educator

HOVA Submission 44. August 6, 2014.

I am Victorian and I am a registered homeschooler. The reason I am registered is simple: I am trusted by the Victoria Government to ably and suitably homeschool my children. This provides me with respect for the homeschooling registration system in Victoria and in turn, I have more confidence in my ability to homeschool my children. As a result, I have higher self-esteem, more confidence and I am a far better homeschooler than I would be if I were monitored closely such as occurs in NSW. Therefore, my children are better socialised, happier and learn more during homeschooling. It's simply psychology. Ask any respected clinical psychologist, and the overwhelming response will be if people are trusted and treated with respect, most will respond accordingly.

There'll always be aberrations in any system. Just as in any school there is the child who suicides from bullying when teachers didn't see it for years, or children who can't read at the age of 10 because of a medical condition that the teachers never investigated and just believed the child had behavioural problems.

We follow Candlebark School's philosophy in education, run by John Marsden. We are unable to access this school as its costs are more than we can afford, and our children cannot cope with their extended camps which are mandatory for their students. The public school system was extremely unsuitable for our two disabled children, whom we removed from the Victorian school system 18 months ago.

Schools require that disabilities be severe enough to warrant assistance. Children must be labelled regardless of the social ramifications to the children via other parents and students (and yes, everyone does find out). Our former school informed us that no assistance would be provided unless our children were labelled with a severe enough disability. They believed none such existed as both were A students, quiet and never caused a problem at school. Special assistance that would have made our children feel more alienated from their peers and would only have assisted them in filling out worksheets etc that they already didn't understand as the teachers still taught the class as a whole in a way my children couldn't comprehend. That's ok, but there has to be room for people to learn in different ways at different paces, something that cannot be feasible in most schools, regardless of what changes have been made to date to accommodate disabled children.

After commencing homeschooling, we discovered that far from being A students, they were in fact significantly disabled, both emotionally and developmentally, despite being highly intelligent. Three months into homeschooling, we discovered one child has a very severe learning disorder, which SPELD diagnosed after we approached them when it became apparent that there was a discrepancy in his school marks and his actual academic abilities. This accounts for some of his severe emotional reactions to school in hindsight, but not his high marks and lack of assistance or testing whilst in the school system.

Although my PhD-educated husband was reluctant to agree to homeschooling, based on his Scotch College and post-graduate education, with fears that our children may be better being formally schooled, he is now a huge believer in home education. Also, he's now a strong advocate of eclectic methods, which would not be supported by stringent homeschooling regulations, despite this being the best way for our children to learn. The results in our children's education and happiness are self-evident to him now.

Our son no longer talks about wanting to die, he no longer urinates or defecates in his pants and he no longer rocks at home, screaming and crying for 2 hours a night or for 1 hour in the morning before school. Our daughter no longer over-eats and nor does she secretly draw all over our walls. Our

former school never recognised any problems, believing they were 'made up' by myself or our children. I have heard similar stories many times since commencing homeschooling.

The fact that Victoria allows us to determine our own approach allows me the freedom to find suitable ways of helping our children, using many different sources. It also means we can educate on the go (such as road trips), take up musical instruments and other hobbies that were impossible to add onto a school day for our children.

During days when our son is highly emotional, I have the freedom to choose to not formally educate that day. This allows him time to recuperate and actually learn when he can then cope. I can educate our children appropriately for their problems and their daily needs, whilst taking opportunities in the homeschooling community and society as a whole that we can only access by being confident that we're not 'being watched' or worrying about formal progress reports.

Most evenings, I am on the internet researching homeschooling opportunities whilst my children sleep. This simply wouldn't be feasible if I also had to map my children's progress in a way that registration officers demand or may even further demand in NSW in the future. The more work the state expects from homeschoolers, the less we can educate our children. The less time we have to find opportunities for them. The less educated our children would actually be.

I am a highly educated mother with enormous self-motivation and a strong devotion to our children's education. My husband and I hope our children will enter university or undertake a meaningful further education after high school years that will enable them lead happy and financially secure lives as adults. Most homeschoolers I've met share this high level of education, in that the mother has attained post-graduate degrees and/or the father has. My extended family finds it interesting that so many highly educated people who have been trained at the highest levels in formal education believe homeschooling to be a valid form of education. We sincerely doubt that this level of dedication by us or many other well-respected and dedicated peers would always translate to impressive reports set out in a formal education mode for a formal educational system.

If I lived in a state such as NSW where homeschooling is regarded so closely by authorities that mothers become extremely anxious and place enormous pressure on themselves and their children, I simply would not register. What I see on homeschooling forums from NSW homeschooling parents with regards to NSW re-registration stresses, horrifies me. I find it very difficult to respect NSW registration processes at this time and any further tightening of the system would only diminish our respect further. Would it affect the quality of our children's homeschooling education if we had to prove ourselves regularly - of course it would. I'd be too paranoid to socialise in public, to attend events or just being seen by the public in case the state expected me to account for everything I was doing outside of our home. The knock-on effects would

greatly affect my children's emotional, social and educational wellbeing. No more museums, operas, zoos, road trips for us if I was scared of being closely monitored.

Incidentally, John Marsden is uniformly considered one of the elite in education in Australia, and his school's philosophy is to 'get out into the world' far more than any other school I've seen or had access to. His school also attains some of the highest NAPLAN results in the state. By all means, read his blog, see his interviews! He once told me he feels he runs a homeschool at school. The benefit he has is he can do all this under the banner of being a school, with student's academic marks being the envy of most Australian schools.

No state can expect people to volunteer their children and themselves to such scrupulous investigation and fear without the very same people resenting them, inventing or exaggerating children's progress or simply refusing to register to start with. Victoria has a high level of registration because we don't fear the system. It respects us and in return, we greatly respect it.

So in conclusion, I am grateful I live in Victoria, that I am not spending my days partly educating my children and partly fearing authorities least they knock on my door, or spending weeks putting together proof of my child's education progress every year or so, instead of taking care of my children or getting out into society and socialising and teaching them. If Australia starts to tighten up homeschooling regulations from state to state, you'll logically have to expect homeschoolers will reduce socialising, they'll 'hide' from the state and an overall reduction in compliancy and registration rates. Its simply psychology!

HOVA Submission 43. August 6, 2014.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a homeschooling/unschooling mother of three. My two older children both received a public education until last year. Since we removed from them from the public school system we have witnessed great personal growth, as well as an excitement and love of learning.

For example, my eldest has Aspergers and struggled with severe social anxiety in a "normal" school environment. Since we have begun homeschooling him, his confidence has improved and he's actually become MORE outgoing.

And there is my middle child. He was a well-liked student who did great in most of his studies, and he struggled with reading, reading comprehension

and speech. Because he was a good student in all his other studies, and well-liked, his issues were over-looked until his last year in public school. That school year he had a teacher that tried hard to work with him, as well as working with us and the school system to get him the extra help he needed, but there was only so much she could do. That same teacher, as well as both the boy's other educators, all encouraged us in our quest to homeschool. Since then the change in our son over the past few months has been incredible. Not only has he turned into a regular bookworm, challenging himself with bigger books as he goes, but he is also reading to his younger brother every day. While I am forever grateful for all the effort that our boys' teachers put into them, it's just another example of why the ability to homeschool is important.

As for the long-term effects of homeschooling, I can speak to that myself. I too was homeschooled for the last three years of my secondary schooling. My social group, many of whom I am still in close contact with, were a good mix of homeschooled and non-homeschooled individuals. Those that were homeschooled have been just as "successful" and well-adjusted as those who were not homeschooled.

Homeschooling parents are not going to get it right 100% of the time, but neither are public school teachers. At the end of the day though, parents have more invested in their child - have more desire to see their child to succeed - than any average teacher. Taking away a parent's ability to homeschool their child by either stripping the right from them completely, or making it near impossible to achieve approval, only hurts children who would bloom in a homeschooling environment.

Thank you for your time.
-Concerned Homeschooling Mother

HOVA Submission 42. August 5, 2014.

We have been home-schooling our children for 7 years and having 5 young children, we still have many years to go. We originally started because our oldest daughter, who is highly gifted (as assessed by a Developmental Psychologist) was not being academically challenged at school. We tried a private school and a Montessori school, and neither had the available time to invest in extending her. Their priorities were average and below average students (and I can understand that). Furthermore, our daughter changed from being an articulate, confident and well-behaved child, into a withdrawn and unmotivated child who had learned from other children in her class, how to be disrespectful to adults. Furthermore, she had to cope with a lot of

bullying at both schools. We were obviously really unhappy about what school was teaching our daughter. We withdrew her from school at age 5.

Within months, our little girl was happy again. She was polite and respectful again and thriving academically. After completing all her morning jobs, she would throw herself into her bookwork, loved writing biographies on people that inspired her, devoured Science and History books and spent a lot of time researching the answers for the many questions she had about the world, and doing projects on some. She also loved playing the piano, listening to classical music, doing puzzles and hours of imaginative play.

Our daughter was able to take a major role in a play she was involved with, because her confidence had returned. She also enjoyed all the public speaking opportunities that were available to her, through our home-schooling network. Most of the children in our home-schooling circle were also very intelligent, well-behaved and gentle, and so our children made lots of close friends very quickly. Those friendships have been lasting and our children are still close friends with them today.

We loved that we were able to learn organic gardening through lessons at an organic farm. The children learned how to make soil from household refuse via composting and a worm farm, how to reduce salinity in soils by planting trees, and how hard it is to dig in a sapling tree and keep it alive during summer. They learned which trees are fire resistant and which ones make good 'bush tucker'.

We did weekly lessons with a Naturalist at a local lake studying the wetlands habitat, wildlife, bush tucker and aboriginal history. The children built Mia Mias based on their research on the topic, and painted themselves with aboriginal style rock paint. We did water sampling lessons at the lake and with the Swan River Trust and studied invertebrates and water pollution.

We did excursions to a post office; to a bee farm and watched honey being produced and learned about the life cycle of bees; to a wildlife park to learn about wildlife conservation; an Emergency Services exhibition and sports carnival. They went to music lessons, dancing lessons, drama lessons, Latin lessons and a 'Thinking Games' class. We had speakers from various backgrounds come and give talks to our home-school co-op.

This was all just in the first year of home-schooling. Seven years later, we are still ever increasing our learning. All our 5 children are intelligent, respectful, kind people. They are well liked and socially mature. They get on well with people of all ages and take on responsibility readily. Not only are they doing well academically, but they have a heart of service in our home and the broader community. They work hard and are efficient and capable for their ages.

Home-schooling has blessed them with the best foundation possible. They are taught by their parents, who love them, and do whatever it takes to do best by them. We are not limited by the school budget because we prioritise

education in our family and spend whatever it takes. Our children are emotionally secure because they have a strong relationship and spend many hours each day being given attention by their mother and father and the siblings who love them. They have had a broad range of experiences and have spent time with a broad range of people, and thus they have great general knowledge.

Our oldest daughter has now almost written her first book on the settlement of Western Australia (and ultimately Northam) through the eyes of the children in one of the families that settled here from England. It will be a 200 page novel for 9-12 year old readers. It is based on her own extensive research and our family history. We are expecting to self-publish it this year. She is already networking with other published authors and gaining support and inside knowledge.

In my opinion, home-schooling produces the kind of people that this country needs. Conversely, when see the conduct of the teenagers at shopping centres, and all the vandalism they produce, we can see that schooling does not necessarily produce a better result.

Thank you HOVA for your effort with this.

HOVA Submission 41. August 5, 2014

I am a mother from NSW. I have three children. I homeschool my children in an unschooling style. We are not registered. We registered initially, however, I let the registration lapse because I found the process too onerous and I felt that by having to report on following the curriculum we were not being honest about our learning.

My children, despite having additional needs, are self taught readers. They are bright, smart enthusiastic learners who engage fully with their world and with society. They have amazingly diverse interests from ancient history, modern history ,self building, animal husbandry, cooking, agriculture and self sufficiency, the arts (modern and traditional) and the sciences. Their minds are always open to new experiences, new ways of thinking, new ideas. As their parent I see one of my jobs is to expose them to many different thoughts and concepts as possible, to explore religions, cultures, ways of living. I am acutely aware of the onus on me to expand their thinking rather than create a mini me.

The community I live in contains many many homeschoolers. Some follow a school at home approach, and are deeply religious, others are less structured

in their learning, and there is also a large portion of unschoolers or natural learners. Many of them unregistered. When we discuss registration, we all feel very similarly....that it is impossible for us to register, as no one even understands what we do! We hear those who do more structured homeschooling panicking every time rego rolls around, they are so very stressed about the process! Their children are stressed about the process...they say they find it arduous to meet expectations, to fill in all the paperwork, to have themselves and their children judged. And these are people who follow the curriculum and who use pre made resources with their children!

Having been involved in the homeschooling community with my own children for many years, and before that watching my aunt and uncle homeschool their now grown sons, I have seen that this form of learning produces sound results. My oldest homeschooled cousin has gone on to further studies at university, never having been schooled outside his home! His younger brother will be sitting his HSC at school this year and is expected to do very well. Within my own community there are homeschooled children who have gone on to university as well, indeed my daughters piano teacher who was solely homeschooled went to university to study music and is now working for Yamaha Australia! Others I know have started up their own business or doing further tertiary study. Following young adults in my own community I see a vast array of amazing talents being developed in those homeschooled kids! Some choosing to continue learning at home, others doing community college or TAFE courses or apprenticeships.

I believe if the system to register was more relaxed, like if I could just submit our intent to register, and that was it, I would very much register. I believe that it is my role and my job as a parent to provide education for my children. Not the government. The current schooling system (of which I was a participant up to graduate diploma level) cannot possibly meet the entire educational needs of a child. It cannot possibly support a child to grow and develop to their full potential. I see my children and their friends growing slowly into amazing well rounded aware children. I see the vastness of their knowledge, their self confidence to live wholly within the world, the fact they can engage fully with an adult in conversation, the fact that their independence has come at no cost to their relationship with me and I know that had they been sent to school....they would not be the shining individuals they are. They would instead resemble every other child their age in terms of fashion, interests, behaviours and ideas. I want more for my children than to become a drone or a replica of someone else. I want them to become them!

I really hope this enquiry shines a light on who homeschoolers are. We are

not a bunch of crazy fascists, intent on creating weird kids, we are not suffering some financial nightmare because we only have one wage, we are not resource poor, struggling in some kind of wasteland. We are strong organised collections or groups who create amazing opportunities for our children, we are smart, engaged parents who resourcefully seek out all manner of opportunities for our children to learn from, and if those opportunities don't already exist...we create them! I wish the enquiry could see the amazing things homeschool parents have created for their children, the clubs, excursions, classes, learning experiences, teams, spaces and access to all manner of activities based around our children's interests! I wish the enquiry could see how we make it work on the one wage we have to work with, the fact that we have made this choice and see the benefits is reward enough. I wish the enquiry could look beyond the myths that come with homeschooling and see we are just a bunch of ordinary (or maybe amazing?!) parents who have found ways of educating their children that is supportive of who they are and who they will become. Our children have great self esteem, they are thriving, happy, well socialised, well educated wonderful beings. Homeschooling works...unschooling works!

Thankyou for reading my thoughts.

HOVA Submission 40. August 5, 2014.

When we fell pregnant with our first child, we were excited. We were also daunted, but committed to doing our best. We wanted to care for her health and her heart. We wanted to raise her in a family filled with lots of love and give her the best foundation in life so that by the time she was no longer living under our roof, she was equipped to interact within this world with strength and dignity.

We still think like that.

We do not wish to break the law. We feel an unease about not being registered and the category that puts us in. The reason we haven't registered is because we feel that the system is not one which supports and encourages families to make good choices for their kids, but one that ends up causing anxiety over trying to prove to someone who may have a different view of an educational model, that they are doing the right thing. Parents end up feeling judged and criticised, rather than encouraged and empowered. They can be told that their approach, recording, etc is inadequate, and therefore not given permission to educate their children, rather than being offered assistance, help and advice.

I can see that this inquiry has provided a wonderful opportunity to look at the role of homeschooling and the Board of Studies, and to build a world class relationship which other nations can emulate.

The Board of Studies seeks to set and direct this nation into a high standard of education.

Homeschooling families are dedicated to set and direct a high standard of education for the people they are responsible for. Our aims are similar. So, let's develop a better partnership. Their influence would be more respected and meaningful in such a relationship. And the registration process can be part of this, and would actually be viewed as a positive rather than a negative.

We can register with the BoS, advising our intent to homeschool and the children whom we are schooling, so that you are able to have a realistic understanding of the situation of education within the state. The BoS can make available, and provide us with information about educational resources, offering support and encouragement.

In my opinion, it's really the approval process that causes the friction and needs to be re-evaluated. The Board of Studies' jurisdiction shouldn't be to give well-intentioned and dedicated parents the right to teach their own children. It should be to demonstrate how they have come to their decisions in best practice - so that we can learn from them. It should be to open up learning opportunities that are currently available, to as wide a range of students as possible. It should be to take responsibility for the outcomes and the students that have been entrusted to them by their parents, to take the praise where deserved, and admit the errors that have been made.

And the role of parents is to keep doing the best they know how, equipping their children, whether they attend a school or educate at home, to eventually interact with this world with strength and

I would like to present, from my own experience, that it is not just the child's education that can have great benefits from homeschooling, but the whole family can too. As the wife, mother and main educator in our family, I have noticed some pleasing and surprising 'side-effects' that I hadn't envisaged when we first started down this path 3 years ago. They are relevant to this discussion because they help show that this education choice has many endearing factors other than quality education, and the continual growth of character for members of our community will result in healthier communities, and unfortunately, is something which doesn't have the social value that it should.

I have never loved learning more in my life. I was an above-average student, placing towards the top in many of my classes at school, and at university. However, my approach to study and learning was very different, I just wanted to get it done so that it was finished. Now, I revel in learning about all this world has, and relish the opportunities to make and share discoveries with my kids. I actually want to write essays about the topics I am discovering. That

someone would want to do this was absurd to me previously. But I now understand a brighter approach to learning, and look forward to my children being brought up into this world of discovery at a younger age than I was.

I value my role as an adult more. I see much more clearly the importance of my words and my actions, and how much weight they carry as a role model for my kids, but also for all the people younger than me with whom I interact. Sporting personalities are, by nature of their abilities and our cultural admiration of the athlete, thrust into the position of being role models, without many have the opportunity to really understand the reach of their influence. I feel for them and the expectations they face without the culture of support to grow into this role. And I am all the more grateful for the way that taking this path to homeschool has shaped me. I am constantly confronting the reality that it is initially my character and attitude towards study and learning that my children will see. And I have the opportunity to show them sincere apologies when I have failed, and to change and improve. I don't think many kids get the opportunity to learn, by the example of an adult. I would hope that more kids could have such role models.

I value children more. Having worked for 7 years after university, I was accomplished, had won an award in my field, was well respected in my role and felt socially fulfilled. But now, having homeschooled for nearly 3 years, I see my values changing to valuing children more. The more time I spend with them, learning together, the more I see how great their potential, and how influential their formative years are in who they become. I value their future more, and the responsibility of what I will leave behind.

I am a better mother. I have become more patient. I wasn't abundant in this attribute a few years ago, but over the course of these few years, have seen how my impatience (often arising because of unrealistic deadlines and expectations I had set) is detrimental to my kids actually learning, and to our relationship. Learning myself, how to take a slower more meaningful approach has enabled me to see value I had previously missed. To be more understanding. To be compassionate and flexible. Essentially, I can care for and parent my children better because my character has seen some significant improvements.

I am a better wife. My husband works, yet we are a team in this endeavour. Because I am home, I do most of the teaching, though not all. Being a team in an endeavour that has very significant consequences, and one where we both stand or fall based on the final assessment, we seek to do this well. Our communication with each other has improved. Our delight in our family is more noticeable. And our goals and directions are clearer. They have had to be because the accountability is high. And so we are more respectful of each other.

Our whole family is stronger, more pleasant to be a part of and richer for this journey. I would commend homeschooling as an education model which can be a significant contributor to stronger families and stronger communities. And that Government bodies should recognise this and provide support to those

families who undertake this path.

I see education choices much the same way as I see the many decisions we have made on behalf of the family we have, such as health and well-being. My husband and I have decided to homeschool our children, and have moulded our lives to accommodate this decision. Although there are challenges along the way, we are very settled that this decision is the right one for us at this time. These children that bear our name, our genetics, and benefit from the many things we provide for them, are our responsibility. Not the responsibility of the Board of Studies, or anyone else. And our decisions in educating them is also our responsibility. Which we fully accept, and are prepared to stand by when they time for the end of their schooling with us comes. And I feel that external expectations and regulations won't actually help us in this role we are committed to. In fact, the thought of external regulations adds anxiety to my role. It makes it harder for me to consider homeschooling under that system.

While I am of the opinion that it is not the responsibility of the Board of Studies to educate children that have not been entrusted to them, I am not of the opinion that the Board of Studies are irrelevant. Actually, I see that a respectful relationship, where there is mutual benefit, can be established between homeschool communities and the authorities that regulate the education of the majority of the children in our state and nation. Indeed, it is my hope. There is much that homeschool children and families can benefit from the Board of Studies. And conversely, there is much that the Board of Studies can benefit from the different approaches of education.

I understand the perceived concern about child abuse, and my heart bleeds for children who suffer at the hands of, and under the care of adults. But I do not see that the scenario is as common in homeschooling families, as children abused and bullied in school environments. I see that my sensitive son is saved from 5 days of abuse, and I get to train and instruct him in how to behave and interact with a world that will be grateful to have him rather than pick on him.

I see that school could break him. But I am not convinced that a BoS representative is likely to take that into consideration in their assessment, and rather focus on other elements. If that were to result in a rejection of my application and I was forced to place my child in school, who is responsible for the bullying?

Would the AP come and meet with my son, build a relationship with him to know best how to steer him through this experience? Would they apologise for the consequence of their actions? Fund strategies to overcome the issues? In a strong relationship, such as the case between a parents and child, that can happen. But it can't with an AP. And so, I do not feel that registering, to be possibly told that I can't make a decision for my child, is actually in the best interest of our family and my ability to educate my kids well.

HOVA Submission 39. August 5, 2014.

TO: The Director, Select Committee on Home Schooling, NSW Parliament House

I am a homeschooling parent living in NSW and have not registered our children with the NSW Board of Studies for homeschooling. Though I have lived in Australia now for many years I am originally from the United Kingdom, where registration for homeschooling is not required - a much more sensible system. Parents should not be accountable to governments for what and how their children learn.

I have had children in school and I have children who homeschool. They are happy, healthy kids with lots of friends who are involved in all sorts of activities in our local community. No one can say with honesty that school is better than homeschooling on any front - including learning and socialising. I went there, my kids went there, that is nonsense. My kids have the choice to attend school if and when they wish. My family's approach to learning is one of 'unschooling', it is unstructured and works beautifully, I'm watching them grow as happy, intelligent, considerate and creative young people.

The registration system in NSW is a waste of homeschooling families' time. It's stressful, doesn't fit at all with any kind of 'natural learning' approach such as unschooling, and quite frankly any unschooler would be naive not to be concerned about their application being rejected. Parents who register are required to follow a set curriculum, when unschoolers DON'T follow curriculum. What does that tell you about the NSW Board of Studies understanding of natural learning approaches like unschooling? What does it tell you about the out-dated type of legislation in NSW that allows the BOSTES to develop these kinds of policies?

NSW should institute a regulatory system for homeschooling similar to what exists in the UK, where parents are not required to register at all. I've been homeschooling for years and know many far more experienced homeschoolers than I, and the majority of homeschoolers I've met, including many of those who do register, don't want to. Though I imagine members of the Select Committee of the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Homeschooling don't really want to hear this. I have to ask why was this Inquiry set up so that the large number of unregistered homeschoolers in NSW would not be able to easily have their say? Many of us who respond are doing so only because of the anonymous channel set up by the HOVA group.

It appears that the only 'representative' homeschooling group the NSW Board of Studies & NSW government have consulted with over the years is the Home Education Inc. Australia (HEA). This group appear to be pro-registration and anti-unschooling (despite public reassurances to the contrary). We are not members of this group and they do not represent our family. HEA also appear to be encouraging families new to homeschooling to embrace the registration process by touting the view that governments in this country are

not progressive enough to consider change or to look beyond the regulatory systems currently in place.

HOVA Submission 38. August 5, 2014.

To Whom it May Concern

Re: NSW Enquiry into Homeschooling

As a homeschooling mother of one, currently residing in South Australia, I would like to address the terms of reference in the current NSW Enquiry into Homeschooling in this submission.

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

We are currently registered as home educators in South Australia, and have been since our son turned compulsory school age in 2012. In South Australia we prepare a short report each year, detailing how we have covered the 8 Key Learning Areas, and we are visited by a representative of the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) each year to discuss our home educating program. In South Australia, a child also needs to be registered at a school in order to gain an exemption from attending school.

DECD states:

'When choosing to home educate, parents undertake responsibility for their children's education and must be able to demonstrate that their child(ren) have access to:

- an appropriate learning program which addresses eight areas of learning*
- resources to support the learning program*
- opportunities for social interaction*
- a suitable learning environment.'*

Though we have had no problems with this process, and find our liaison officer very helpful and supportive, we do still find the regulations constricting to the learning process and the home visit intrusive. Further – the regulation that a child needs to be registered in a school in order to be home schooled seems to serve merely to create more paperwork and bureaucracy – once a child is registered to the department as a home schooler, there seems no reason for them to be enrolled in a school?

As such, we find the South Australian registration process to be too highly regulated, and believe that is the reason why many people may remain unregistered – the registration process may be too intimidating and bureaucratic for parents new to home education. I personally have helped a number of parents write their initial reports as they were intimidated by the SACSA curriculum documents (hundreds of pages long) and the ‘edu-speak’ associated with them. A less regulated system, similar to that in Victoria, would, I believe, result in a greater number of parents complying with the registration process in SA.

(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

As our son is only 8.5, I cannot comment personally on this aspect of home education. However I have been involved in a number of homeschool groups, in real life and online, in the USA and in Tasmania and South Australia, and know personally many young adults who have been home/unschooled who have gone on to successful careers in a variety of fields. Many others have successfully gained entry to Universities to complete higher degrees. Grown homeschooled children I have met are generally self-confident and happy.

A number of peer-reviewed published studies show that homeschooled children do as well, if not better, than their schooled counterparts as adults – both socially and in the work force.

For example:

Medlin (2013) reviewed a number of studies and states ‘Compared to children attending conventional schools, research suggests that [home schooled children] have higher quality friendships and better relationships with their parents and other adults. They are happy, optimistic, and satisfied with their lives. Their moral reasoning is at least as advanced as that of other children, and they may be more likely to act unselfishly.’

In examining the academic performance of homeschooled children, Ray (2004) finds, ‘In study after study, the homeschooled scored, on average, at the 65th to 80th percentile on standardized academic achievement tests in the United States and Canada, compared to the public school average of the 50th percentile.’

In a US study on the attitudes of college admissions officers to homeschooled students, Jones & Gloeckner (2004) found, ‘Approximately 56 percent of the admission officers expected homeschool graduates to be as successful as traditional high school graduates, and nearly 22 percent expected them to be more successful.’

A review of studies conducted in Australia finds comparable results (see Jackson 2006 for a full review).

(ii) financial costs

Speaking for ourselves, we find no onerous financial cost to choosing to home educate. When we chose to home educate, we were aware we would be earning only one full salary and are happy to bear any related financial costs.

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

My husband and I come from working class backgrounds, but now both have doctoral degrees after taking a non-traditional route into higher education. However, parents from all backgrounds are successfully able to home educate their children, and I have personally met home and un-schooling parents from all types of backgrounds who are doing a marvellous job home educating their children all over the world.

The primary motivation for us to home educate our son was dissatisfaction with the schooling system. We believe the current school model does not provide for individual learning styles, does not promote a happy and secure family unit and indeed often serves to forge a wedge between parents and their children. We believe that home education is the best way for our son to learn and to foster self-confidence, self-inquiry and a life-long passion for learning.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers

I believe the extent of unregistered home schoolers has been greatly exaggerated by the Home Education Association (HEA) and the situation is in no way as dire as has been reported. However, many people do still choose not to register with the department in their state, and numbers suggest that the highest proportion may be those in NSW. I believe parents choose not to register because of a variety of reasons that are not mutually exclusive, such as:

- The intimidating registration process
- The extensive reporting required in many states
- The lack of acknowledgement of the success of alternative home education strategies such as unschooling
- The intrusive home visits
- The fact that the parent has the right to choose how their child is educated – not the state (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 (3) states ‘Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.’)

(c) Regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

As stated above, I believe the current registration process in NSW, and in all other states with the exception of Victoria, is overly bureaucratic and restrictive, intimidating to many parents, and the primary reason why some choose not to register. I believe relaxing regulations and guidelines, and acknowledging other approaches such as unschooling, Steiner, Montessori, etc, would result in a far greater number of home schoolers complying with the registration process. This would also aid in providing future data for studies on the success of homeschooling and homeschoolers as adults.

(ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons

I do not believe it should be common practice for home educators to receive visits in their homes from authorised persons. Home visits should only occur when there is cause to suspect neglect or other issues warranting investigation. All persons involved with home educating and home educators should be fully aware of up-to-date research on home education, all types of home education approaches (such as unschooling, Steiner, etc) and ideally should have home educated their own children.

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

As detailed above in point b(i), a multitude of studies demonstrate that home educated children are, on the whole, well-adjusted, highly social, happy and self-confident.

I have found no persuasive evidence that home schooled children are more at risk than schooled children in terms of safety or risk of abuse. A recent study (Webster 2013) investigating the potential link between home schooling and abuse states 'Through interviewing social workers, I examined the relationship between homeschooling and child abuse and found no evidence of their relationship.' Similarly Kunzman (2005) states 'We do not have data revealing whether the frequency [of child abuse] is greater [for home educated children] than in families whose children are educated in institutional settings.'

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

As discussed above, I believe the current regulatory regime in NSW, and all other states in Australia except Victoria, are not appropriate. The less regulatory system in Victoria has demonstrated that a greater proportion of homeschoolers are likely to register – the number of registered homeschoolers in Victoria nearly doubled between 2008 to 2012, rising from 1829 in 2008 to 3435 by 2012 - an average of nearly a 22% increase each

year. During the same period in New South Wales, numbers went from 1703 to 2802, an increase of only 16% each year. If NSW brings in tighter regulations and control of home schoolers, the proportion of registrations is likely to drop further.

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

In South Australia, our assessor provides a list of local homeschoolers and online groups, and this should be common practice for Home Education departments in all states. From experience, the major support issue I have come across in the home education community are related to worries/concerns about the registration process – and other more experienced home educators have helped with the preparation of applications in those instances, including myself.

We have utilised freely available resources, such as local groups, our local soccer club, the YMCA and have found no need for support specifically for home education. We do not, in any way, agree with the HEA statement that ‘Home educated children are excluded from educational resources.’ – we have utilised the local science club, museums, zoo’s, libraries, and many other activities organized within the homeschool community including drama class, circus class, etc. We also DO NOT support the HEA in their call for more access to school resources for home educating families – this is not something I believe the majority of home educators want. We take full responsibility for the well-being and education of our son and accept that in rejecting the public school system it is entirely up to us to provide resources outside of the schooling system.

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

This should be a standard – all home visits and assessments (if they are carried out) should be carried out by persons who have experience of home education.

HOVA Submission 37. August 5, 2014

The Director
Select Committee on Home Schooling
Parliament House
Macquarie Street

I am writing this submission in relation to the current inquiry into Home Schooling. I live in NSW and practice Unschooling offering my children the freedom to completely direct their learning. Two of my children are currently of school age and our older child has moved on from Unschooling and is now in the workforce.

I pulled our son out of primary school after he was struggling with the classroom structure and the pace the curriculum was being delivered. Despite my best efforts to work with school he was unhappy, barely learning and the teachers didn't have time to address his individual needs appropriately. Within the home environment he was able to forge ahead in areas he had already mastered while slowing right down in those areas he needed to spend more time on. This initially resulted in him being several years ahead in some subjects and several years behind in some subjects compared to his schooled peers, however, by age 15 he was on par with his schooled age-mates in all KLA's. The benefit of homeschooling for him was the freedom to take the extra time in areas he needed it without being held back across all subjects.

Initially, I registered to homeschool our son and were granted 2 years approval. However, finding the process to be irrelevant to our homeschooling and a time consuming exercise we chose to let our registration lapse over fifteen years ago. We found the government requirements to follow a school style curriculum didn't allow us to follow our son's interests in a way that engaged him. We simply weren't prepared to replicate school-at-home when school itself had proven unsuitable for our son's personality and learning needs.

He has since "graduated" from homeschooling and has successfully completed a TAFE course. Despite being Unschooled from age 6 and never being forced to follow a curriculum or take any formal testing he had no issues getting on with his TAFE studies and found himself to be on par with the other students. He was referred to by his instructors as an enthusiastic student. While studying he was also working part time and since finishing TAFE 6 years ago he has been working full time. He consistently receives glowing reports from his employers who are impressed with his initiative and work ethic.

We currently have two children still living at home who have never attended school. They are healthy, happy, have a strong base of both homeschooled and schooled friends, and are learning eagerly and well. They are interested in all areas of learning and take part in a variety of community activities including extracurricular activities with other children and volunteer work alongside adults. Both children discovered strong interests in specific fields at a very young age. Homeschooling has allowed them the flexibility to delve into their passions through mentors they have found in the wider community. One daughter has been studying art at an adult level since she was very young and has been supported by adult artists in our community. The other child has already become less of a general learner and has started to specialise her learning towards meeting her career goals. Again, she has

been well supported by adults already working in her chosen field and has been able to take advantage of work experience opportunities.

We have never registered our younger children for homeschooling as we have observed the regulations become gradually tighter and tighter which has put us off applying. We fear that our Unschooling approach is not understood well enough by the APs for them to fairly assess our ability to educate our children in the Unschooling style. However, if the regulations were changed to allow parents to simply notify the government of their intention to homeschool we would certainly consider registering.

As parents, we feel we know our children best and are best equipped to recognise if their educational needs are being met adequately. If we recognised that support outside of our home would be of benefit to them we wouldn't be interested in accessing schools for this kind of support but rather would turn to other Homeschoolers and the wealth of knowledge and support our local Homeschooling community offers.

HOVA Submission 36. August 5, 2014.

We began homeschooling our first daughter when we saw the signs of stress that had begun to effect her in the over stimulating school environment. At four and turning five in December, our second daughter was due to start pre-primary but was still having a long sleep in the afternoon. We did not feel she was ready for four full days of school a week. Both girls had very good oral language skills and were very happy to engage socially with extended family, church and play group friends and neighbours. We had read to them from a young age, played games that fostered their curiosity and co-ordination, and spent lots of time with them at the parks and playgrounds around us.

As we continue our homeschool journey we have found more and more reasons to believe that this is the best way to educate our children. We have found a wealth of resources available in the local community and through homeschool networks. We have been able to source classes or tutors in the community to cover areas in which we do not feel we have sufficient skill e.g. languages, music, drama and sport. One of the best benefits of homeschooling is being able to develop good relationships with our children and to see them develop good relationships with their siblings and friends. This has had a very positive effect on their self esteem and caused them to have respectful attitudes towards others in the wider community, elderly people for example.

I have seen my children both girls and boys and their homeschool friends grow and develop in a very rounded way. Their learning experiences have almost always been positive and any negative ones are used to build resilience. Being able to spend time with people of all different ages has enabled them to be confident socially. A significant advantage for them has been the freedom to learn to manage their time so as to complete their learning tasks, their jobs as part of a family, and to have the time to pursue their interests and extend their creativity.

In summary I have found that intrinsic interest in a subject is the best motivator to excel. In my experience as a homeschool mum for 14 years, homeschool children usually develop into adults who have an intrinsic love of learning and who excel in their chosen field.

As a part time teacher in a state school, I have first hand knowledge of the difficulties children face in this learning environment. I am very grateful that my children have been able to have a home and community based education under the loving supervision of their parents.

I wonder where the push for increased regulation of homeschooling in New South Wales has come from? Who will benefit from the increased regulation? Will it produce better educational outcomes for anyone and will it result in an unnecessary burden for home-educators?

The home-educators I know are doing a wonderful job. It is not an easy job however and over regulation including a big time commitment to complete administration tasks would make it very hard.

If this push for increased regulation is coming from the government and not from the homeschool community or the wider community then it is undemocratic. Parents who are educating their children at home are making a huge investment in their children and ultimately the whole community. They are achieving very good educational outcomes for their children and they should be encouraged and supported, not hindered in their endeavours, or worse, prevented from being able to homeschool.

Yours sincerely

We live in Perth, Western Australia.

HOVA Submission 35. August 5, 2014.

A SUBMISSION FOR THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HOME SCHOOLING
INQUIRY from a family in N.S.W.

We have been educating our children outside the public system for the past 16 years and during that time have been involved in the same homeschooling community. This group has consisted of both registered and unregistered children. Our group has been in operation for the purpose of supporting home schooling families, providing educational activities and promoting home education. We will address a number of the terms of reference under the appropriate headings.

Outcomes of home schooling including in relation to transition to further study and work

There have been hundreds of families involved in our group during our time of involvement. Some students have continued home schooling until tertiary education and have successfully entered university and studied courses such as Accounting, Software Engineering and Midwifery. One was awarded the university medal. Others have joined the RAAF, found productive work or started their own business. Many students have finished Year 10 at home and gone back to the state system for their senior years and gone on to university or taken up apprenticeships. Among them are medical students and a builder. Others have taken up traineeships.

An important part of our own children's outcomes is the experience we have gained through the process. Although we started as complete novices, our older children have succeeded at university and entered the work force. Our approach has been constantly changing and developing so that our younger children are now highly motivated learners.

Financial costs

The fact that parents engaged in home education and bear the cost of their children's education is an indication of their commitment to their children. It is without doubt that families with more disposable income have the opportunity to spend more on their children's education. However, this does not mean that those with less are at a disadvantage compared to publicly educated children.

From our experience, home education is much cheaper than private schools. There is a multitude of curriculum material available at reasonable prices which may even rival the cost of school uniforms, fees and excursions at a public school. In our case we prefer to invest some of the savings into equipment, tools and trips so that our children can be far better equipped than average.

We do think it is unfair that we pay for everyone else's educational choices through our taxes. We would like to see a voucher system that does not preference any form of education above another.

Demographics and motivation of parents to home school their children

Parents who choose to educate their children at home come from a wide spectrum of backgrounds. Within our group we have post graduates, public servants, business owners, tradesmen to name a few. The motivation to educate their children at home is as varied. Many parents see education as their responsibility. They see that the firm foundation of our society is in its families and in home education they are better able to create a strong family as a valuable resource. Many desire to maintain cultural and religious roots rather than allow them to be eroded by a public system that no longer values these highly.

However, the strongest driver we see is dissatisfaction with schools. Here are four examples that illustrate why parents were motivated to home educate specific individuals:

Student A is of above average intelligence and became a nuisance in class due to boredom. His situation improved in a small private school. He switched to home education in high school and went on to win a scholarship to university where he did very well, mostly because he was able to finish his studies by lunch and study other interests in the afternoons.

Student B is a highly meticulous worker who rarely completed class work in the allotted time. When he switched to home education he would often still be doing school work after dinner. He enjoyed his work and enjoyed good test results throughout. He has acquired many skills that suit his temperament, particularly in construction.

Student C comes from a family of large people and he developed early. Due to his being head and shoulders above his peers he was often targeted for a fight, yet he has a very placid nature. He home schooled and has gone on to pursue higher studies in textiles and fashion.

Student D has always been home schooled but his parents had many challenges to motivate him due to Asperger Syndrome. They found a unique solution to his motivation. He would happily work on one subject for the whole day. If they tried multiple subjects he would rarely get anywhere with the second one. Only home schooling offered such a solution.

Extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers

Perhaps less than half of the home schoolers we've met were unregistered. Keep in mind that probably all parents would much prefer to operate within the law.

Here are some of the reasons we've encountered:

- Parents should not have to ask permission to do something that is their responsibility.
- The task of being parent AND teacher can be a significant challenge. The expectations of paperwork to comply with registration are prohibitive. This challenge would need to be eliminated not just reduced to be of much help in increasing registration.
- The curriculum expectations are too restrictive; don't give freedom to teach different ages together or for a student to discover the world in a natural way and learn what is of more value and relevant to them.
- The national curriculum is not giving children a broad view but an ideologically narrow one.
- There are many successful educational models that are highly divergent from the state education both in practice and in curriculum. Unless there is a high prospect of successful registration, people who use or try these forms of home education will avoid registration.
- The prospect of dealing with a department that practices education from a highly institutionalised, regimented perspective is daunting for individuals. This is not ameliorated by the presence of some very broad minded and experienced individuals within the department.
- Home education is of course, home based. Think how you would feel if your school principal was coming to your house twice a year to check on how you were administering your children's homework. If you knew they were coming would they see your house as it usually is? Of course not. So the visit would be quite ineffective at gauging your true performance. In the same way home educators see official visits as a waste of time and intrusive.

Characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children

Home schooled children have the same spectrum of characteristics as children in the wider community. However, we expect that there would be a higher proportion of children needing individual support and attention being home schooled because their parents recognise the child's needs and that home education can better meet those needs.

Comparison of home schooling to school education including distance education

The beauty of home education is its efficiency and its relationships. It does not suffer from the institutional limitations of class sizes, truanting, negative social contact, queuing, transport, special buildings, administration and the like. It allows highly customised educational experiences for those who want to pursue them. Children who are many years apart in age can maintain close and strong friendships.

Current registration processes and ways of reducing the number of unregistered home schoolers

The case of home schoolers being unregistered could be almost eliminated if the registration process was a matter of filling in a simple application. It would need to include:

- 1) the name and age of each child who will be learning,

- 2) the names and addresses of the people who will educate them,
- 3) their relationship to the child,
- 4) perhaps nominate the preferred educational method,
- 5) a couple of character endorsements, and
- 6) signed statements that they understand the requirements, these requirements being more accommodating than at present.

Training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons

Many other jurisdictions don't have inspectors. As stated previously it is doubtful they achieve the desired aim and they can be distressing to deal with if they don't have good knowledge about home education. What would be of greater use would be people who have had home school experience that could visit and offer advice. These would be better received if they were contractors. They could still collect data and submit reports to validate the government expenditure on their services.

Adherence to delivery of the New South Wales Syllabuses

A Syllabus is a clear statement of educational priorities. It is important the NSW Education Department clearly articulates its own choices through the Syllabus. Currently parents choose between different implementations of that through state or private education. Home Education needs to offer a place for people who either want to expand the choice or, on the basis of conscience, cannot endorse some part of the state Syllabus. Parents need to be respected for choosing to differ from the NSW Education Departments Syllabus without the two sides accusing each other of abuse of some kind.

Potential benefits or impediments to children's safety, welfare and wellbeing

It is our experience that most children experience bullying at school to some extent. It is so common that some people will defend it as a normal part of growing up. Bullying should never be an accepted part of life and this can be prevented in a home environment. Our children have never experienced bullying within the home school community.

Within the home environment, children are able to enjoy their individuality. The absence of competition and comparisons allows them to grow up with a positive self-image even if they are not as academic as their peers.

Two main concerns about home education (apart from the 's' word) are neglect and abuse. Let us deal with these individually:

We seriously doubt that any parent who undertakes home education will be truly negligent. There will be a range in the amount of energy that people commit to the educational enterprise as with everything people do. But, if for example, a parent has a substance abuse problem they are most likely to send their children to school to get them out of their hair rather than use 'home school' as a cover for their activities or lack thereof. Children who are

not well trained to be courteous and kind are irritating to live with and only parents who are serious about the task will persist with having their children home ALL the time.

Physical and sexual abuse is a serious concern but the unfortunate truth is that it happens. It happens in schools by teachers and particularly by other students. It happens at home and it is unlikely that any form of red tape will put a band-aid on it. The question of why it is increasing and how to reduce it is a completely separate issue unrelated to home education legislation.

Personal thoughts

In closing we would like to offer a few personal experiences. Our own teachers at state schools were very imperfect people and although there were some 'bright lights' our recollection was marred by bad tempers and incompetence. The educational expectations could best be described as mediocre. The playground was a mixture of simple joys and intimidation. We had never heard or thought of home education in our early parenting years but we are very glad to have discovered it and would highly recommend it, not as an easy life but as a worthwhile one.

HOVA Submission 34. August 5, 2014.

Hi there from a Western Australian Home-schooling family,

Our eldest child recently completed a Science degree, has received national awards for sporting achievements, is a good musician and works hard. Our other three children follow the same path of high achievement, hard work and high performance respected by others. All of our children have been home-schooled 100%.

Kind regards

HOVA Submission 33. August 5, 2014.

To Whom it may Concern

My home educated children are well-educated, socially well-adjusted, competent, confident young people. They are able to think critically and analytically. In fact they are just the type of people I'd like to employ! Many of

the great thinkers, innovators and inventors of our world history were home educated.

Home education has been very hard work for my wife but we have no regrets. It would be a great shame and loss to society should home schooling be made too difficult for most families to do because of enforcing a lot of additional "red tape" and administration onto the home educator.

Father of 15, 12 and 7 year-old.

HOVA Submission 32. August 5, 2014.

To whom it may concern,

I am a homeschooling mother of 3 children. I also home schooled my step-daughter who has gone on to do further study and is now a productive and responsible member of society.

I am concerned about the changes that have occurred in NSW for home schooling families.

I have several reasons for homeschooling, but one regarding the school system was extremely important. My daughter spent year 1 and year 2 with the same teacher who was frequently angry and harshly spoken. She was very unapproachable despite repeated attempts to find out how my daughter was going and what I could do to help. It was very difficult to send my child to school every day and hand her over to someone like this. My daughter was too frightened to ask for help.

I came to the conclusion that my children are my responsibility, not the teacher's, or the school's, or the education department and that if I wanted to know what my children don't know, I would have to teach them myself. I also concluded that if my children continued in school, they may get a good teacher the following year, but they may not - and I am no longer willing to take that chance.

Many, many teachers are wonderful, but there are also many who are not, or who are just average at what they do. Remember that a pass mark at university is 50%. My children deserve better - they deserve someone who cares more about their education than anyone else - and that person is me.

At this stage in their young lives, my boys want to be an engineer and an electrician and my daughter is as yet unsure what she want to do when she is older. That is ok - I decided to study midwifery when I was 29. I now work on the weekends and homeschool during the week. My children look up to my husband and I and the work we do and I am confident that they will all become productive and responsible members of society when they are adults.

Regards,

HOVA Submission 31. August 5, 2014.

To Those Inquiring Into Home Education in NSW,

I wish to have input as regards the effectiveness of home based education, being an Australian home educating mother for the past 9+ years. I am also an active member of the homeschooling community and so have had the benefit of seeing the results of **many** other home educating families efforts.

My children are benefiting greatly from being based at home for their schooling. They are able to progress at their own rate (be that accelerated or delayed) and can easily access one on one attention. They are able to interact with the community in a real way, rather than learning about life in a somewhat artificial setting. Bullying is not something we have had to put up with, and peer pressure is not the driving force of their lives. In a climate where teenage mental illness has risen to 50% (as I read in our recent newspaper!), our children are secure and happy. Our family relationships are strong and siblings are benefitting from time together. There is plenty of opportunity for home schoolers in Australia to participate in limitless groups and activities, giving healthy social interaction in a setting where parents can be involved.

Every child is different in how they learn, also in their interests and capabilities. There needs to be various approaches to cater for these differences. While a 'one size fits all' approach seems more convenient to implement at a governmental level, it is not a valid way to meet the educational needs, not to mention the social, emotional and physical needs, of children.

In all my experience as a long term home educator I have observed that, although families have many different reasons for pursuing this course, they are invariably committed to it because they truly love their children and have their best interests at heart. While there may be those who do not educate and keep their children home from school out of neglect, they must be the minority (and I have yet to meet them) as the home educating parents I know are diligent, hard working and are striving to give their children the education they need, as well as preparation for life in other important areas that school is not well designed to ensure (training in character, values, social interaction, responsibility on the job, healthy self image, positive intergenerational relationships).

Choosing to home educate your child/ren is a great responsibility to undertake and often involves sacrifice on the part of the parent as home education requires a lot of time and dedication. Since schools cannot adequately meet the needs and fit the unique circumstances of every child, making home education as easily accessible as possible will ensure that Australia remains a place of freedom, diversity of options and ability to choose- aren't these core values being promoted in the education system?

Yours sincerely,

HOVA Submission 30. August 4, 2014

I am a home-educated girl in year 10. I heard of the survey you are conducting and thought I'd tell you a bit about my experience as a homeschooler. The following are some of the ways homeschooling has benefited me:

1. Through homeschooling I have learned how to take responsibility for my own work.
2. I have been well trained in taking notes and paying attention to speakers.
3. Homeschooling has given me a respect for other people.
4. To a large degree I have been able to pursue and develop my interests and talents.

5. I have been given time to improve my weaknesses.

6. Being homeschooled has fed a healthy relationship with my immediate family. This is good because stable, peaceful, families build a society.

7. Because of the way I have been taught, I love to learn and enjoy working to increase my understanding of this world which has a wealth of education to offer.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts. I hope they are helpful.

HOVA Submission 29. August 4, 2014.

I am homeschooling 2 children in New Zealand.

I believe the responsibility to educate children lies primarily with the parents, and as a homeschooler of two children, I am proud and happy to take on this responsibility.

My boys are thriving out of school as they are able to get the physical activity that young children need for optimal neurological development. They are able to freely develop their creativity. They are involved in a wide range of activities in the wider community. They are involved in solving real-world problems, engaged with local issues, learning life skills and they are learning all the time.

They are excited about learning because they can follow their natural curiosity. We have connected with networks of homeschoolers locally, nationally and internationally and my children have made friends all over the country through home education camps. Our local Home Ed community offers playgroups, crafts, swimming lessons, music, sports, public speaking classes and much more.

Home-educated children are not missing out on anything. Parents should have the right to educate their children in the way they see best without excessive regulation.

HOVA Submission 28. August 1, 2014

To whom it may concern,

I find the home education regulations being implemented in Australia and NSW deeply sinister.

I have been home educating My eldest son for 4 years and my youngest for 18 months. My eldest was bullied so severely he wished he would die. (He was 8 at the time).

My youngest, was always ill and missed so much schooling. His lessons were constantly interrupted by children spitting at him, scribbling/ripping his work, kicking him, screaming abuse at the teachers, throwing furniture and vandalising the classroom. We would not expect an adult to work in an environment like this.

My son was not allowed to drink whenever he needed to, he wasn't allowed to go to the toilet when he needed to. He developed bladder problems because of this. Lunch was always lukewarm. If he was treated like this at home the authority would consider me a bad parent.

I firmly believe that if human rights really looked at what children face everyday at school. If they studied children's physical and mental wellbeing, school would be found wanting.

Both my sons have now thrived at home. My eldest now volunteers at youth club, even though he is officially too young to be a volunteer, they have made an exception as he is mature, helpful, willing to learn, polite and engaging. Skills which will see him do well in the workplace.

Home ed parents want the best for their children. Stop treating us like criminals who need monitoring. It is the schools that need monitoring rigorously.

If more home ed parents were involved in education policy, children would benefit.

Kind regards,

HOVA Submission 27. August 4, 2014.

To whom it may concern,

I am a homeschooling mother of two children, one of whom has gone onto Uni and who has coped very successfully. So far, every semester she has received a letter from the Uni, congratulating her for her marks and she has made many friends and she has a good reputation of being a most responsible student.

Neither of my children have been to school but they both have a good reputation of being very sociable, polite and helpful. They have also won many writing competitions, eisteddfod competitions and participated in many community and voluntary activities which they could not have if they were schooled.

My daughter has learnt to love and care for older people through voluntary weekly services at nursing homes, this would not have been possible if they were at school without parental control of their educational outcomes.

My son has picks up two two other languages apart form English, is an award-winning artist, and violinist, also not possible under restrictions of a schooled regime.

I have learnt to observe their strengths and allowed them the time necessary to build on their interests and they have been trained to be the best citizens they can be. This cannot happen without the constant mentoring, discipling and training only a parent can give full-time.

I ask you to consider that homeschooling parents/grandparents wish to do the best for their children, with the freedom given them to bring about their best strengths and that they be given the cooperation for them to bear their responsibility for their children in a world where some neglectful parents are giving up their responsibility and the state has had to pay for the trouble which come from neglected and wayward youths.

Yours sincerely,

HOVA Submission 26. August 4, 2014.

My children have benefitted greatly through being educated at home in the following ways:

- The are socially adept – being able to cope with new and varying social situations with different age groups with confidence and skill.
- They are self-confident and display leadership qualities in situations with their peers.
- In the clubs and groups (eg. Girls Brigade and dance class) to which they belong they are recognised as mature, competent and dependable.
- They have a high level of literacy – both in writing and reading.
- They have a high level of numeracy.
- They speak well and clearly both in private conversation and in public.
- They love to learn and are therefore always doing so.
- They have a strong work ethic and high standard.
- They have excellent life skills gained from working together as a family.
- They respect authority and have been greatly benefitted by a strong sense of “belonging” in the family unit.

IN SUMMARY: These confident young people are growing up to be highly competent, useful members of society who will doubtless go on to achieve the same with their families. This is not only true for our children but for the many other home educating families with whom we associate.

As parents we want what is best for our children and for society and believe that this is the best way in which we can achieve that goal. We understand that this is not the best option for every family. However, for the many families who choose to do that which they strongly believe will be of most benefit, it involves a high level of commitment, sacrifice and hard work. It would be of great benefit if the authorities would recognise the way in which these children benefit society and support families as they seek to achieve this goal.

Home Educating Mum of 3 in Perth

HOVA Submission 25. August 4, 2014.

Hello.

I am an 11 year old girl who is homeschooling in NSW. I have been homeschooling my entire life and I have never been to school or childcare or anything. I love being a homeschooled child. I love reading, writing stories, drawing, doing drama classes with my friends, going horse riding, looking after all my pets, playing with my brothers who are also homeschooled. I have some difficulties with learning, well mainly writing. My mum noticed I was having trouble because I can read very well (she says like an older teenager) and I can tell her about what I'm reading verbally, but I find it very hard to write my ideas down and spell. So we went and saw some people who assessed me for dyslexia. They don't think I have that, but they do think I have other issues with writing, which are common (I can't remember the name though!). They said to me and my mum that despite my problems (which I was born with) I have a lot of self confidence. I think that is because no one teases me because I can't do things. Some of my friends who go to school said they get laughed at by other kids in their class when they can't do things. That makes me feel sad and mad for them. I am glad no one has ever laughed at my writing or spelling.

I wanted to tell the enquiry that homeschooling is a good thing! I have lots of friends in the homeschool community, I also have lots of friends who go to school. I like spending time with my family and learning about things that interest me. I like that I can learn things all the time, even at 5pm on a Saturday when we start on some interesting topic...my mum and dad laugh at me and say " no learning! It's the weekend!" And then they sit down with us and we all get carried away with learning. I love that I can just learn things as they come up, and my brothers can too, even if they would not be learning those things at school at their age.

I also want to say when I am finished with homeschooling I have a list of things I might want to do...maybe a vet, or a pilot, and I would also like to be a librarian. I wanted to be Australia's first female prime minister too, but Mz Gillard already did that.

I hope you get lots of letters to help you see that homeschooling is a good choice for children. Some (not all) of my school friends say they would love to be homeschooled like me. I think I'm very lucky to get to learn this way. I think the fact we don't have to strictly follow a teacher like my friends at school do mean I will learn more variety of things. As far as I know there are many

things I have learnt that they aren't allowed to do in their classes as they have to do all the same work as every body else. I like that I can read Shakespeare now and I don't have to wait until I am in highschool like my friends big sister.

HOVA Submission 24. August 4, 2014.

To whom it may concern

I am a former homeschooling parent who lives in WA, and I would like to tell of my journey of home educating **without masses of paperwork and registration frustrations**. I had very good moderators who came to visit us, took notes of what we were doing, and offered suggestions for improving/implementing key learning areas that needed work.

My son was struggling in Maths in a Public High School, put into the lowest class and had to compete for attention from the teacher, with several students who simply did not want to be at school! (This was after he had been in the Top Five students in Maths in Primary School!) This led to his demise as he was practically left to his own motivational drive to do his work, and instead preferred to join in with class antics which were not at all good...

I was faced with a choice: make (More) noises to the school about the problem; or take my son out of the school and teach him myself. I chose the latter; we had two years of work in Maths to catch up with, in six months, and then we were able to work on Maths at his year level. (We worked on English, Science, SOSE, Art, and T&E also.)

My son was home-schooled for 18 months, did work experience, attended various community groups, assisted with MOPS caring, and found an apprenticeship with a Mobile Diesel Mechanical Services company. He is currently seven weeks away from qualifying. Incidentally, the boss asked me in the first interview, "How is his Maths? I'm tired of having to teach kids about Maths when they come here to work. They should be learning that in School!" To which I was able to honestly reply, "It's very good!"

In my view, my son would be struggling if he had stayed in school in the environment he was in. He would not be the self-confident, self-motivated person he is today, who is able to take challenges head on and work them out.

HOVA Submission 23. August 4, 2014.

I wish to tell you about my grandson who was home schooled. He applied and was successful in obtaining an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic. After a three month trail, he was so good at the job that he was given harder jobs to complete. He has already finished his Taff course well before time. So if you are asking can home schoolers make the transition into full time work and study, then I think my grandson has proven that. This is only one of many successful stories.

HOVA Submission 22. August 4, 2014.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HOME SCHOOLING INQUIRY

I am a home educating mother of three. Both my husband and I are primary school teachers in the Catholic Education System. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in 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,

When we were originally researching schooling options prior to our eldest child reaching school age, we read an article about a family accessing part---time schooling for their children in South Australia. At the time we were very interested in this as an option for our own family and were most disappointed to discover that part---time schooling is not permitted in NSW. In our opinion, all methods of education should be available to all Australians, not only those residing in certain states.

(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,

My children are still only young and we are in the early stages of our home educating journey. However, already my husband and I are very pleased with their academic progress. For example, our children are reading at a level between 18 months and 2.5 years above their chronological ages. My husband and I have for the past several years taught Year 3 classes (ie NAPLAN) and have become increasingly disillusioned with the school system's misplaced emphasis on testing and teaching to tests. By contrast our own children are progressing educationally, each at their own pace, and

we are able to address their learning needs as and when they arise. This is being achieved without the need for testing.

(ii) financial costs,

Home education is a costly undertaking from the point of view that one parent must forgo earning an income in order to be with the children. As a family this is a commitment we are willing to make in order to ensure that our children receive a high quality, broad education tailored to their needs and interests.

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

As primary school teachers my husband and I see the great work that teachers/schools do in an effort to enhance the lives of students. However we are also in a prime position to know and understand the inherent drawbacks and limitations of school life given its institutionalised nature. Given the large numbers of students, and the pressure and stress to achieve strong test results and meet targets, the best that schools can provide is really a one size fits all approach to education. Home education gives our family the freedom and flexibility to tailor education to the needs of our children as individuals. We are able to foster a love of learning for its own sake, not as a means of achieving grades. Also, childhood is such a brief period of a person's life and we believe that the people best equipped to guide children are those who know and love them best – their parents, supported by grandparents and close family and friends.

Extent of and reasons for unregistered homeschoolers,

Thus far we are unregistered. Initially this was because our eldest was under 6 years of age. However, hearing the negative experiences of other home educators under the altered NSW registration procedures led us to delay seeking registration. We now question what benefit registration would offer our family. As teachers we are very confident in our abilities to tailor a comprehensive education program for our family. If we were to encounter an AP with little or no understanding of home education we would see that as a hindrance.

characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children,

comparison of home schooling to school education including distance education,

Both my husband and I are primary school teachers and yet our home educating approach is certainly not limited to “school at home”. Our teaching experience assists in that we have knowledge about and access to a wide variety of educational resources. Also, we are aware of the levels children in the school system are expected to achieve year to year and are able to apply these broadly to our own children – if we so desire. (Remember, we are allowing our children to develop at their own pace) Beyond that, our

classroom teaching skills are not often employed in our home education experience as the teacher---student dynamic is very different from that of parent---child. While some time is spent “doing lessons” in the conventional sense, much of our time involves activities out of the home such as gymnastics classes, swimming lessons and drama classes. We attend many field trips to museums and galleries, and we participate regularly in home ed group days. In contrast to socialisation within the school environment, these days provide our children with the opportunity to socialise across ages and in an environment where inclusion is facilitated so that children with varied interests, abilities and experiences are encouraged in positive relationships with each other, by the presence of many adults. We are also actively involved with our large extended family, and we maintain friendships with schooled children after school and on weekends.

regulatory framework for home schooling including:

current registration processes and ways of reducing the number of unregistered homeschoolers,

As stated, we are currently unregistered. Nor are we inspired to seek registration given the fact that the homeschooling community up to this point has not been consulted about the registration process. In our opinion, any registration process ought to be supportive of home education.

training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons,

As we are currently unregistered we obviously have no personal dealing with Authorised Persons. However, we consider it essential that all authorised persons should have an in---depth understanding of home education and be supportive of it. We believe that home educators should be involved in the training of those whose job it is to assess home education programs. Further, in our opinion interview panels for appointments related to regulation of home education should include a home educator.

adherence to delivery of the New South Wales Syllabuses,

potential benefits or impediments to children’s safety, welfare and wellbeing,

As teachers we are very aware of the number of school students with serious social and behavioural problems. Unfortunately these students can have a very detrimental impact on the other children in their classes. For example, disruptions to learning, and exposing the children to violent and/or inappropriate behaviour. In contrast, home education provides a safe environment in which social interactions can take place. As previously stated, our children enjoy a full and varied social life outside of the home.

appropriateness of the current regulatory regime and ways in which it could be improved,

We believe that appropriate regulation of home education in NSW ought to be in line with the types of regulation required by other Australia states.

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

We would be pleased to see the NSW Government demonstrate a supportive attitude towards home education as a viable method of learning.

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

Given that BoSTES is responsible for the regulation of home education in NSW, we feel that BoSTES should be required to have a member that represents the home education community.

(e) any other related matter.

Conclusions

Once again we thank you for the opportunity to participate in this inquiry.

HOVA Submission 21. August 2, 2014.

The Director
Select Committee on Home Schooling
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sirs,

Submission to the Select Committee Inquiry into Homeschooling Home Education Foundation of New Zealand

Like many other home educators around the world, the Home Education Foundation of New Zealand was surprised and disturbed by reports of the New South Wales Board of Studies' 2013 Home Schooling Information Pack, which promised to regulate home education more severely in New South Wales than in any other Australian jurisdiction.

The Home Education Foundation welcomes this inquiry into home education and hopes that the Committee will take this opportunity to hear the concerns of New South Wales and other home educators. Home educators often feel that they are fighting an uphill battle to help legislators and bureaucrats

understand, much less support, their beliefs and practices. We would respectfully ask you to keep a sympathetic and open mind as you receive submissions from parents and families for whom home education is not simply a 9 to 3 learning venue, but a treasured way of life.

We have read the Committee's Terms of Reference for the inquiry and would like to take this opportunity to present you with our advice, which is based on over 30 years' experience home educating and working with home educators in New Zealand, Australia, the United States and around the world.

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

Under current regulations in New Zealand, parents may home educate a child on approval of an exemption application by the Ministry of Education. The relevant legislation provides that approval may be granted if the Minister is satisfied that the child will be taught "at least as regularly and well" as he or she would be in a registered school. Visits to home educators' homes are not compulsory at any point, nor is approval of home educators' syllabuses, although the exemption process includes an outline of the intended teaching method. Exemption, once granted, does not need to be renewed. Around 600 annual reviews conducted at a venue of the parents' choice by the Education Review Office per year were at one time carried out, but this ceased in July 2009 because, according to the Ministry of Education, "This programme is considered to be low risk to the education priorities of the Government." Fewer than 35 reviews are now done annually.

New Zealand home educators, who presumably display a similar variety of beliefs, motivations, socioeconomic status, and educational background to those of New South Wales, were greatly encouraged by this recognition from the Ministry of Education that they were doing their job well.

For reasons addressed later in this submission, the Home Education Foundation otherwise finds the current situation in New Zealand **unsatisfactorily highly-regulated** from a parent's point of view. The current New South Wales home education regulations are more onerous than the New Zealand structure, but we would discourage the Committee from taking the New Zealand structure as an example.

(b)(i) Outcomes of home schooling including in relation to transition to further study and work

We are not in a position to comment on these things specifically in relation to New South Wales homeschoolers. However it is thoroughly well-documented by now that on average, home educated students do well in transitioning to further study and work.

For example, in a 2007 article titled "Homeschooled Students Excel in College", Christopher Klicka, reporting for the Home School Legal Defence Association, said, "Research has shown that homeschoolers on average do

better than the national average on standardized achievement tests for the elementary and secondary grade levels. Statistics demonstrate that homeschoolers tend to score above the national average on both their SAT and ACT scores.” The *Homeschool Progress Report 2009: Academic Achievement and Demographics* report compiled by Dr Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute surveyed over 50,000 home educated students in the US and found that home educated students score, on average, 37 percentile points above public school students on standardized achievement tests.

In a 2003 study titled *Homeschooling Grows Up*, the same researcher, Dr Ray, surveyed over 7300 home educated adults and found that:

- Over 74% of home-educated adults ages 18-24 have taken college-level courses, compared to 46% of the general United States population.
- Homeschool graduates are active and involved in their communities. Seventy-one percent participate in an ongoing community service activity (e.g., coaching a sports team, volunteering at a school, or working with a church or neighborhood association), compared to 37% of U.S. adults of similar ages. Eighty-eight percent of the homeschool graduates surveyed were members of an organization (e.g., such as a community group, church or synagogue, union, homeschool group, or professional organization), compared to 50% of U.S. adults.
- Only 4.2% of the homeschool graduates surveyed consider politics and government too complicated to understand, compared to 35% of U.S. adults.
- Taking all things into consideration, 59% of the subjects reported that they were “very happy” with life, with another 39% declaring that they were “pretty happy”. Life is exciting for most (73%). When compared to the general population of the United States, homeschool graduates are more content.
- 95% of the homeschool graduates surveyed were glad that they were homeschooled. In the opinion of the homeschool graduates, homeschooling had not hindered them in their careers or education. Eighty-two percent would homeschool their own children.

In the Australian context, Glenda Jackson’s *Summary of Australian Research on Home Education* (2011) arrives at a number of conclusions based on the available research: Home-educated students in Australia do as well academically or better than their schooled peers; are able to acquire social skills and recover from bad social experiences at school; come from a variety of backgrounds and income levels, none of which has an impact on the quality of their education; and are generally happy about being educated at home. In Victoria, which until 2006 had a very relaxed level of government regulation, Jeff Richardson of Monash University stated that home-educated students perform “extremely well, above average” in universities, no matter what form their education might have taken: “On any measure you like, socially or academically, they will do better.”

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

In our experience, parents across the world choose to home educate for many different reasons. Some choose to home educate during a period of travel. Some choose to home educate because of bullying or other bad influences in schools or a perceived inability of schools to provide personal, one-on-one care to a child with special needs. Some are dissatisfied with standard one-size-fits-all curricula and prefer their children to learn at the pace that comes most naturally, whether faster or slower than the standard. Some home educate for religious reasons, believing that they are called as parents to deliver an education that reinforces their beliefs. Others simply prefer to spend as much time with their child as possible during their precious youth.

For most parents, the reason may be a combination of some or all—or none—of the above. It should be emphasised that the decision to home educate is complex and intensely individual to the family in question. It is by nature a decision made in response to a family's unique circumstances. The one unifying factor is that home education is a decision made because a one-size-fits-all approach is incapable of providing adequately for the children's needs. Home education is the nonstandard educational option. Regulating and standardising it strips it of the very benefits that make it the preferred option of thousands of Australian families, and effectively renders those families incapable of choosing the best educational and lifestyle path for their children.

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

In our experience, home educators fail to register with governmental authorities if they perceive the government's regulations to be inappropriate. The Committee may be aware of the situation in Queensland until recently. The Queensland home education regulations were so stringent that the majority (estimated as high as 80%) of Queensland home educators were unregistered. In response, the Queensland government relaxed its regulations to encourage home educators to register.

(c)(vi) Appropriateness of the current regulatory regime and ways in which it could be improved

It should be noted that for some home educators, any registration process will be viewed as inappropriate. We are of this perspective and would respectfully invite you to keep an open mind on this possibility.

Many home educators consider that the family, not the civil government, is personally and primarily responsible for the education of their children. We assert that this is a basic parental duty given by divine decree in Scriptures such as Ephesians 6:4. We would further draw the Committee's attention to a number of treaties at international law that assert a parent's right to choose what kind of education his or her child shall receive, as for example the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) Article 26 (3) - "Parents have a

prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” or the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) Article 10 (1) and 13 (3)³ - “The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.”

We would argue that parents have this right to determine their child’s education, including content and mode of delivery, because parents have the primary responsibility for their child’s education. It may be appropriate, in cases where the authority of the family breaks down or is abused, for the civil government to step in and intervene. However, it is the Home Education Foundation’s view that requiring home educators to register, be approved, and be required to follow a state syllabus goes far beyond what is appropriate and injures the rights of the family as an institution.

Just as it would be inappropriate for the legislative or administrative branches of government to take on the duties and responsibilities of the judiciary, so it is inappropriate for the civil government to trespass upon the justly exercised authority of the family, the church, or any other basic institution of society. We believe that it is basic to the authority and dignity of the family as a foundational institution of society, to choose in what manner, and by whom, their children shall be raised and educated. It is unnecessary and inappropriate for the civil government to oversee, register, and approve this process in the absence of prior evidence that the family is delinquent.

Until 2006, the Victorian regulatory framework simply required home educating parents to prove, if challenged, that their children were receiving “regular and efficient instruction”. Such an approach recognised the state’s role in holding parents responsible for the instruction of their children, without removing that responsibility from parents altogether. We highly commend this regulatory approach to the Committee.

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

In our experience, most home educators glean valuable support from local home education support groups, from other home educating families, and from veteran home educators who can give the benefit of their experience.

Beginning home educators may find it difficult at first to connect with these local home educators, but may be reluctant to contact government bodies for assistance. Home educators do not want to give the impression that they are struggling, to a body which may solve the problem by recommending that the children are sent to school, rather than by connecting them with other home educators who can assist them to excel. Home educators may view the

government as looking for an excuse to revoke their registration to home educate, especially if it implements an onerous regulatory system.

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

We warmly commend this suggestion. As with any industry, state, or commonwealth, no governing body should fail to include representatives of those being governed.

In closing, we would urge the Committee to remember that home educators are simply ordinary Australian parents who love, sacrifice for, and care for their children. Home education is not an easy choice to make. It usually requires a family to get by on one income and to face misunderstandings from the general community. A government can only make this lifestyle more difficult, more intimidating, and more stressful by viewing these families with suspicion.

Also, since it may be relevant, the Home Education Foundation would like to acknowledge to the work of an Australian home education graduate in writing this submission.

We hope that this submission has been of use to the Committee. We thank you for your time and work spent grappling with these questions and hope that home educators in New South Wales can look forward to a regulatory structure which is friendlier to their lifestyle.

Yours sincerely,

The Home Education Foundation of New Zealand
Per:

Barbara Smith
National Director

References:

1. Christopher J Klicka, "Homeschooled Students Excel in College", 2007 article, <http://www.hslda.org/docs/nche/000000/CollegeExcel07.pdf>
2. Dr Brian Ray, "Homeschooling Grows Up," summary of 2003 research, <http://www.hslda.org/research/ray2003/HomeschoolingGrowsUp.pdf>

HOVA Submission 20. August 3, 2014.

To whom it may concern

The Universal Declaration of Human Right states that: ***“Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”***

Please note, it is PARENTS, not education official who have this right!

Since the right to home education is related to all the other rights, e.g. freedom of thought, right to parental care, right to human dignity, right to freedom of movement, to physical and psychological integrity, officials and their policies should not be unreasonable or unjustifiably infringe any of those rights.

The law assumes that parents are responsible and not guilty of negligence until proven guilty.

It appears that education officials do not understand the limitations of laws and policy and are imposing unlawful, draconian regulations which limit the rights of parents without any justifiable reason.

I urge all parties concerned to insist that the rights of parents be upheld and that the laws and policies regarding home education in New South Wales do NOT unreasonably infringe on any of the rights of families.

Regards

Shirley Erwee

Homeschooling mother of 6 kids for over 17 years

South Africa

HOVA Submission 19. August 2, 2014.

I write in support of home education. My two children have never been to school and they have grown into creative, self-confident, sociable young people.

My son is at college doing a Level 3 Diploma, having got a distinction in his Level 2 Diploma. He composes and performs his own songs, at least 30 so far. He is 18 and has just been to Ireland to stay with a family he had never met before.

My daughter is more shy but has found it easy to make a great bunch of friends, too. Over the years they were home educated we were part of a huge community of people from all walks of life covering a least a 50 mile radius, meeting at halls, events, camps, doing educational stuff or just having fun. These fellow home educators have been friends for life. Well, entire families. We took a break for eighteen months and travelled the world at one point, something that would have been hard to do if they had been in school. In fact, one of the places we visited was Australia. My children have met people of different nationalities and had some amazing experiences.

I believe it should be one of children's rights to be home educated. A lot of children don't get that choice. They don't even know there is an alternative to school. School suits some children but not all. Schools of the future could be like resource centres, part of the community, offering courses to all ages. My daughter is off to college in September because a forward-thinking person at the college has given home educated children the chance to study for exams there earlier than is usual.

Let the educational establishments become more open and flexible and let children have freedom to learn in their own setting and their own way, I say. Home education works!

HOVA Submission 18. August 1, 2014.

The Director
Select Committee on Home Schooling
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

I am writing this submission in relation to the current inquiry into Home Schooling. I have a son that is no longer enrolled in the public education system in New South Wales (where we reside) and would like my opinion into this matter be heard.

In relation to (a), the background of home schooling including comparison of practices with other jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand, I have no comparison or comment to make.

(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:

I find this point to be irrelevant. I have three children. They are each unique and different as every person is. My first child attended local public education schools, completed her HSC and is now in her second year at University. My second child also went through the local public education system, is in year 12 at the moment and has no ambition at this stage to go on to university or any other form of what is termed higher education, has no idea what she might like to pursue as a career when she leaves school in a few short months, but is quite happy to be employed in a full time position with her current employer where she is employed on a casual basis, until something more interesting comes along. My third child was enrolled with the local public education schools as well, from kindergarten up until the end of first term, of year 3, this year. At this stage it is too early to even speculate what he would like to be doing as an adult. Both my husband and I attended public educational institutions in our home town – the same schools our children attended. My husband left school at an early age, moved away and undertook an apprenticeship. The same occupation my husband continues in to this very day. I completed my HSC with no ambition of a future career and with low marks. Upon leaving school I have had in a variety of working roles, but it was not until I was in my mid 30's when I reassessed what it was that I wanted to be doing with my life. I enrolled in a college to pursue my ambition. It was a great achievement for my family and myself when I completed the studies and graduated with a Diploma. I now have a second Diploma to match it. It was not until later in my life, after I had experienced life, that I was able to decide what I wanted to do, but also more importantly, to have the support that was needed in order for me to be able to achieve it. To me, it does not make any difference how your learning is provided as to what your future study or work life may include. There is too much push from teachers and principals within the education system, from my own experience and from that of my children, for them "to do well at school, get good marks in their HSC and go to university". University is not the be all and end all in this world. There are high drop-out rates of students leaving high school that go straight to university, which is one of the reasons why they have a high rate of what is termed "mature aged students" – people who may not have good marks in their HSC, may not have completed year 12 or may not have known at a younger age what they wanted to do with their lives or for a career. Most people have no idea what they want to be or do when they finish their education at the end of year 12 or sooner, so I do not believe this point to be of any more relevance to home schooling than I do for students enrolled in educational institutions whether that be public or private. I am a firm believer that it does not matter where or which school you attend or how you receive your education or

learning. If you want to learn, you will learn no matter where you are. If you don't want to learn, you won't. It all comes down to the people around you, their attitudes, behaviours and mannerisms, if you have a connection with the person you are to learn from and if you are presented a subject in a way that you find interesting and that is easy to learn about. This cannot be delivered to every student in the current educational system, but it is achievable when we educate our children at home.

(ii) financial costs:

As my family and I are relatively new to home schooling, the best I can answer this question at the moment is to say that are financial costs are "different". It probably will work out to be more expensive for our family as we are now able to go places and do things that at one time we would have just said "one day" or "later" to and probably never got around to doing. We belong to a group of home schoolers that meet up on a regular basis for gatherings that benefit all the children, even though there is a big age range. These gatherings see us attending art galleries, nature reserves, museums, factories, and other local attractions or exhibitions of interest. As we are living in a rural area, we have to travel long distances in some instances to get to our destinations, but this is a small cost to pay for the learning that is achieved by being able to see, touch, hear, smell and in some instances, taste, the experience of, rather than being confined to a small room and learning about it in books. Each family approaches their learning in different ways, so some may spend quite a lot of money on resources such as books, programs, stationary, aids etc., whilst other families spend very little and rely upon the resources they already have on hand or those which they can source for little or no cost from other community members, family or friends. There are many, very educational and worthwhile computer programs available such as Mathletics, Studyladder, and Reading Eggs. There are many on-line groups that families may choose to be a part of for their learning or to find out what other families are learning about, or just for support. There are always exhibitions and performances available to attend. Nature is all around us providing us with opportunities to watch, study and learn from all the time. The amount of places you can access resources such as text books, reading books, stationary, science kits, aids relating to subjects like geography and history, as examples, and art supplies, is seemingly endless as there are so many different places to access them from, both in Australia and overseas, with many different styles and approaches which may be taken for each subject area. Having variety, and the option to use whichever method appeals best to our individual child makes their learning a lot easier and more successful for them to remember things and retain that knowledge. Today due to the Internet and other forms of technology, it is much easier for everyone to have access to information that at one time was impractical for us to obtain. It is up to each individual family how much they can afford to spend, or more importantly, how they choose to educate their children, which will determine how much money they will spend. Regardless of cost, I know at the end of each day my son can relay to other family members what he has done throughout the day and he is excited for them to know about it and share his experiences with them. This did not happen when he was attending his last

public school, so it is wonderful to see him engaged and eager to learn again. Some families may be in a position where one of the parents, or in some cases, both parents may be required to leave their places of employment to be at home with their children, so I think the cost of that also needs to be recognised. For these families it may mean that their dreams of buying a house, a new car or perhaps even having to go without things they may have grown accustomed to, just so they know their children are happy, safe and getting an education that will benefit them later in life. This is a sacrifice that warrants attention also and is a factor in whether some families will home school or not. It is a shame when the cost of living comfortably is a factor determining the education of our children in the manner we want for them, or they themselves would want. I found it to be frustrating, at the end of each school year, for my children to be sent home text books and other resources (that we had paid for) that were not completed. In some instances not even a quarter finished. To me this is a waste of our money if the products are not being utilised. At home we can be more selective about the materials we access so that we know they will be fully utilised, and therefore not be wasting our money.

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

For my family, even though we are located in a rural area and have access to public and catholic education facilities, our choice to remove our son from this system was not in relation to where we live demographically. It was failure of the system to provide an education that was suitable to our son and the way he needs to learn that lead us to removing him from that environment. I do not think it would have made any difference to our situation if we had of been living in a metropolitan or any other area. It is a failure in the current educational system that needs to be addressed to accommodate all children by today's standards. Motivation for learning has not been an issue for my son or myself now that he is at home all the time. If anything, there is more motivation to do, learn and experience more things now than before. Earlier this year I had a very hard time to get my son out of bed and ready for school on time. He was very angry and on some days would be in tears at the thought of having to go to school, even before he got out of bed. Now, mornings are a pleasure again. We have smiles on our faces and we start our work, in some cases, before a 'normal' school would be starting their lessons for the day. Having our son at home learning means we get to spend more time together as a family unit which means we are closer together and work closer as a 'team' to get things done. We have more quality time together. We are all learning new things, or in more depth, each day, so our whole family has a much more rewarding and knowledgeable life than before. Motivation is not an issue for us. Just by doing things together makes it rewarding. What better motivation could you need than to be with the people you love most in the world? By having our son at home with us learning, he has the support and love and care he needs, whenever he needs it, and he now has the confidence again to do what he wants and be what he wants.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers

Before we registered to home school, I did a lot of research on the Internet, talking with people over the phone, talking to people in person and communications via email. To leave the educational system is not something we did lightly on a whim, but after much research, thought and discussion, we realised it was the best thing to do for our son. The thought of not registering had crossed our minds and we were leaning that way until we were basically forced into registering. The idea of having to keep track of every little thing our son is doing (as long as it is accordance with the curriculum) is daunting and makes learning less fun. Learning should be fun as this is how people learn best. We wanted to do a trial of learning at home before we sent our son back to school at the end of term 1 this year as he was having difficulties at the school he was enrolled in, but we were intimidated by the principal of the school, so we were basically forced into registering for home schooling and hoped that the process wouldn't take too long. I believe that the majority of people choosing not to register their children for home schooling have been through the education system themselves, have seen the many shortfalls that exist and want to be able to provide better opportunities of learning for their children than what they themselves received. Their own personal shortfalls, where they may not have been able to read and write properly, may be one of the deterrents for not registering - although I don't think that should be a problem when one of the English teachers at our local high school has very poor grammar and spelling herself, so what hope do our children have? (My eldest daughter would have assessments sent home with comments on them with spelling mistakes in them and would even wrongly correct my daughter's punctuation and grammar, even though we had checked meanings of words etc., and school reports would even be sent home with spelling mistakes on them.) To me it is important that our son is learning, whatever form that should take, and I do not believe that we should be told or given subjects/areas that we should be focusing on for his learning or for him to be taught. Our son learns by engaging in the world around him with tasks or things we are engaged with at the time. This does not fit in with any timetable or guidelines for learning. It is just natural and a part of his life-long learning skills he requires. By having to justify to people in any department or government body that we are indeed doing what they want is taking our valuable time away from our son and his learning process. It does not mean he is not learning anything at all. It just means he is learning different things and in different ways than what others may want. I believe this to be an issue for other parents who choose not to register their children also.

(v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children:

Every child is different and has different ways in which they learn. This can even be from subject to subject. This cannot be provided for in a traditional schooling environment, which is set out in a particular way, to teach children in a particular manner, and is based on teaching a particular type of child. If a child has issues and difficulties in understanding a concept the way a teacher is delivering it, the child falls behind in that particular area and in too many cases, fails to catch up. As in the case with reading. If you fail to understand the basics of letter recognition or phonetic sounds of each letter, this makes it harder for you to read and write properly. This may go unnoticed for many

years, even until high school years, when it is much harder to be retaught how to read and write again after you have been doing it a particular way for so long, or have been getting away with not doing it at all. By having our son now learning at home, he has someone to help him one on one whenever he needs help with what he is doing. This allows us to see what areas he is good at and needs little or no help with, and it also allows us to see the areas he needs extra help with. This means if there is a particular concept our son does not understand, we have the time to try another approach in the way we deliver it to him, and we can stay learning a concept until we are sure he has a sound understanding of it. Again, this cannot happen in a traditional schooling environment when tasks are allocated a specific amount of time in which to be taught and understood. One of the reasons our son was not happy at school, was that he felt he was getting into trouble when he did not understand something. This caused him to withdraw into himself with refusal to learn, or it would cause him to be disruptive to those nearest to him. Our son is sensitive to other people and his environment. This means that he may be easily excited or he may become easily upset. In either situation, he is then unresponsive to any approach for him to learn, and in a school setting it is harder for him to get the understanding or care he needs in order for him to revert back to a co-operative situation. He is not naughty or bad or disobedient. He is just sensitive, in the same way more and more children are these days, which unfortunately does go unnoticed by most in the educational system. The setting and environment at his last school was not helpful to our son's situation. This school was too regimented, with too many restrictions, rules and regulations that may have contributed to our son having a difficult time there also. Children are naturally inquisitive. They want to explore and do things in different ways to which adults may do them, or in ways that are different to how adults may want the children to do them. By learning at home, our son has a better opportunity to explore his environment and push his abilities to try new things, or improve on the things he already does without the pressure of other people telling him he cannot do something. With learning from home, each child is better able to have their educational or learning needs met with an approach and understanding for their individuality in mind.

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

First of all in response to this point, I would like to state that we do not "school" our son at home. He learns at home, in his community, with family members, with friends, or wherever he may be. We do not restrict his hours of learning between 9am and 3pm as in traditional schooling, and we do not sit inside all day at a desk learning from books. This to me is schooling, and as this is not what we do with our son, I do not see that we "home school" him. He is "learning" at home, he is not "schooling" at home. To me this is important, as they are two different things. Schooling to me implies being institutionalised in a room with other people your own age (regardless of their ability), that you may or may not get along with, being seated in uncomfortable chairs, at a desk which is shared with other people, with an adult standing in front of you or over you as they try to teach you something, that more often

than not you have no interest in or have no idea why they think it is important for you to learn it. You are confined to your seat and the room for most of the day. You are given set times in which to eat (even though you may have been hungry for the past half hour which is why you can't concentrate properly), and set times in which you are released from the constraints of your room, where you are then forced outside in either the cold or heat when you would much rather be undercover inside. You are told continually to sit down, be quiet, hurry up, don't rush, make it neat, we haven't got all day, etc., etc. No wonder children don't know what is going on or what to expect next. When was the last time you turned up at a school, unannounced as an adult (not as a parent or a Politician) to witness what is going on inside those buildings? Have you recently arrived at a school and could hear shouting and yelling coming from either the teachers or children before you even have the opportunity to leave your car either across the road from a school or a school car park? It is no wonder children complain they don't want to go to school. Our approach to learning (not schooling) is more relaxed, enjoyable and comfortable. Our son does have some books that he works in or learns from, he does have a desk he may choose to sit at, but he is also able to sit outside on the grass with our dogs by his side if he chooses, or he may be in his cubby, at the dining table, on the lounge room floor, on his bed or in his hammock. It is not important where he is learning as long he is comfortable, happy and learning. We also do not restrict learning to a time frame. We are learning all the time from the moment we wake up, until we fall asleep at night. All the time throughout the day we are constantly learning. Watching television shows, documentaries and movies are one area for learning that is highly under rated. We mainly watch documentaries or educational shows which are wonderful for learning. Shows such as Horrible Histories and Operation Ouch are not only educational, but they are humorous and provide for learning in a fun way that cannot be delivered by books. Movies that we think we are watching just for fun can also be educational. Recently we watched the Australian movie 'Crocodile Dundee'. Our son saw it for the first time and really enjoyed it. He was laughing a lot. We were also explaining some of the very Aussie terms and slang that came about in the movie as they occurred so he would understand them. The surprising thing came a few days later when the word 'subway' came up to be discussed. After explaining the meaning of it, our son got excited as he recalled to us that in the movie 'Crocodile Dundee' Mick Dundee went down into the subway to catch a train when he was in New York. Learning occurs around us all the time so we should not be restricted with how or when or what to learn and in what ways this should occur. In our family, learning occurs in a number of different ways. We play games, we watch movies, we watch shows on free to air television, we look at magazines and books, we discuss a lot of things as they occur to us, we ask lots of questions when we need to ask them, we interact with family members, we interact with our community, we interact with other families that do not send their children to school, we interact with other families that do send their children to school, we interact with our neighbours, we have visits to museums, art galleries, factories, libraries, seasonal events or any other place that may be of interest to us, we attend sporting facilities, we play games and learn on the computer and an i-pod, we go for walks, ride bikes, ride scooters, ride motor bikes, drive golf buggies and ride green

machines. We are in a rural setting so it is very easy for us to access our natural environment to be amongst trees, grasses, wildlife, wetlands, rivers, creeks, streams, canals, and farming land. With access to so many wonderful things around us all the time, to be cooped up inside with our heads in books for most of the day is just a real waste of time, especially when it has little meaning. It is much better to be outside getting fresh air and sunshine, where you feel inspired to learn and be creative. Some of our days have structure to them where we do spend time working in books for some subjects, which is always more mundane than the days we are learning about things in a less formal and intuitive way. Some days it feels like we are playing all day even though we are constantly learning something new. When we go for walks or ride bikes outside etc., we may be discussing the way the wind has an effect on the vegetation or the way rainwater run-off is causing erosion. We may be examining droppings to determine what animal it came from and what it has recently eaten. We may be looking at tracks made in the sand to determine what type of animal or insect made them. We may be telling each other stories, we may be reciting our times tables, we may be challenging each other with spelling words, or we may just be enjoying the quietness of the outdoors. Our learning is more liberating, informal and rewarding on a personal level than traditional schooling, with more emphasis on life lessons provided, and learning from nature. In my opinion, you do not need to have any special training or background to be able to have your children learn. All they need is love, support and understanding. With this, they will be able to learn wherever they are and whatever they are doing. Having three children that now range in age from 20 down to 9, I have had the privilege of being able to help out in the schools when my children were enrolled there, so I have been able to see first-hand how a child can fall behind if they do not get a particular concept and how they have to wait for other students to catch up if they are able to get a concept much quicker than most. I have also been able to interact with a lot of parents as well. I am a rare breed of parent. When it comes time for school holidays, most parents will grumble and complain that they have to look after their children and wish school holidays didn't exist. For me, I loved the school holidays because it meant we didn't have to rush anywhere and we could be together as a family doing things together. For some people having children is a bit of a novelty that seems to wear off very quickly, where they can't wait for someone to take care of their children for them, and as long as the children are not around the parents, the better it is for them. Well, I'm not like that. I love my children very much and have their best interests at heart all the time, which is why when our son was having difficulties at school, to not have him there was the only option, and a sensible option for us. The parents that I have spoken to, that do not have their children enrolled at school, agree with me, in that their children are the most precious things in the world to them and that is why they do not have them enrolled at school - because they love them and want them to have the best. Sending our children to an institution to be surrounded by strangers all day long, to have someone standing in front of them dictating to them what to do, just because they have a piece of paper to say they can teach means very little. Just because someone has gone to university and passed exams does not mean that they can teach or know what they are talking about, so I know it is not important that a person be 'qualified' to be able to teach. (As an

example of this, at our local public high school is a person who is supposed to be a 'teacher' of science. From my understanding, she is a highly qualified person in the science field, but for some reason decided to take up teaching as a profession. All of her understanding of science, and in particular chemistry, does not make her a teacher. When you have the knowledge of a particular subject or area, but then cannot explain it to other people so they too can understand it, does not make you a teacher, even if you have a piece of paper to say you are one. As a result, students at our local high school either avoid taking this subject knowing that she is the 'teacher' or they take it and are no wiser at the end of their time of 'learning' with her. This puts our students at a disadvantage and therefore lowers their marks for the "all important" HSC, hindering their chances of getting into university if they so choose.) There are many resources available on-line to be accessed to facilitate in the learning of our children whether this be from courses that are available via distance education, computer programs or to be able to buy resources and textbooks from. The internet and computer technology are a great asset which makes it much easier to access information when it is needed, and in our household is in constant use. The best way to learn though, is from self-experience and talking with people who are doing things, which is why our method of learning is working well with our family and much better than that which is currently provided by our local schools.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

I find the need to be filling in paperwork or to be showing examples of our son's work to a third party to be a waste of time and effort, and an intrusion of our life and privacy. Our son is learning every day and we know he is. When he was enrolled in the local public school, he could not tell us what he had been doing at school that day, but we just had to accept that he was learning something. I think the same should apply for those of us deciding not to enroll in traditional educational institutions as well. Our children are learning all the time, in different ways to traditional schooling institutions, and I think that should just be accepted as well. We are in a fortunate (or maybe not, depending on how you look at it) position where we are settled in a house and community that we love, so that ticks one of the boxes for us to be able to learn from home. I do not think it should matter where you live, or how you live, to being a determining factor in whether you are allowed to be home schooled or not. Again, it is not important where you learn, but how you learn that is important. Also, I do not understand why people are not allowed to register for distance education. If a person is learning, it should not matter how this learning is delivered. For our family, the current curriculum is rather confusing at times, limiting or constrictive at times and not relevant at other times. We do not see having a plan and a set way to learn or set things to learn, as an advantage to our son. This may be another area that is a deciding factor as to why some families choose not to register for home schooling. For some people, the idea of having to undergo an interview in order to be approved for Home Schooling may be another reason why they

choose not to register. For some, this process may seem confrontational, and when you are feeling intimidated by people you have never met before, are a shy type of person, are feeling overwhelmed by pressure, are very concerned about the welfare of your child, or do not like the idea of strangers telling you what you can and can't do, the idea of not registering for Home Schooling is very appealing. My solution to this concern of yours regarding the current registration process and ways of reducing the number of unregistered home schoolers, would be to have a very simple registration process. All that is required is very simply the name/s of the parent/s or carer/s to be overseeing or facilitating the learning, the names of the children, the children's ages, a contact phone number and a current address. It should not have to be any harder than that. In today's society, there are too many people employed in office jobs making too many rules, and making them complicated for the people they have not even met, and to whom the rules they are making are to apply. A person should never presume to know what another person is thinking or what is best for them. The same applies in this situation, the best people to know about learning at home is by speaking to the people in person, not over the phone or via messages, to find out what is working or not working and to find out what their needs and wants are, keeping in mind each family and each child is different, and has different needs. Hopefully the submissions into the home schooling inquiry will go a long way to amend a system that does not seem to be working for some families due to its regimental and constraining doctrine and registration processes. The answer to issues such as this is always simple. KEEP IT SIMPLE.

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

Firstly, surely there must be a better name than "authorised person". Lots of people are "authorised" to do lots of things. Home learning liaison mediator may be one example, but I think it is important to avoid names or titles, which have a connotation of authority or domination, such as 'officer'. The title needs to be more friendly and approachable in nature. When it came time for us to register for home schooling, I was very apprehensive about having to meet the AP and having to undergo an interview. It seemed like it was not really going to be an interview, but more of an interrogation to see if we were actually seen to be of reasonable state of mind and stature to be able to home school, from what I had heard from speaking with other home schooling families and from what I had read on the internet. It was really concerning for us to have a child that was too upset and anxious to go to school, and the thought that we may not be deemed as "good enough" to be teaching our own son. It is rather ironic that we invite a total stranger into our homes to tell us if we are good enough to teach our children. There are no tests or guidelines for us to have children and raise them for the first five or six years of their lives before they get handed over to total strangers that are supposed to be qualified to teach them, when they get sent to school, so why are we parents not seen to be "qualified", and have to undergo a series of questions and interviews? The same applies with an AP. What qualifies them to tell us if we are capable of giving our children an education or not? What qualifies them to tell us that our children are not learning? What qualifies them to tell us that our children are not learning the right things according to a curriculum that has

little relevance in day to day life? What qualifies them to tell us anything about our children? As parents we are in the best position to know our children, what works for them and what does not. We do not need a stranger entering into our homes to tell us what we should or should not be doing. I think this is another area that needs a total overhaul. As is it part of the process of registration at the moment, I first spoke with and then met our AP, Lindy Billing. Lindy was very approachable, friendly and down to earth. (I told her so just before she left). It was a huge relief for us to have Lindy as our AP. The most recent AP to our local area before Lindy was not a very helpful person, from the accounts I have been told by other families that had the misfortune of having him. Lindy made the process for us to be home schooling very easy and quick, which was a huge relief. We were feeling pressure from our local school, by way of phone calls and letters, to have our son return there immediately, as we were not registered for home schooling. We even had a phone call from the Department of Education about our situation as well. This lady was starting to become intimidating as well, until it was explained to her that we were in the middle of our consultation with the AP when she phoned. This quickly changed her attitude and manner in which she was speaking. We had to go to see a GP to get a medical certificate to exempt our son from attending school due to his anxiety, stress and possible depression, so having to go through paperwork and waiting around to find out if we would be 'suitable' or not to home school, as well as pressure from the local school, is all very difficult to deal with, so it is no wonder parents choose not to register. AP's that do visit should have an understanding of what it means to home school, and in particular to know that it is nothing like school at home. They need to understand there are many different ways that a person can learn to receive an education and that one method or approach is neither right nor wrong, but just different. They need to understand learning and receiving an education does not just happen between 9am and 3pm in a classroom - it is continually occurring in every place, in every opportunity. AP's also need to be aware that every child is unique and different, and so too are the methods and conditions for which they need to learn best, regardless of whether they have been diagnosed with a particular condition or not. Not every parent wants to or needs to have their child labeled with a condition when it makes no difference to the person they are. Preferably AP's should also be parents or grandparents themselves so they actually have first-hand experience with raising and living with children. Again, just because a person holds a piece of paper to say they are qualified in a particular area, only means they know how to pass exams, but it does not necessarily mean they know what happens in reality in the real world.

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

Wow, where to begin other than to say it does not work for our family and we would be happy to see it and any other guidelines to be permanently abolished. Learning or an education does not and should not have to follow any guidelines. The community and area we live in constantly has displays and other areas of interest for us to be a part of and learn in, or from. To try to find ways for them to fit into the curriculum in specific areas, to try and justify that we are learning something, is a big waste of our time, and it is also open

to various ways of interpretation. Think back to your schooling days and I am quite sure you will not remember very well the specifics of every subject you were taught, and I am even more certain that those things do not have any impact on your life today. I am also sure you will remember the subject/s you disliked the most and had to sit through even though you were totally bored and wanted to be somewhere else. There is no point in having to learn about a subject such as ancient history, and to be more specific the Aztecs, if you have no passion or interest in them. How do we know if we want to learn more about them or not? We have a brief look, and if we are interested, we then delve into it further to satisfy our curiosity until we have taken in as much as we need to at that time. If we look into it and it is not something we are interested in, we are then able to spend our time looking at other things that do interest us - perhaps something totally different such as how an engine works. Yes, this can be traced back to early days of engines, so this research could then be deemed as a history lesson, but it is now in an area that is of interest to us, so we will learn better and have better retention of what we have learnt. Again, learning at home is totally different from traditional educational institutions. We are also more flexible to take our learning to the place it occurs, instead of having to learn from books. No, I do not think adhering to a syllabus of any form is practical or warrants mention for those of us giving our children an education away from traditional educational institutions. This narrows down the learning our children are looking for in some instances, and does not comply in other areas they are interested in. Our children want to learn, and we want them to learn, we just have different ideas and methods than what is provided for by the current curriculum. Another thing to note is that it is not very practical for us to be assigning a specific amount of time for learning each subject. If our children are brighter in a particular subject or area, they should not be forced to spend extra time here wasting their time going over things they already know. Also if a child has a learning issue in a particular area, it makes sense to spend more time in this area, even if it means spending more time than is scheduled in some curriculum. We as parents have the best interests of our children at heart and this does not mean putting a time limit on their learning. Also, the idea of assessing and reporting in accordance to the outcomes as set out in the syllabuses takes us away from our children and other things they could be learning. Assessments, exams, tests, whatever you want to call them, only benefit the teacher or examiner. They are not a true indication of what a person has retained knowledge about. Some of the most academic people in a class fail their examination processes in a big way due to the pressure and stress they feel they are under. Sometimes, the way questions are worded are open to interpretation which may mean something different to the person who wrote the question, the person answering it and the person marking it. But again, the whole idea of a curriculum does not apply to most people, and certainly not our family, so regardless of the "outcomes", it is not important to us. Our son is happy, he is learning. That is it. Simple. We do not have to, and should not have to prove to anyone this is the case. I realise you may not like this response to the point in question, but sometimes hearing (or in this case, reading) about the truth may not be what we want to know. At least now you have an honest answer that some other parents may be too politically correct or intimidated to answer in this way.

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

The choice to remove our son from the local public education system was bought about due to a number reasons. All of these issues arose from him being at school, and now that he is at home learning, they have been resolved. As mentioned earlier, we got to the stage where our son was anxious and depressed at the thought of having to go to school each day. He would be in tears each school morning before he even got out of bed. He did not like his teacher being away (which was happening too often), he did not like the yelling or shouting that was coming from the relief teachers or the teacher they had for art, and he even got to the point he did not want to go to school at all on the days he had art. He also thought he was getting into trouble when he did not understand something that was being taught, and at times he was unable to complete his work in the time frame allocated. He started swearing, he was becoming disobedient, he was withdrawing from the activities that he once enjoyed such as riding his bike and being outside, he was becoming very sad and depressed. Our son is only 9. This sort of behaviour should not have been happening. The schooling environment our son was involved in was not healthy for him to be a part of. When our son was first taken out of the school and started his learning at home, we had to start out with basic things below his level of work in order to build his confidence in himself and his ability up again. Being a part of a loving, caring and understanding environment makes a huge difference in anyone's life, especially children. This environment is not easy to achieve in a traditional school, and is perhaps one of the reasons why children do not thrive or learn there, and why there is a high truancy rate or in those leaving the education system earlier than they may like, and definitely before the government guidelines would like. Another point to mention is the process for registering for home schooling. When children are not happy or are at risk of harm, whether this be physical, mental or in the case of our son, emotional, the process is too drawn out and does not have the best interests of children at heart. We did not return our son back to school at the beginning of term 2 this year, and due to intimidation from the principle, we took our son to a GP for a medical certificate to satisfy her, and the department of education as to why our son was not attending. It is ironic he was not allowed in our care (even though we are his parents) when he was learning at home during this time, but he was allowed in our care when he was ill (not requiring a medical certificate) or when we went away on holidays. It just does not make any logical sense. To register for home schooling should be a simple, quick and easy process, but for some reason, government departments always think they know best, without consulting the people that are affected the most. Sadly, when it comes to children and their welfare, these people are usually too far removed from the real world to begin to understand what is happening. Unfortunately, this puts our vulnerable children at risk. Our son is seen, usually on a daily basis outside of our house, out in the community and in other communities, and since he has been undertaking his learning at home, he is seen out in the community more and we have more people asking what he is up to, what he is learning about, or where he is going this week for an excursion or learning experience. Our connection within our community has

expanded since we started learning from home, and a lot more people in our community are now a lot more informed about what this actually means. Also, our children that are learning from home are less likely to be involved in a car accident, as is all too common in school areas. This alone is a big plus to the welfare and safety of our precious children. They are also less likely to incur being stalked or kidnapped as they are in the company of an adult most of the time, which is a deterrent to the types of people that undertake in these pursuits. Our children learning from home are also less likely to be bullied by other children, which again is a big plus to their safety and welfare.

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

I think the current regulatory regime needs to be readdressed and be given a total overhaul to make it more relevant and appropriate to the needs of home schooling parents and children. I think, that for the welfare of our children, that as soon as an application to home school has been received, the applicant be granted immediate approval for a period of at least three months. If an interview process is required, it should be kept very brief and be helpful to the applicant. This could simply include a discussion about how the applicant may intend to teach or how their children will learn, and what resources they would utilise to do this. It could also include discussions about joining groups of other home schooling families in the community, different types of resources in the community or on the Internet, and different styles or methods of learning that are available. The application form should also be very straightforward, simple and easy as well, giving the briefest of details including the applicants name, address, contact number, and the names and ages of the children they are applying for. The process of registering for home schooling should be a means of gaining more insight and options about home schooling. It should provide the chance for networking and questions – it should not be an interrogation. Again, home schooling parents want to see their children learning and are prepared to offer them quality learning. We do not need to have complicated and lengthy regimes or curriculum in place in order to do this. We, as parents intend to take responsibility for the education and learning of our children, otherwise we would not be doing it. That is all. Nothing complicated or confusing about it, and neither should the regulation processes be either. We are prepared to do what cannot, or is not provided by the current educational system, so we should be supported in our choices, not hindered by regulation processes.

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

At this stage, we do not feel that we need any support for the education of our son. We are a part of a local home schooling group, but this was initially as a social aspect so that our son could interact with other children who are learning from home and for him to realise he was not the only child to not go to school to be learning, but it is also serving as educational as we regularly meet as a group to attend local events and places within our local communities. For some families, belonging to a group like ours is very

important, but for other families, they are happy to do their own learning, in their own way by themselves with little or no support from others and I think this should be honoured. However, for those families that wish to seek outside help and support in the form of institution such as TAFE, distance education or access to other forms of training, better and easier access should be made. I also note with some interest that in some other states in Australia, children may be a part of their local public school for certain lessons or sporting activities, which is something unavailable in New South Wales at the moment. This may appeal to some families that wish for their children to participate in activities the family has no resources in or very little understanding of the subject, or purely for physical or social interaction with other children their age. Another area that I feel needs to be addressed is the access to travel concessions. Our children are still learning and are a part of the community, so I feel they should not be discriminated against by not having access to travel concession cards like other students. Also, as some home schooling families choose to never send their children to a traditional educational facility, I too feel they are being discriminated against when they have to wait for their children to turn six years of age before they are allowed to be registered for home schooling when children usually start their schooling at five years of age and in some cases even four, which then restricts Home Schooling families payments they may be entitled to from Centrelink.

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

I note that there are no representative of home schoolers on the BoSTES committee and find it very unusual that you do not have relevant people to this particular field represented on a committee to make decisions for or on behalf of this group (home schoolers) of people. How can decisions be effectively made if a group has no representative and therefore no voice to be heard? Again this could be seen as discrimination through exclusion. People appointed to this committee should have first-hand experience with home schooling and to the various approaches or methods that may be applied to it.

(f) any other related matter:

This inquiry into Home Schooling is a worthwhile undertaking provided the voices and opinions of those that it affects the most (ie those undertaking to have learning take place away from traditional educational institutions) are truly taken into account and their concerns rectified in a timely and appropriate manner. Not everyone dresses the same, eats the same food, has the same hairstyle, drives the same car, or lives in the same style of house, etc. The same goes for learning. Not everyone learns in the same way, at the same pace, at the same level, or at the same time, so I do not think guidelines or procedures should be put in place for this to occur, as currently is the practice in New South Wales with the current curriculum. It does not work in traditional schools, and it does not work with Home Schooling either. Think about your own learning, think about that of any siblings you may have, think about the learn of your children and you will see that you have each learnt in different ways, at different times and at different

levels and different paces. You have each learnt, but it has just been in different ways. One method is neither right nor wrong, it is just different. This needs to be kept in mind as you are going through submissions into Home Schooling. Just because what we do is different, it does not make it wrong or less efficient or effective. It is just different. Enrolling in traditional schooling with set curriculum does not provide for you to leave school with higher qualifications. The methods currently in place do not work for them, and I do not see any reason why they should try to be enforced upon those of us who do not have our children registered there either. Our son is now able to learn something at home during the day and relay it to other family members at the end of the day, which results in further discussions or more learning. To have a curriculum may be useful in a traditional schooling environment where control and conformity of the masses is seen as important, but it does not readily apply to our family and other people that I have spoken to either. There are events, displays and exhibitions in our local area all the time, so it is more important that we be learning about them and delving into the background behind their meaning and exploring those particular avenues. This is more important than to be checking with a list to see if it is covered, to decide if we will do it or not, as it is relevant to our lives, our culture and our community and environment. Our lives are a lot more fluid than how a curriculum is set out, and that is how our learning is structured also. It is important for our son to be able to read and write fluently. It is important for him to be able to recognise and know his numbers and basic numeric equations. We want our son to have a basic learning and understanding in key areas that we think are important, which then allows him the time and energy to delve further into areas and subjects he does have an interest in. It is very important to learn about the real world happening around him, rather than to have his head buried in a book inside a stuffy little room. At the end of the day, the most important thing to consider is our children. They are all unique and different, so please do not box them into categories or label them. They are children who simply need to be loved, feel secure and needed. Children are naturally inquisitive, so left to their own devices they will naturally find solutions and answers. They may need prompting or shown ways to do things, but it is not important for them to be told what to do all the time, or how to do it. From the contact I have had with other families that do not send their children to school, we all seem to have traditional, old fashioned (but never outdated) morals and values, which is why we choose to teach our children in the way we do. We are taking care and responsibility for our own, which is a very basic and fundamental thing that all creatures do. As parents, it is our responsibility to love, nurture, care, protect and educate our offspring. Home learning is the best way for this to be achieved.

HOVA Submission 17. August 1, 2014.

I am shocked to hear that home education may be under threat in Australia. I had always imagined Australia to be a forward thinking country and not narrow minded at all. School is not for everyone and for those children who are not attending school being educated outside school can be the most rewarding of their lives. Surely you can 'think outside the box' as we can and see that education is for life, not something to be done during certain hours, it is the most natural thing in the world. I feel sad for any child who may be missing out on education because of your short sightedness.

Yours faithfully,
Kathleen Thompson
Education Everywhere

<http://www.educationeverywhere.co.uk/>

HOVA Submission 16. August 1, 2014.

To whom it may concern:

Homeschooling:

I believe that it is the parents' God-given responsibility to educate their own children or at least have the freedom to decide if they want to home educate their children. By taking away that choice, I believe it is a breach of a basic human right.

School in itself is a very modern invention, and a hundred years or so ago a lot of great world shapers (including Einstein) were home schooled then. Some children who are homeschooled do not cope with mainstream school due to learning difficulties. Others suffer to cope due to peer pressure, which affects their ability to learn.

Homeschooling works for my family for the following reasons:

1) We are the main influencers of their character and we can shape it according to good moral values and Christian beliefs. Our children are completely peer pressure free, which makes for a wholesome childhood in itself.

2) Wonderful, lasting sibling and parent-child relationships are formed, which is more precious than a lot of money.

3) My children have developed a love to learn through home schooling. When asked what they learned today, the answer is never "Nothing", like most school children would respond. The response is almost always an enthusiastic exchange of knowledge.

I hope this gives you a little bit of insight into why homeschool families should be able to continue the wonderful work they do without so much interference from government. We are all parents who love our children dearly and would obviously not choose anything to the detriment of our children.

HOVA Submission 15. July 31, 2014.

I am writing to you share with you our wonderful experience of home education in England. I have lived and worked in Australia during the 1960-1970s and was good friends with Bryce Courtney and his first wife Benita in Sydney. At the time I taught modern history at the University New South Wales, wrote a regular column on the Women's page of the Sydney Morning Herald and knew the young John Fairfax and his wife who lived in Paddington at the time. The reason I mention these connections is to reassure you that I was a hard working and social member of Australian society with a circle of friends who were both influential and educated. As a result of living in Australia, which was part of my having lived and worked my way around the world for ten years after graduating from university in Vienna and Berlin, I published poetry, married a professor of history and settled down to raise our first child.

That child turned out to be an exceptionally gifted child, an assessment suggested and later confirmed by the Headmaster of his first pre-prep school where we sent our son at age 3 ½ . By age four they had already identified his gifts and asked that he be formally examined at the Centre for Gifted Children, which found him to have so high an IQ that he was off the charts in both verbal and non-verbal. How exciting my husband and I thought. We knew nothing about this field but surely thought, wonderful, he will surely win a scholarship to university when the time comes.

That time came when he was just eleven!

We had him in private schools which although we could afford them, the schools proved a disappointment because they could not keep up with his unending thirst for knowledge. Their answer to his extraordinary gifts was to accelerate him through the school by many, many year groups so that when he was five, he was in class with children eight and nine, which at that age, meant trouble on the playground – bigger boys and bullying as a result – but even then, the academic work did not satisfy him. We tried four different private schools, each time wrongly thinking that the next one would solve the problem, perhaps giving him more with more difficult assignments, hoping to keep him in his year group for the social side of things but it was, of course, impossible. No institution is set up to deal with anything other than the industrial model, like turning out sausages. If you have a child who is in any way unique, no institution is prepared to do anything unique for him. It was foolish of my husband and I to expect it. What to do?

We faced the crisis of not knowing what to do. Finally the National Association for Gifted Children suggested we take him out of school altogether and just educate him ourselves. They encouraged us that it was not that difficult and surely we, both university graduates and my husband with a PhD could manage one small child! When put that way, it made us realize that we had been so foolish, trying to fob off our own responsibilities onto someone else. The Bible is clear on this point, that educating children is the responsibility of the family, not the state.

The funny thing was that schools had worked so well for both my husband and me – indeed, my husband had made education his career – and I also had done my share of teaching, even when I was in Sydney, I had taught at the Sydney Technical School a few night classes in EFL, I had also taught younger children at the Malvina High School, all of which I had enjoyed. Looking back on it now, home education was the making of our family and that education was not for our son but for ourselves. It forced us to grow up and start thinking for ourselves. Halleluiah. Is that not what education is supposed to do, make us independent, creative members of society?

We took our son out of the private schools that we had paid so much money for and received so little from. We had even gone so far with the schooling dream – and believe me, we had a bad case of it, it seemed like something so easy that we could buy, instead of earn or create, but then we still were so young ourselves, so inexperienced at parenting, we put his name down for Eton just after he was born so sure enough, he was called up for an interview and an entrance examination when he was eight. We somehow thought that we could buy our way up the social ladder and use our son as a sacrificial lamb. Memories of Abraham and Isaac do come to mind here. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit interceded for us. When we took him up for his interview and

entrance exam, he scored so high and also finished the exam a half hour early that he was immediately offered a full scholarship – academic and music both – but by that time, we knew in our hearts it would be wrong. Even our son commented on how silly some of the men seemed to behave! We turned them down because by that time, thank God, we had come to see what poverty really looked like, emotional poverty, what young men huddled together to keep warm in the cold, cruel world of academia looked like and we were overwhelmed with a great sense of sadness for these chaps, who go on to huddle for a lifetime, still hoping to win prizes. A far cry from a young man growing up confident and independent, a young man ready to give something back that is original, authentic and his very own.

Many people tried to tell us because our son seemed so musical that we should move to London and put him in a music conservatory or even worse, go for the music scholarships at the choir schools. They were all clamouring for him but again, we said no, because of the boarding issue and also because of the regimented and stunted way they treated the boys. I even took him up to the Royal College of Music in London to have his compositions evaluated and they said he was already writing music at a post graduate level and this was when he was eight. His first orchestral scores had already been performed by regional orchestras and his first DVD's were already selling in the gift shops at the cathedral and music conservatories. The Royal Family had already presented him with the nation's top achievement award for the under 25's. What to do? You see, my husband and I are not musical, my husband although a professor of history is musically illiterate whereas I can sing a hymn but that is all. What we were to learn is that this was the best gift we could give our son, total ignorance on our part! The best thing that we ever did for our son was just to get out of his way and not impose any of our own ideas onto him which meant that all of his drive to learn, explore and discover could be given full vent, his music was entirely his own. Imagine if I had been a composer myself, how awful that would have been for him? Thankfully, I was not, which left the whole field wide open for him to explore and explore he did.

He also loved sport so we decided on investing time outdoors with riding, sailing, tennis, golf, cycling, swimming, and martial arts. He thrived on it all. The Royal Yachting Association had a very good scheme for Yacht master which, need I say it, he sailed through, and was soon off to the Azores sailing between Wales – that was at age fifteen. He is now a certified Yacht master and that credential means a great deal to him.

At age eight, besides French and German, which we perfected on summer beach holidays to the continent hitting all the French beaches and in the winter, to Switzerland, where we hit all of the winter ski resorts for German, he

decided to study Latin and thank goodness for his photographic memory and perfect audio memory which helped with the pronunciation of a dead language no end, so that when we took him on a pilgrimage to Rome with our vicar, he was able to translate all of the monuments for everyone, age ten.

The most important thing, however, that we were able to give our son was a strong belief in God. We were successfully able to avoid all of the escapism that is so prevalent today among the young and instead gave him a mature love of society, for people of all ages. He met youngsters his own age when doing sport and then mixed with older people when doing music. By age eleven he was the youngest member to be invited to join as a Professional Writer Member of the British Academy of Songwriters, Composers and Authors.

Our son is now age 22 and has been invited by the Foreign Office to take his music to the United Nations and make a formal presentation to the UN General Assembly, as a gift from Parliament to each of the 193 member nations. This was an invitation from the Undersecretary of State Henry Bellingham who gave him a 1 ½ hr interview. He was also given a tour of the House of Lords and taken to tea there and introduced to several of the peers of the realm.

He decided it was time to give something back and so took classical sport and combined it with classical music to promote peace. Already the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra has put in a bid to record and premiere with him conducting an 80 piece ensemble and Decca/Universal have told him they will distribute the album providing he can finance the recording and premiere. This now means he is learning all there is to know about becoming an entrepreneur and raising money to pay the orchestra, a considerable task. Already Yachting Magazine has done a feature on this story and the BBC has done several interviews. He has prepared a full 360 project of Music, TV, Book and Digital portals to put on a global spectacular so that after the UN presentation, we can pass the baton across the time zones and demonstrate what peace sounds like when united nations work together in concert. We all know what war sounds like but what about peace?

His current album includes three major new works for the orchestra all paying tribute to sport. It is a two-hour programme and enough for a double CD Album

SPORTING CLASSICS – A Royal Tribute

Overture to Sport (15 min)

Equestrian Concerto for Cello (45 min)

Yachting Symphony (55 min)

If the Australian Broadcasting System would like to do a TV documentary on this, he would be happy to come down and conduct the programme for you. You can read about this at his website, follow his blog and keep up with the tweets at www.musicolympia.com

To conclude then, we did not move to the noisy and congested city but stayed in the lovely English countryside, far away from any music conservatory where our son could actually listen to what it sounds like to grow up fit and healthy in the UK today. If he needed a textbook on notation or orchestration, for instance, that was easy to obtain. There was also the Internet for asking questions and we found wonderful instrumental teachers nearby so he developed first hand a love of performance. The same held true also in sport, as I have mentioned, especially with the riding and sailing. We insisted on keeping learning as part of loving, that this was how God loved us by giving us this beautiful creation to explore and to give thanks and use it properly, care for it and contribute to it. He began to think what he could give back and how his passions could be employed in that gesture. He learned how a person can grow up integrated with the chance to bring his physical and spiritual sides together. In the public school system, the spiritual side of a person is entirely forgotten and it is just a materialistic world that is taught. That means children in the state system end up with half a deck, a terrible disadvantage.

In our home education, we eliminated the word teach and substituted the word learn. As a result our son learned the lessons that sport and music taught him, that he must realign the melodies of the mind, the harmonies of the heart and the rhythms of the body for peak performance. The same rules apply for a champion athlete as for a champion composer. This means that for you down under in Australia, young people can arrive at this same turning point, a place where light is born out of fire, where the body's one bridge can burst into star with gifts to shower the night.

HOVA Submission 14. July 30, 2014.

I've been home schooling for 12 years. My children love to learn and people are always amazed at their knowledge base and their ability to talk to others from all walks of life. They are social and capable. My daughter starts college in September, and is missing a year due to being capable!

HOVA Submission 13. July 30, 2014.

I went to teacher training college. It was there I came into contact with the works of John Holt and others who advocate an autonomous learning environment. It was during this time that I also met home educators. What really impressed me was the maturity of their character and their interest in learning. That was many years ago and I am so glad that we have been able to home educate our children and still can. Our eldest is 16 and she is just about to join a 6th form to study the International Baccalureate after never being to school and for her early years doing less than half a day academics. I would have found the level of oversight from government so stressful. I am certain it would not have benefitted my children's education in the slightest, more likely made me want to give up. How sad for you all that this being hung over you as loving parents concerned for the best of your children. Does your education department know about John Holt and others? Have they researched this well?

HOVA Submission 12. July 30, 2014.

So sorry to hear of the difficulties you are having in NSW, Australia. I am really shocked that a country I consider so closely aligned with the UK has such a draconian approach to home education.

I am so thankful that the education of a child is enshrined in UK law as the responsibility of the parent. Parents may delegate this responsibility to school or keep it themselves. Parents who choose to keep the responsibility themselves are free to educate however they choose. Local authorities are only obliged to check up on families if there is a reason to believe a child is not receiving an appropriate education.

I love home schooling. I lead a large and thriving group of home educators who meet bi weekly to do educational activities. We have 30 families associated with us. Parents take it in turns to lead sessions. We are blessed with an ex head teacher, Grade 8 musicians, Children's ministry leaders, 2 nurses, a church minister, a drama teacher, vocalists, engineers, a caterer and a doctor amongst the parents. All are willing to share their skills with the children. We also invite outside speakers like the police, fire brigade and nutritionists. We are all passionate about our children's education and ensuring they are exposed to as many experiences as possible.

Other parents in our home education community arrange regular trips to the museums in London, to a local outdoor activity centre (sailing, high ropes, caving), to recycling centres, dog rehoming centres and anywhere that offers educational trips! We always get the same prices/treatment as schools.

We have weekly home ed swimming lessons, followed by a social swim with the 20 families that attend. There are weekly Lego robotics and football lessons too. I employ music teachers for my 3 children and am thrilled with the children's love of playing and great progress. We rarely have to ask them to practice, they do it because they love it.

Then there are the numerous birthday parties. We also belong to a thriving church with youth groups and community events that we help at. I believe that my children are exposed much more regularly to a much bigger cross section of community than children who are at school. This is giving them confidence to treat with respect: the young and the old; the rich and the poor; and the well educated and uneducated. We regard as good friends in our home education community a relative of royalty and families struggling to pay the bills. My children love them equally.

As regards reading, writing, maths and English. These are covered quickly and easily in a morning's work. Exposure to great literature and engaging reference books meets their voracious demand for knowledge and widens their vocabulary. My 2 older children have read many of the children's classics, like: 'Little Women' and the Laura Ingalls Wilder book. It can be difficult to get their noses out of a book sometimes!

We have amongst our home ed group, a cohort of teenagers supporting each other as they take their national exams and apply to higher educations colleges. They are a great example and encouragement to us. My children are only just approaching senior school age but we will soon be starting some English and maths groups to support them through national exams a year early.

I can understand the fears of authorities, who don't have much experience of home education. Especially when there are additional worldwide fears of extremism being bred into children and so on. But it doesn't take much work for authorities to build strong, healthy relationships with home schoolers. Most home schoolers would be only too willing to take new home schoolers under their wing and would, of course, report swiftly to authorities any parents abusing their right to home school and neglecting (or worse) their child. Respectful and open dialogue between authorities and home schoolers is the way to go; draconian laws can only increase suspicion and hostility on both sides.

Our local authority had some concerns about elective home educators who are not obliged to have any contact with authorities. So they arranged an open meeting where council workers and parents could meet to talk about concerns they both have. No details were required from the home schoolers; the children came and played while the adults talked. There were light refreshments. It was very helpful. Parents were able to discuss difficulties they had regarding accessing exam centres while council workers were able to explain their concerns about children in the area that they felt they had no access to. Fears were soothed and better relationships formed.

I plead with the authorities in NSW to rethink their home education policy and adopt a UK or US model. To aim for good working relationships with parents rather than crushing them with such burdensome, stressful documentation and strangulating regulation.

HOVA Submission 11. July 30, 2014.

I home educate my 4 children (ages 2-12) in Scotland, & always have done. I see my children growing & developing as individuals, being allowed to be unique & pursue their passions in a way that encourages them to love learning, to love & appreciate the world, & to treasure their interactions with all the people they meet. Home educating has enabled us to meet their individual needs with patience & compassion (something rarely possible in a class of 30 children). My children are confident & highly social. They are good at making new friends of any age (0-100!), whereas I have noticed a tendency in the schooled children I spend time with to be very shy & apprehensive about holding a conversation with an adult.

As the mother of my children, I am the one best placed to assess their needs, to call in extra support if needed, & to oversee their education & development. I do not need the interference of the government - I am grateful for the Scottish Government's trust in my competence, & thankful for the resources available to us should we need them. I am glad not to have to do any paperwork at all for government approval to home educate - home educating is time consuming enough without having to fill extra forms in or jump through arbitrary hoops to please someone in an office who knows nothing about my children & the plans they have for their lives.

Home education is a wonderful way to live, and can bring great development in every area of a child's life. Parents who choose to home educate will have thought seriously about this huge decision, and will be ready to take their child's progress seriously - they do NOT need to be constantly interfered with & directed & given a prescribed syllabus to follow. Those measures enormously restrict the family, completely unnecessarily.

HOVA Submission 10. July 30, 2014.

I would like to comment on home education.

I have home educated five children, four of whom are now adults. We started off home educating in South Africa, and continued after our move to England. In South Africa, for a number of years, we ran the Eastern Cape Home Schooling Association. I also worked as a Media Officer for the UK based Home Education Advisory Service for five years. I have seen that my own experience of home education as a safe, successful and enjoyable way of educating and raising children is also true of countless other families. In all the years of involvement with home educating families, there have been very few about whom I have had concerns of any sort, certainly nothing that couldn't be sorted out with a little support.

My two eldest children are happily married. One is a horse trainer, running her own freelance business. She is also studying part-time and aims to complete her Environmental Studies degree with the Open University within the next couple of years. She cares deeply about issues related to poverty in Third World countries and hopes to start a project with horses and disadvantaged children in Tanzania. My other daughter studied at Winchester University, and

obtained a First Class Honours Degree in Choreography, Dance and Journalism. She is now a Ballet teacher at a private school. She and her young husband have just purchased their first home.

Our son is at Falmouth University, doing the Drawing Degree. He is one of only thirty students accepted on this degree. He runs private drawing classes for home educated children to support his studies and earn an supplementary income. He has an interest in Art as therapy and loves building confidence in children who are struggling with Art. Our son is dyslexic and didn't learn to read until he was 14. In spite of this, he has been able to thrive and become successful. Recently he underwent a full battery of special needs testing and assessment at his university, and the comment was that he shows all the symptoms of dyslexia but none of the problems. I have noted that dyslexic children often suffer a lot of damage to their self-esteem in their peer groups. Home education allowed us to avoid this risk because home educated children interact with people across a wide range of ages and stages of life.

The 4th daughter is a trainee riding instructor. She is 2/3 of the way through her course with Think Like A Pony and is an excellent teacher. We have 7 ponies, and along with her youngest sister, she provides for all their care and needs. She is also interested in Racing School, and would like to be an exercise rider for young horses. She has a strong interest in training horses and has successfully backed and trained her first youngster. Also dyslexic, we have not seen her held back in her learning. A year ago, purely for interest, she did a GCSE in Classics, a subject that requires a lot of reading and writing. I feel strongly that home education allowed both my son and this daughter to develop and thrive at their own pace in spite of their learning challenges.

Our youngest daughter is 13 and is still in the compulsory phase of education. She is very interested in animals, and it is likely that she will choose to study something in this field. With this in mind, she is beginning to focus on the Sciences in her studies. She owns 3 ponies and is a very responsible caregiver and horsewoman. She is a completely self-directed learner, surprising us all with the breadth and depth of her knowledge about a wide range of subjects.

All this suffices to show that the children have done very well in home education, and that they have been adequately equipped and prepared for life.

Our approach was autonomous, in that we allowed the children to set their own educational direction. In spite of this rather unusual approach, we have seen them grow up as responsible, interested, caring people. All the concerns raised over the years about the way in which we educated our children have proved to be inconsequential.

I have no hesitation in recommending home education as a valid and viable way to educate a child, and would like to respectfully request that you continue to offer it as an education option in Australia.

Regards
Cathy Koetsier

www.Christian-unschooling.com

HOVA Submission 9. July 30, 2014.

I have a 9 year old son, he is home educated the reason being is he is dyslexic, if I had continued with his state education he would have left the establishment illiterate.

My son is thriving now, he read his first paragraph independently, afterwards we both cried with joy, this is all due to my time and patience to help him read. My son is now a happy confident boy.

Do not take people's rights away to do the best by their children.

HOVA Submission 8. July 30, 2014

I've been home educating my two children age 5 and 9 from the beginning. They have never been to school.

We follow an unstructured home ed route, which allows my boys to learn practically and according to their interests.

In England we are not obliged to follow a curriculum or be monitored. We have the freedom to educate our children as we see fit.

I chose to have inspections, and we have an annual inspection.

My children and thriving on this method of education.

They are incredibly bright. They love science. We belong to 2 Home ed groups that meet once a week, and they have many friends.

They are socially and politically aware, far more than any child I have met who attends school.

To date my children have accomplished so much -I list below:

9 year old.

- Is stage 6 in swimming (stages 8-10 are competitive levels or life saving).
- He is in the local Gymnastics squad and competes at Regional Level,.
- He has 2 grades in Fencing.
- He had passed child's BSL (sign language) exam and is working towards his second.
- He has completed the British Heart Foundation First Aid Certificate.
- He has completed the National Science Crest Super Stars award and is to start Mega stars,
- He is learning French.
- He reads and writes his reading level is around age 11.
- I could go on and on

5 year old.

- Reads and writes approx. Age 7.
- Has started sign language.
- Had completed Science Crest Awards Star level will start Super stars.
- Has gained his level 7 gymnastics certificate, working on 6 and hoping to join the squad.
- In stage 3 swimming.
- Nearly completed First aid certificate.
- Etc.

They both take part in workshops.

Have lots if educational trips.

I really cannot state here all the amazing things my children are doing.

The freedom of unstructured education allows children to grow and develop in ways that are truly restricted at school.

Please revise your policies and allow a new generation of truly inspiring and creative children to become the free and creative adults that will make real and lasting contributions to your society in the future.

HOVA Submission 7. July 30, 2014

Hello,

I am a mum of two girls who are still little (2.5 and 5). I'm planning to home educate both of them.

I personally experienced how the school system can fail a person and I want better for my children.

I was a good student throughout the 12 years of my childhood. I did as I was told and followed the school schedule to the letter. And when I reached 18 the school spat me out and declared me "ready" for the world.

I still remember the fear and anxiety I felt. I didn't know what I wanted to do next? I didn't know anything about life outside the school institution. I didn't know anything about myself! What I'm good at what I'm not.

I just knew I can memorise data to pass tests and follow schedules.

But from then on nobody was going to tell me what to do where to go? It was a terrifying feeling. Like someone pulled the ground out from under my feet!

I didn't just want to choose one of my parents' profession just because I didn't have any other idea, so I spent the next 10 years trying to find out what I'm good at what is my element by coming and going in the world looking for my place.

I want my children to be out in the world experiencing real life not institutional living. This is where they will have to find their place after all.

Information is everywhere and while they will pursue their personal interests they will pick up lots of general knowledge as well

But most importantly they will have deep self knowledge and will not stand there at 18 like I did feeling completely unprepared and not even knowing what they want.

My eldest is 5 now and she is so clear about what she wants to do. She has a curiosity for life and I'm so glad that in this country I can just let her get on with it. I actively stay involved with her every day and provide her all the opportunities to dig as deep as she wants into her interests. She is thriving!

School would break her spirit, her curiosity! The constant judging would place self-doubt in her soul which would grow into the "what if I'm not good enough" fear. It is very hard to cancel these fears later on. I know.

I believe it IS the parents' responsibility to help their children become self-sufficient independent adults. The government leaves us in charge of meeting all their other needs (emotional and physical) so why do they presume that they are better equipped meeting their educational needs. How can they think that by forcing a child to spend 80% of their life in an institution where they must be and do like everyone else , memorise tons of data that is totally irrelevant to their lives is a good way to prepare for the individual unique life that that child will have?!

Good luck with your fight over there in NSW. The situation so far is good here in the UK but the government is always trying to change it for the worst. They don't like not having control.

Kind regards

HOVA Submission 6. July 29, 2014

I am a UK home educating mother of 2 boys, aged 10 and 8. Neither has ever been to school or received any formal education, yet both are articulate, sociable and active, with enquiring minds and strong convictions.

I have done little out nothing to teach them to read and write, other than encouraging their own efforts, reading to them and reading and writing myself. My eldest was about 8 and a half when he felt confident enough to be able to say himself that he could read, though he was quite capable of reading a lot of words much earlier. He has recently embarked on reading his first novel by himself - his choice? The Hobbit by JRR Tolkien! He tells me that it might take quite a long time, but he wants to read it all himself because then, when he reaches the end, he'll be much better at reading! This is just one of the things he has chosen to do for himself and illustrates how intrinsic motivation works in child-led learning. Meanwhile, my younger son doesn't yet feel confident enough of his reading ability to be able to say he can read, even though his reading and writing are both coming on well.

Both of my boys have been interested in nature and wildlife from an early age. We live on the edge of a small town and have easy access to the countryside, as well as visiting nature reserves, country parks, woods and so on frequently. They also watch many natural history programmes, such as David Attenborough's excellent series and love visiting natural history museums. They both decided several years ago that they want to be conservationists when they grow up and have grand plans to set up teams of people to save animals from extinction across the world. It is a big ambition and we hope we can help them to achieve at least a part of it.

They are also very interested in history, enjoying visits to museums on a wide variety of historical themes and the historical sites, which we are lucky to have access to in the UK. They also enjoy historical re-enactment shows and festivals and, of course, the many programmes on history available on TV.

The boys attend a variety of activities with other children, both those organised for home educators and after school clubs. They are both members of the local Cub Scouts group, attend a weekly science club and a home ed sports session. They are also keen to take up tennis, archery and fencing, for which we are currently waiting on availability at local clubs, though we are able to practice the first 2 to some extent.

Other interests, meanwhile, have come and gone, followed to the extent to which it suited the boys themselves and sometimes returned to from time to

time, as they choose. They choose to draw, build, bake or play at different times and in different ways. They make full use of technology, such as computers, and of books as they like, play indoors and out, with toys or on computer games or watch TV. I and/or their father are near at hand, sometimes busy with our own jobs, chores or interests, sometimes helping them, chatting, discussing or explaining, sometimes playing with them or involving them in our own activities.

To conclude, my children are growing up in a happy, secure home where they are free to follow their interests, to let their imaginations and enquiring minds run free and explore the world around them, whether that be at home, out in the wider world or with friends and family. They are learning, developing and growing without the need of any formal education and I have full confidence in their ability to learn the life skills they will need in the future and especially that they are learning how to learn, which will enable them to pursue whatever goals and ambitions they may vary into adulthood or choose later on.

This is how home education works for us, and it is something which no school or prescribed curriculum can provide.

HOVA Submission 5. July 29, 2014

I have been home educating my children for 10 years. My son is almost 17 and my daughter 10. In these years I have watched my children grow into well-rounded young people. They are interested, inquisitive, engaged and most of all very independent in their learning. I often feel that they are receiving the style of education University provides. They are expected to be in charge of their own learning, this enables them to extend their innate sense of curiosity for learning beyond pre school years, (I feel that school discourages this style of independent learning and then expects older young people to get it back again when they go to University). They both interact with many community groups and notice how they can engage differently than schooled children - even schooled children who come from the fee-paying schools. My son made an observation recently whilst talking to a friend at a group, 'he was talking to me about psychological studies like he had no understanding of what he was saying, but was just repeating what he had heard'. My children have the freedom to really engage in their learning, which means ultimately, they understand it better.

HOVA Submission 4. July 28, 2014



HOME EDUCATION AND NATURAL LEARNING

Dr. Alan Thomas, FBPsS., Visiting Fellow, Department of Psychology and Human Development.

I am a developmental psychologist with a particular interest in how children learn. I embarked on home education research while I was a Senior Lecturer at Charles Darwin University. I have since undertaken research into all kinds of home education over a period of 20+ years, mainly in Australia and the UK and, most recently, worldwide, covering at least 400 families. I have published my research in learned journals and monographs and in handbooks for educational professionals. I have also briefed governments in Australia (Victoria and Tasmania), the UK, Ireland, France, Belgium and The Netherlands.

Parents adopt a wide range of philosophies, ranging from following established curricula based on set lessons to entirely autonomous, also known as natural learning, informal learning or unschooling. In this submission I will refer to it as natural learning.

When I embarked on my research into home education I expected to see timetables, parents preparing and teaching lessons, setting and assessing written work, in other words a mini-mainstream school. What I found, however, demonstrated a very broad range of educational approaches. At one end of the spectrum, a few parents did conform to what might be described the mainstream school model I initially expected to see. At the other end of the range, some parents had abandoned lessons or deliberate teaching altogether, allowing their children to determine their own educational path and to acquire an education through everyday living and by following their own interests, certainly through the primary and well into the secondary years.

Natural learning will be unfamiliar to the vast majority of professional educators who view a structured education and planned, sequential teaching as essential for progress. Nevertheless it well established throughout the world.

All children learn naturally during the first years of life, informally, with little or no structure. There is no reason why children should not go on learning in the same vein, certainly until the need to obtain educational qualifications becomes important.

The great advantage of home education, whatever method is practised, is that it is individualised. For children educated autonomously this means learning by following their interests and in what they learn informally during their everyday lives, with the parent as a constant resource and mentor.

Normative measures of progress used in school do not apply when children learn what interests them and at their own pace. Mainstream schools follow set curricula delivered through planned lessons; students are carefully tracked and their progress regularly measured against age-related norms. However, these established practices governing teaching and learning in mainstream schools are there by custom and tradition and no more. They may be necessary for the effective running of mainstream schools but they are not educational "givens" in any scientific sense.

Autonomously educated children may not cover the same material as they would in school but there is no doubt they acquire an education which fully prepares them for entry into formal education or work.

Some key areas including the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and computer/IT skills are often learned not by having lessons in these areas but during the course of everyday activities at home and in the wider community. For example, in my research I have found many children who have learned to read with very little if any of the kind of teaching which may be necessary in a school setting.

Subject matters addressed at home can vary widely and often encompass skills and areas of knowledge not included on the school curriculum. We have found that some children follow passionate interests for years, going deeply into their subject matter. Sometimes these interests peter out; sometimes they form the basis for higher, formal education and careers.

We have come across children with deep subject knowledge. Examples include the Russian Revolution, computing, aeronautics, chemistry, cookery, jewellery making, creative writing, Japanese culture, boat design and a wide variety of craft and technical skills such as spinning, weaving, bee keeping, welding, rabbiting – the variety is truly astonishing. We also found children pursuing music and sports to quite high levels as well as for recreational purposes. Whilst the subject matter may sometimes be unusual we have found that children are able to develop thinking skills, critical analysis, problem solving, logical and creative thinking and self-expression in a variety of forms through their interests.

Home educated children have no difficulty in embarking on formal education in school or college when they are older. They may not have covered the same areas as their school peers, mainly because they will have followed their own interests. However, their educational experience will have prepared them very well for mainstream education at whatever age they start.

Universities are increasingly finding that home educated children make good students because they are more used to independent study. Harvard actually reserves places for home educated students.

Selected publications relevant to natural and informal learning

Books

Thomas, A. (1998) Educating Children at Home, London, Cassell. (translated into German "Bildung zu Haus: ein sinnvolle alternative, Tologo Verlag, Leipzig)

Lowe, J. & Thomas, A. (2002) Educating Your Child at Home, Continuum International Publishing Group, London & New York.)

Thomas, A. & Pattison, H. (2008) How Children Learn at Home, Continuum International Publishing Group.

French translation: A l'école de la vie, les apprentissages informels sous le regard des sciences de l'éducation Editions L'Instant Present, Paris (2013) (translated into German: Informelles Lernen, Leipzig, Tologo Verlag, 2014)

Thomas, A. & Pattison, H. Learning to read without being taught (Bloomsbury, London, in preparation)

Articles

Thomas, A. & Pattison, H. (2013) "Home education and informal learning" In: Hancock, R. Collins, J. and Stacey M. Eds. Primary Teaching Assistants: learners and learning. Routledge: London.

Thomas, A. & Pattison, H. (2013) Informal home education: philosophical aspirations put into practice. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, **32**, 141-154

Thomas, A. & Pattison, H. (2014) "Informal home education and the development of literacy" In: P.Rothermel (Ed): Intercultural perspectives on home based education. Palgrave Macmillan.

Alan Thomas BA(Hons.), Dip. Ed., MSc., PhD.
Fellow of the British Psychological Society

HOVA Submission 3. July 22, 2014

To Whom It May Concern,

Due to the increasing costs of living expenses and rent, it is more affordable for my children and I to live on the road in a caravan and travel whilst I home school my children. Due to NSW making it such a difficult process to homeschool and not accepting travelling to be considered an appropriate way to school my children I have been forced to not register for homeschooling. I believe travelling is a very educational experience, adding to that my natural learning approach to teaching my children is also not accepted by the NSW Board Of Studies.

My 8 children have been in the school system over a period of 20 years, the system has failed each and every one of them. They have all had learning difficulties (in school), struggled to cope, been a victim of bullying by teachers and other students. Addressing these concerns on numerous occasions was to no avail. Some of my children have diagnosis' of Autism, ADD, ODD and ADHD which has also added to their bad experiences at school. My older children all now still suffer from anxiety, depression and other psychological issues from their time in the school system. I would love to be able to register my children for homeschooling if it is made legally possible to travel whilst teaching my children through the way I believe is best for them. My children need a natural learning approach and love to learn. All of my children are self taught, with support, encouragement and guidance from myself.

Thank you

HOVA Submission 2. July 14, 2014

Terms of Reference

I am a homeschool mother in NSW who has educated her seven children for the past 13 years. I believe strongly that it is my responsibility and right, not the states to take on board providing and monitoring the kind of educational content and environment in which my children learn and grow. and I wish to bring to the attention of the committee into homeschooling in NSW the following points:

Achievements

As a homeschooling family of thirteen years experience I have never questioned my reasons for the decision to homeschool after seeing the great benefits it has brought our family. Our eldest son (22) after completing his education at home, studied and completed his Certificates 3 & 4 in Agriculture at TAFE and now works in the meat industry. He is a very confident and capable adult who is now happily married with a family of his own on the way. Our second eldest (20) after completing his home education achieved well at TAFE, completing a Diploma in Sound Production and has now gained entry to study for a Bachelor in TV production at University. Our third eldest son (17) is still continuing his studies and hopes to do Law or Veterinary Sciences when he is finished. Our other children are still studying at a primary level and are enjoying their education from bookwork to outings and sport activities (archery, sport and swimming carnivals, gymnastics, etc) organised by the homeschool group networks that exist in the community, fueled by devoted parents who want the best opportunities for their children. Arts areas are

covered by private lessons e.g. piano and art and dance lesson.

Home Education Vs School Education

Three of my older children and myself experienced the school based system for 5 years with great deal of disappointment and stress. Education within a school based environment is fueled with unknowns for the parent who place their trust solely in the hands of strangers. Our precious young vulnerable children are then placed around influence and values and that we may not wish for them to be exposed to at any age. Adult role models are of great benefit to children who are always looking for examples to follow. School based systems provide very little of this opportunity as it becomes peer based orientated with little if any one on one contact with adults. Socially school based children become more competent around their peers rather than becoming more competent at talking with adults. Educational opportunities at home provide unlimited access to the right adult role models, advice and one on one assistance and monitoring of educational content. As a result generally home educated children are very intellectually and socially competent and versatile especially with adults when compared to school based children. They become more confident in their own abilities and thoroughly enjoy the opportunities they do get when attending homeschooling community based activities such as sporting activities.

Access to facilities

It is disappointing to say the least that with such a dedicated group within the community are not treated to the same financial opportunities as school based children. Home educated children should have access to Educational Support Services which are currently available to those in the public education such as access to the school, travel passes, TAFE, TvET courses, part-time schooling, school library facilities etc. Currently the state gives no financial assistance to this group within the community who are actually relieving the government of educational costs.

Demographics and motivation of parents to Homeschool.

There are many various reasons why parents choose to homeschool their children. Some have already been mentioned above. Most parents want to shape their children to become socially competent with good quality education which means providing a loving and caring environment in which they can flourish. The latter as well as good educational programs, text books or pre bought courses and a dedicated parent are what is needed to homeschool successfully. A parent does not need to be a teacher to do this. Some choose due to location to educate at home as the distance to a town or school is too far for children to travel. A child with a disability or special needs that can not be met by the current state of the school system is another reason.

Reasons for unregistered homeschoolers

I was previously registered but it just seemed like a bureaucratic exercise for the NSW Board of Studies benefit that provided me with loads of work and unacceptable stress levels on top of what I already had to do and therefore decided not to continue registration. The recent changes to the process of registration in NSW have made it increasingly more difficult for parents to

register their children. Many feel that the package and process makes them feel uncomfortable and overwhelming. If the state makes registration a difficult process and dismisses the advice of homeschoolers to have a say in how they are registered then there will only be an increase in unregistered homeschoolers in NSW. The HEA (Home Educators Association) has been trying to get the Board of Studies to hear its concerns but with no success.

I hope this letter assists you in understanding the concerns of homeschool families in NSW and that you will take these matters into consideration particularly the registration process.

HOVA Submission 1. July 9 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please accept this submission, regarding home schooling.

I am Australian, living in the UK but intending to move home to NSW within a few years, with my British husband and our two children, currently 5 and 3. I qualified as a primary school teacher at the University of Wollongong in the mid 1990s, and have taught in schools in NSW, the NT, the USA and the UK. My children are Autonomously Educated- Radically Unschooled, in our UK terms.

Home education is very important to me and to my children, and I am distressed by the levels of unnecessary and invasive regulations in NSW. I am sure you are aware that in the UK parents are legally responsible for ensuring their children receive an appropriate education, and that schools are considered answerable to the parents. We are free to choose not to utilise them, and are in no way required to deliver the National Curriculum to our children. The purpose of assessment and record-keeping in schools is to present information to parents, and the assumption that I am accountable to the Department of Education, rather than to my children, is ridiculous.

My motivations to home educate are manifold. I enjoy my children's company and am passionate about learning and watching them learn- why would I send them away to do what I love with someone else? I do not believe schools are best able to meet their individual needs, (through no fault of the many excellent professionals involved in education,) either academically or otherwise, and I do not believe an imposed, timetabled curriculum can do other than damage any child's most valuable educational asset- their

curiosity. My understanding of our chosen method of education is based on extensive research, and although it would not be manageable in a school setting, it does not logically follow that a curriculum developed for use in schools must be superior for learning outside of a school. The following requirement in particular illustrates the complete lack of understanding of Radical Unschooling apparent in your registration requirements: "Have you: ... (i) identified a location in your home suitable for educational purposes?" (Registration for Home Schooling in NSW – Information Package, Office of the Board of Studies, NSW, August 2013. Page 12.)

Regarding the financial costs, I was not intending to work while the kids were at school, before we decided on home education, so we are not bothered by the lack of a second income and are feeling very blessed to be able to take advantage of the great reductions in prices of so many things during school term time. By no means least, we have been able to spend a month with my extended family in NSW each of the last 3 years, which would no longer be an option now that my son is of school age. I consider that opportunity for bonding with distant extended family a huge blessing for my children.

We also take advantage of the reduced crowds on school days at a variety of local attractions, museums and theme parks and libraries and parks and cafes and shops all being more accessible for our days out.

Regarding registration, my children are both known to our Local Education Authority, due to attending a free-play preschool, however considering the current requirements in NSW I believe I would refuse to participate should we move to NSW, and would continue Radically Unschooling, and claim that we were on an extended holiday if discovered and challenged.

I respectfully ask that you reduce or eliminate the stressful registration requirements placed on home educating parents. We have our children's best interests at heart, and do not require your irrelevant school-based expertise, especially considering the absolute wealth of wisdom and support available these days within the ever-growing, international home educating community.

Kind Regards,

An Aussie Mum in London

SURVEY OF HOMESCHOOLING PARENTS

INTRODUCTION

In July and August of this year, HOVA conducted an online survey of current and former homeschooling parents. 855 homeschooling parents responded. We included room for comments in all but one question, and 902 comments were made by respondents. We report here the main findings of the survey, and include some of the comments which help bring to life the raw data. Some responses were probably made using hand-held devices, resulting in some typographical errors, but we have left the comments as they were made. We believe the meanings are clear, in spite of any errors.

A. REASONS

Respondents were asked their reasons for beginning to homeschool:-

	Responses—
— My children were thriving at home and I saw no reason to change.	42.91%
— I wanted my children to be able to pursue what interests them.	57.33%
— My children were not thriving at school.	40.14%
— After researching, I considered it the best option for my children.	73.32%
— I wanted the flexibility that homeschooling could provide.	59.01%
— I was inspired by homeschooling families I knew.	44.59%

And their reasons for continuing to homeschool, if they had done so for more than 12 months :-

	Responses
I am pleased with my children's learning.	86.24%
I am pleased with my children's development.	86.90%
I am pleased with my children's social growth.	84.66%
My family is flourishing with homeschooling.	84.66%
I am confident that homeschooling is better for my children than school.	91.01%
I am pleased with how my children are doing compared with their schooled peers.	62.70%
My children prefer to be home educated.	80.82%

Some respondents also added other or more specific reasons, or made comments about their reasons. We have collated these and include some here to show respondents' experiences.

There were two predominant categories of reasons:

- I. Negative experiences of school on children and,
- II. Positive experiences of children of living without school.

I. NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL:

(i) Bullying by other students which was unresolved:-

Bullying was out of control and was leading to behavioural problems and anxiety and it was getting worse not better after 2 years we had no choice
7/27/2014 9:16 PM Respondent #36

Oldest son was bullied at school, we were moving towns and getting a divorce so HS meant son didnt have to have the additional stress of a new school
7/27/2014 9:40 PM Respondent #41

My daughter in Kindergarten was being bullied by another student - she stopped speaking at all- as a result of the inaction of the school and the "resilience" ideas which did not work, we pulled her and her brother and sister out.
7/27/2014 9:44 PM Respondent #42

Bullying [In response to question about reasons for homeschooling]

7/28/2014 12:17 PM Respondent #125

Homeschooling is not for everyone, but many families find it beneficial for various reasons. Mine was to spare my son from the bullying he endured while in public school, and to accommodate our family's lifestyle where we moved a lot for work.

7/29/2014 2:22 PM Respondent #198

My eldest son was bullied relentlessly at school from starting to age 6. The school refused to help despite constant pleas for action to be taken. My son had become depressed, withdrawn and a shadow of the boy I knew. He needed help. Home education restored his confidence and he thrived. He has now finished his A levels, has a Private Pilot's license and is about to embark on his dream: - Training to become an airline pilot.

7/30/2014 3:23 AM Respondent #251

child being bullied and unable to learn in group setting.

7/31/2014 11:52 PM Respondent #543

Bullying.

8/1/2014 1:36 AM Respondent #550

My eldest son was severely bullied. My younger son was always ill and missing so much school.

8/4/2014 7:49 PM Respondent #787

Bullying from students and teachers. School environment felt wrong.

8/5/2014 1:10 PM Respondent #814

(ii) [Neglect, mistreatment, or abuse from school staff](#)

Special Needs child: . bullied by school children . bullied and neglected by teachers . SN child's funding used for other things, not for SN child's needs at all Child never supported in any way Child now thriving.

7/27/2014 8:42 PM Respondent #24

Mainstream schools would not follow Medical Action plan signed by the Doctor. My child Anxiety disorder got worse and cause Allergic reactions every day at School and the Medications were no longer able to help with this. My child was also struggling to do the work and received no help from the Schools.

7/27/2014 8:50 PM Respondent #29

I am better able to meet my child's needs, without developmentally inappropriate exposure to adult topics (as of grade 2).

7/28/2014 12:17 AM Respondent #61

My eldest child was bullied by his teacher to the point of requiring professional psychological treatment. Although the principal was supportive of my decision to remove my child from the school, I later found out that my child was not the first for this to happen to. Three years later, the teacher is still there.

7/28/2014 12:21 PM Respondent #126

My child was being bullied at school and the school administrators were not taking steps to stop the actions.

7/29/2014 1:47 AM Respondent #175

My daughter was attacked regularly by the son of the Vice Principal, who said it was my word against hers... charming. I knew my daughter was unsafe in that environment, she would cry when having to go to school etc. And rather than offer help etc, the Principal sent the local Dept of Ed guys around to threaten me to put her back in school or I would be arrested... very against the law for them to do this... so no more school for my kids.

7/29/2014 10:59 AM Respondent #192

One of my daughters, who was always extremely well behaved, inadvertently forgot a swimming costume for a lesson one week. It was the first time it had happened and she had remembered her towel. She had been helping me with her younger sister early in the morning and the costume was accidentally left behind. She was given a detention anyway as mitigating circumstances did not appear to matter it was just one rule for all no matter what.

7/30/2014 12:47 AM Respondent #244

My eldest son was bullied relentlessly at school from starting to age 6. The school refused to help despite constant pleas for action to be taken. My son had become depressed, withdrawn and a shadow of the boy I knew. He needed help. Home education restored his confidence and he thrived.

7/30/2014 3:23 AM Respondent #251

My child had spent 6 years at school and could not spell a three letter word, nor write such that it could be read. She was also bullied due to her inability to write. The school did little to help her.

7/30/2014 8:59 PM Respondent #415

Ineffective handling of bullying problems, no care of medical wellbeing (allergies not acknowledged, leaving my child ill) and cold reacting badly to stress.

7/30/2014 9:13 PM Respondent #416

special needs not being met at school, in fact nobody noticed the learning difficulties

7/31/2014 2:22 AM Respondent #449

bullying was a huge issue that just was not being resolved. a number of other families had left that school due to the same bully and others. the staff were failing my children.

8/2/2014 4:46 PM Respondent #640

The schooling wasn't providing a sound education. There were many issues within the classroom. No control of bad behavior. And then there was an incident of a "scripture teacher" having their laptop bring up child porn in front of the class. The teacher was currently under investigation yet was still allowed within the school. Plus many other issues that clashed against our moral beliefs as a family.

8/2/2014 7:23 PM Respondent #660

My son wanted to die at the age of 8, after 2 years of misery whilst at school. My daughter developed an eating disorder during her 1st two years at school. In mainstream schools, all the teachers consistently ignored quiet well-behaved children

like mine, who caused no issues. Any problems I raised were considered negligible compared to the misbehaved or louder children, so removing them from school was a necessary step to prevent further serious damage to my children's mental health. Our paed, GP, psychologist and speech pathologist all concurred they were being seriously damaged in the schooling environment and all supported our decision to homeschool, and now believe my twins are thriving now they're homeschooled. This is their professional opinions, not just mine!

8/2/2014 8:37 PM Respondent #668

My child was starting to be bullied at 5 years of age by both her teacher and some of the other students. My child could not keep up with the pace of lessons and therefore became very proficient at quietly copying. My child's learning style was not the accepted norm for the classroom environment.

8/4/2014 3:21 AM Respondent #753

My child was unhappy and not thriving at school. It was only after homeschooling for some time that the full story of bullying and abuse- including sexual abuse, to which she had been subjected at school began to emerge, which had occurred while she was under the supposed care and protection of her teachers. The early part of her homeschooling was a journey of recovery from this setback in her development.

8/4/2014 7:59 PM Respondent #788

Bullying from students and teachers. School environment felt wrong.

8/5/2014 1:10 PM Respondent #814

(iii) [Children's needs not being met at school](#)

My children had special needs that could not be adequately met at school

7/27/2014 8:35 PM Respondent #22

The school system couldn't meet my child's needs and caused emotional damage to my child and myself.

7/28/2014 2:40 PM Respondent #142

Another of my children has a high IQ and was extremely bored at school and would just switch off. I knew he could be more challenged at home and better achieve his potential. I was feeling frustrated that all the children were treated the same when each one is actually an individual.

7/30/2014 12:47 AM Respondent #244

Not enough interesting challenges at school

7/30/2014 6:13 AM Respondent #275

I had a disabled child that the school system did not cope well providing assistance for

7/30/2014 4:02 PM Respondent #346

My daughter had special educational needs that were not being met in school. She was also bullied in three different schools. She is so grateful that she could be home educated.

7/30/2014 10:15 PM Respondent #425

Both my children have special learning needs that were not being met at school. Dyslexia, low vision.

7/31/2014 9:20 AM Respondent #493

Our son has learning disabilities that the public school system was not able/willing to address (dyslexia).

7/31/2014 3:15 PM Respondent #500

My kids are on the Autism Spectrum. They don't qualify for special school but would fall through the cracks in mainstream. I removed my eldest from mainstream because it was the worst environment for an Autistic child. Didn't even bother with mainstream with my second child.

7/31/2014 3:32PM Respondent #501

My children have additional needs which were not being met at school. They were unhappy and the school were not interested in helping them to be happy.

7/31/2014 7:01 PM Respondent #521

One child had low vision which would eventually be fixed. In the meantime he needed lots of reading aloud and other non reading ways of learning

8/1/2014 10:35 AM Respondent #576

One child was academically advanced but school not supporting he was bored and started to misbehave. Other child academically slow which started to effect her socially and emotionally as she knew she was behind her peers Other 2 didn't go to school as we had started to home ed and knew the benefits

8/3/2014 1:20 AM Respondent #692

1 aspergers not coping with school environment. 1 gifted child becoming very bored in school not challenged.

8/4/2014 12:29 PM Respondent #772

Children with special needs, otherwise it would never have crossed our minds. Thank goodness it did!!

8/5/2014 5:13 PM Respondent #817

(iv) Children's school experience was psychologically and/or emotionally damaging

I have homeschooled for less than 12 months but I have seen the positive changes in my kids' mood and confidence levels. Their emotional health has improved.

7/27/2014 3:51 PM Respondent #8

Note: My "normal" child was thriving at home. My child with autism spent three years in the public school system and was NOT thriving until we brought him home.

7/28/2014 4:54 AM Respondent #87

My exceptionally gifted 6 year old was suffering anxiety at school due to poor educational (and social) fit.

7/28/2014 11:23 AM Respondent #117

My children are happier and more confident

7/28/2014 11:24 AM Respondent #118

He cried every day and I researched other schools and came across homeschooling.

7/28/2014 1:21 PM Respondent #134

My child was traumatised by school and fears going back

7/28/2014 2:40 PM Respondent #142

At home in a supportive, loving enviroment I have seen children so shut down and withdrawn and sever anxiety problems, recover, and bloom. and in time gain confidence in themselves and eventually in society. Which would not happen if left in the situation.

7/28/2014 3:00 PM Respondent #144

My daughter has developed PTSD from the bullying that occurred in her former high school.

7/29/2014 1:06 PM Respondent #197

My daughter had become a shell of her former self while at school; no school can cater for her special learning needs, and the fact she is thriving, both academically and socially, is a clear indicator that this education path and lifestyle is fit for her.

7/29/2014 6:30 PM Respondent #215

One of my children were so stressed in school they started to develop many 'tics' - I also know of other children in school that this has happened too. He lost a lot of confidence too. He is now much less stressed and extremely confident and is completely 'tic' free!

7/29/2014 9:10 PM Respondent #236

One of my children in particular was feeling very stressed in the school environment and suffered frequent migraines which meant he was missing a lot of school work anyway. There were also incidents of him being bullied which aggravated the migraines further.

7/30/2014 12:47 AM Respondent #244

The School experience was very emotionally damaging for my autistic child.

7/30/2014 6:35 AM Respondent #286

My daughter developed anxiety and school phobia following a prolonged period of bullying. As her school were unable to offer flexible educational access which took account of her special needs we eventually decided to home educate

7/30/2014 7:58 PM Respondent #399

My son was doing well in school academically but as a person he was 'disappearing' before our eyes and became stressed, angry and formed negative views of himself & his abilities. He became unable to sleep, had nightmares and was often upset going in to school.

7/30/2014 8:17 PM Respondent #406

She was also suffering from an absolute writing phobia; she will now write. She was scared of other children, she will now make friends and even advise friends on how to deal with bullies.

7/30/2014 9:13 PM Respondent #416

I WISH the schools were as good as they could be. I support public education. But the reality of it was damaging my child. She was suicidal at age 10. Within the first day of knowing she would not have to go back, that began turning around. She is not alone in this. If we are going to make a dent in teen suicide we are going to have to recognize that kids need their parents.

7/31/2014 11:52 PM Respondent #543

Daughter was sexually molested at school

8/2/2014 2:02 PM Respondent #608

My children were bullied and had severe anxiety.

8/2/2014 2:46 PM Respondent #621

My daughter has ASD. She was bullied and school was causing her extreme anxiety.

8/2/2014 5:37 PM Respondent #649

One of our children has special needs and was being bullied and falling through the cracks, we tried 5 schools unsuccessfully and he was talking about not wanting to live by the time he was 8, we removed him from school and he has thrived, he is happy, socialized, achieving amazing results, part of a speed skating team, e en teachers from school commented on the immense change for the better in his Wellbeing. His sister suffered anxiety attacks at school and once removed has thrived developing a passion for the arts and makes friends easily wherever she goes.

8/3/2014 12:25 AM Respondent #688

Eldest has ADHD and was struggling in school. Became very depressed, suicidal. Psychologist agrees home schooling was the best thing for her, that if she remained in school she would have attempted suicide.

8/3/2014 6:34 PM Respondent #724

My son who was bullied was depressed and anxious. Homeschooling has improved his mental wellbeing and his confidence. It took 3 years before he felt able to go anywhere where there were children. The damage done to him at school was huge.

8/4/2014 7:49 PM Respondent #787

My youngest started ti suffer anxiety un kindy

8/5/2014 1:03 PM Respondent #813

Could not find a school that would meet my child's needs, I wanted her to be able to experience the real world without being desensitized systematically. Specifically, the social influences at school were detrimental and caused her stress and anxiety, and it wasn't only her peers; the teachers and admin were a major negative influence on her emotional health. As an ex-teacher, I found homeschooling mums to be some of the smartest people I have ever met.

8/5/2014 9:29 PM Respondent #830

I wanted my children to heal from the seriously negative impact school had had on their health and wellbeing.

8/13/2014 1:32 AM Respondent #855

(v) [Children not thriving at school](#)

I have homeschooled for less than 12 months but I have seen the positive changes in my kids' mood and confidence levels. Their emotional health has improved.

7/27/2014 3:51 PM Respondent #8

My children both thrive in an environment that can be controlled, in terms of noise, activity and social interaction. Homeschooling affords this opportunity to have them be less stressed about interacting with the world around them when we need to.

7/28/2014 4:19 AM Respondent #85

My children are happier and more confident

7/28/2014 11:24 AM Respondent #118

He cried every day and I researched other schools and came across homeschooling.

7/28/2014 1:21 PM Respondent #134

My child had been unhappy at school for several years but I was finally ready to homeschool this year

7/28/2014 3:12 PM Respondent #145

school did not provide a suitable learning or nurturing environment.

7/29/2014 6:13 PM Respondent #210

When a family member is struggling, the whole family feels it; we had lost our harmonious lifestyle when my daughter started going to school, and nobody was at peace or happy anymore.

7/29/2014 6:30 PM Respondent #215

My child started school, in an absolutely wonderful public school with a Steiner stream. In the words of the principal, "her way of coping with stress is not the way of a normal child her age". So she went to a psychologist, who gave us a diagnosis of "highly gifted with an anxiety disorder". She has sensorial hypersensitivities and cannot cope in groups of more than 5 kids (particularly because of noise levels and sensorial input); academically she is 2 years ahead of her peers; but lags behind in

other facets of growth (gross motor skills, she is a bit clumsy, struggles to understand oral instructions, is quite hyperactive). Homeschooling was the absolutely best option for her, she is now much more relaxed, is still ahead of her peers in many areas, and has regained the sparkle and passion for learning which she had almost lost while at school.

7/29/2014 6:30 PM Respondent #215

Saw the affects of school on my eldest son (went to school from 5-16 yrs) and decided I could not subject another child to the system!

7/29/2014 7:59 PM Respondent #229

My child has Asperger's and although ahead in her grades was struggling with the school environment.

7/29/2014 11:45 PM Respondent #243

My older children were having negative effects from school and my younger children were thriving at home as their siblings had been and we started homeschooling.

7/30/2014 3:03 AM Respondent #249

My son has high functioning autism, he attended primary school for 2 terms(about 3 months) it was disastrous.It was too noisy,too busy etc and he just couldnt handle the 5 days a week structure,so we took him out and he is a lot calmer.

7/30/2014 4:04 AM Respondent #258

anxieties of school life these days had a big impact on my son, my daughter was home educated in the 90's until she was about 7 and wanted to try school and she enjoyed it,but having the option to take responsibility for yor childs education is vital,especially when your child is suffering in the school.system.

7/30/2014 7:56 AM Respondent #312

My child hated school, it didn't and still doesn't suite her!

7/30/2014 7:58 AM Respondent #313

After my daughters school flagged her for learning difficulties and after extensive professional testing and a dyslexic diagnosis. We worked with the school and local authorities with no progress so decided we could do better at home. This has proved, surprisingly to us both, to be the best decision we have made with regard to our daughter education.

7/30/2014 7:11 PM Respondent #391

My oldest child was in school and not thriving. My next child was nearing school age, thriving at home.

8/1/2014 1:38 AM Respondent #551

My child was not happy at school.

8/2/2014 10:32 PM Respondent #677

My child was starting to be bullied at 5 years of age by both her teacher and some of the other students. My child could not keep up with the pace of lessons and therefore

became very proficient at quietly copying. My child's learning style was not the accepted norm for the classroom environment. Two of our older children went through regular schooling very successfully, achieving bachelors and masters. However the other older child struggled for 13 years at school. Every year we would say "next year will be better, she'll get a better teacher" or "next year will be better, she'll be in a class with kinder students" and so on. It never did get any better. In hind site, this child would have flourished if homeschooled, Instead she struggles with life believing the nonsense that teachers and students alike told her, all those years ago. It has stuck. I agreed with the Northern European education model where children do not start formal learning until 7 years of age (Finland, Sweden, Denmark - preprimary at 6), we do not believe it is of benefit to our child to have started formal learning at 4 years of age.

8/4/2014 3:21 AM Respondent #753

I initially started by homeschooling my stepdaughter who was struggling at school. Through homeschooling we developed a very strong relationship and I don't believe this would have been the case if she had continued in school.

8/5/2014 8:36 AM Respondent #807

Didn't like the social situation at school

8/5/2014 6:31 PM Respondent #826

After paying private fees for 4 years I was sick of my bright children not being catered for if you can do high school maths you should be doing it not being held back.

8/5/2014 10:13 PM Respondent #831

My child wasn't just 'not' thriving. As a gifted child, the schools (3) refused to meet her needs and as a higher functioning autistic, the schools (3) had a very poor understanding of what that meant. There was a unmanageable level of bullying from students and sometimes from adults.

8/12/2014 12:39 PM Respondent #853

(vi) Teachers whose experience in schools led them to choose homeschooling for their children

I wanted my kids to learn not just the skills and the subjects, but to develop the character with which to use their intellect and gifts to contribute meaningfully and responsibly to the world they are growing up in. My husband is a primary school teacher (one who wants to see his students thrive), and the limitations of the system to develop the children's character is apparent to us. I would say that he does his best to install this still within the system restraints he has.

7/28/2014 1:38 PM Respondent #137

I come from a family of teachers, mother, grandmother and aunt have all been teachers and my uncle is still teaching and currently deputy head at a large secondary school and so our decision to home educate was met with a lot of skepticism and outright claims that we were damaging our daughter for life! It made for some interesting family dinners over the years to say the least. It took a total of two years for them to gradually change their minds, they have all been impressed by

*how well developed my daughter is socially, they recognise how happy she is being home educated and have realised that her level of understanding and knowledge is at least equal to her school-aged peers in maths and English and much broader in other subjects ranging from French and art through to history and the sciences. While I keep a loose grasp of the school curriculum for her age group and ensure she is covering the 'meat and potatoes' of it for the most part we don't actually do much structured learning. On average I would say we do about two hours of structured learning a day for a month and then often have a month where we don't do anything structured. Ironically aspects of learning (e.g. adding fractions) where she struggles during our structured learning which I shelve for a few weeks often seem to somehow resolve themselves during our weeks without structured learning. We go along to local home ed lessons that she *wants* to attend which have in the past included french, art, science, local studies and many other days out doing hands-on learning such as pond dipping and she is an avid reader with a reading age, comprehension and spelling level of an eleven year old. We don't 'learn all the time', we certainly don't hot-house and I strongly feel that while we work from our own loose curriculum (that keeps changing depending on her interests and needs) she is thriving at home and learning far more than she could in a constantly structured classroom. If she has a sudden interest or a question that isn't in our plans for the day we change our plans so I can take advantage of her interest and she absorbs what she wants to know with enthusiasm and joy. She does Brownies, Badgers (St John's Ambulance youth group), choir, dance and playdates. Three years after officially starting home education, my daughter is thriving and my family have recognised this and now give us their full support and acknowledge that home educating our daughter is clearly in our daughter's best interests. It is too easy for those in government or those who teach and who only know the school system to condemn home education or be 'concerned' for the welfare of home educated children. Tight regulations of home education only serves to limit possibilities and try and coerce home education to being an 'at home' replica of school which is not in the best interests of home educated children.*

7/29/2014 7:16 PM Respondent #224

I was strongly attracted to Home Education, specifically John Holt's pedagogy, when first introduced to his writings while studying for my B.Ed-prior to having children. We attempted school, and after a year, determined that despite great resourcing, committed staff, and small class numbers, school was not the best option available.

7/30/2014 6:02 AM Respondent #271

Having been a teacher, a growing awareness both of the unsuitability of the schooling system for growing children and also the vital and irreplaceable role of parents in education. All well educated children are home-educated whether or not they attend a school but schools often disrupt the child-parent relationship.

7/30/2014 6:26 AM Respondent #280

I was a secondary school teacher and met home educating families. I saw their children demonstrating a more positive attitude to learning, greater breadth of learning, more ability to learn independently, more confidence and better social skills

than the majority of pupils in the school system. The social pressures considered normal in school I consider toxic to healthy emotional development of young people.

7/30/2014 7:45 AM Respondent #309

I was a teacher in high schools and found them to be a bad place for socialisation and learning. I thought that I could probably do better than a school for my children, and I almost definitely could not do worse than a school for my children

7/30/2014 8:08 AM Respondent #314

I work in Higher Education - I'm a lecturer in Universities - and I often feel like we spend a long time undoing the damage of formal education: a distrustful attitude towards teachers; low levels of independence in study; a fear of taking intellectual and creative risks in case something is 'wrong' and a utilitarian approach to education in general (I'm getting this degree in order to qualify for x,y,z, not because there is a value in studying in itself).

7/30/2014 5:35 PM Respondent #363

At teacher training college I realised that schools were not always a healthy environment for children.

7/30/2014 7:48 PM Respondent # 395

As a teacher I was acutely aware of the limitations of large scale educational organisations in meeting any individual child's needs or manifesting their potential

7/30/2014 8:15 PM Respondent #404

My children have never been to school. Although my husband and I both qualified as teachers and I studied arts education at university we do not 'teach' them in the conventional sense and are entirely autonomous.

7/31/2014 6:34 PM Respondent #512

I am an ex-teacher and know first hand that our education system has become more results driven, and this is not in line with developing the individual child's potential. There is plenty of research to show that later starting ages, a more play-based curriculum and less emphasis on early reading and writing lead to better outcomes. I want my children to learn how to learn, not be able to do well in closed tests that don't require critical thinking to be engaged.

7/31/2014 7:21 PM Respondent #523

Boy number one is gifted but dyspraxia. School over focusing on writing and not addressing his issues with gross or fine motor skills. Could not provide the intense focus he needed on improving these skills yet he would not thrive in school environment without them. As an ex teacher I knew people would make some attempt through IEP but that it wouldn't be enough. He was becoming socially isolated. His personality was changing and his self esteem low.

8/2/2014 6:46 PM Respondent #656

As a primary school teacher I have taken my child into the formal school environment on occasion and she has commented at how boring the day is because the kids don't do what interests them.... she is only 5 and is very astute.

8/4/2014 3:16 PM Respondent #780

My children are gifted and the 2 schools they have attended made minimal accommodations for this. There was little knowledge among staff as to their needs. Both my husband and I are teachers and we know the little, if any, training that teachers receive on the needs of gifted children.

8/8/2014 1:12 PM Respondent #849

(viii) [Other negative aspects of school](#)

I was astounded to find a nephew reach Year 10 (NSW) without being able to read and write. He left school and then taught himself. A stepson living interstate (NSW) wrote us a letter when he was 13 and it was complete scribble with the exception of a few 'the' type words. For whatever reason I did not want my children to be left behind but to receive the best education I could give them.

7/28/2014 12:20 PM Respondent #126

I wanted to protect my daughter from the dangers of school - ie: bullying, peer pressure, falling through the cracks of the system, etc.

7/29/2014 3:59 PM Respondent #201

My daughter was not ready to be seperated from me (her primary caregiver) at 5 years old. We felt 5 was too young to be seperated for her and felt that other schooling models that started school at 7 years old would have been better for her. Studies showing the emotional and wellbeing future benefits of a later start are numerous.

7/30/2014 7:00 AM Respondent #302

My children were not challenged or inspired at school.

7/29/2014 3:14 AM Respondent #179

Family life suffered

The hours were too long and our family life suffered.

8/1/2014 10:43 AM Respondent #577

II. POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF HOME EDUCATION

(i) [Children who thrived with home education](#)

My child has thrived since we started Home Schooling her Allergy Attacks have reduced. She is re-learning all the basic concepts she didnt learn at school, and is catching up very quickly. She enjoys learning now. She is in a relaxed and safe environment. She designed a Logo and Flyer for a Home School meetup group we started ourselves.

7/27/2014 8:50 PM Respondent #29

My children, through homeschooling, can explore subjects at a greater depth than in many classrooms. It also allows us to spend extra time on subjects that they may understand quickly, which leads to a greater overall understanding.

7/28/2014 4:19 AM Respondent #85

It seemed like such a wonderful way to live, if done well. We had a few years before compulsory school age to try out some of the ideas and see how it went. It was wonderful, and still is.

7/28/2014 10:43 AM Respondent #112

I had a positive experience of being homeschooled as a child myself.

7/28/2014 10:54 AM Respondent #114

My oldest daughter, 11, would enjoy public school. She loves being around big groups of people. Even with that being the case, she chooses homeschooling. She is years ahead of her age mates academically. She has time to pursue other interests. She can be out of the house every evening for activities without sacrificing sleep or family time.

7/29/2014 12:41 AM Respondent #170

Learning is a 24/7 experience! Learning comes from all sources, positive and negative experiences. I am proud to have children who contribute to our community in voluntary ways (we are non-religious so not affiliated to church-like activities) and that my children consider all age groups as friends - from babies to the very elderly. I work for a government agency dealing with welfare and child youth and family and see many sad stories of children and families who have not managed to navigate the traditional education system and feel abject failures - and how this translates in to life-time failure patterns and leads on to downward spirals and really bad outcomes for our community as a whole.

7/30/2014 4:12 AM Respondent #259

My child has thrived by being home education, he is sociable with all age groups and is an important member of the community, both home educated and wider community, that my child is learning all the time, I strongly believe that parents have the right/responsibility to educate their children.

7/30/2014 6:46 AM Respondent #294

. At least once a week an adult in our community compliments me about how mature, confident, intelligent, or happy my children are in contrast to their schooled peers. This is true for the majority of homeschooled children I have met, whether they are taught at home with a curriculum or with a more self-directed approach.

7/30/2014 6:48 AM Respondent #295

They all want to home educate their own children. Oldest daughter at 16 said to me 'I had the most wonderful childhood'. We all love each other and delight in each other's company. Family life doesn't get any better than this.

7/30/2014 7:16AM Respondent #305

As a teacher I witnessed too often school shutting down children's motivation, confidence & therefore opportunities. The older children in our home-school group are clear about where they want to get to, what they want to achieve, and own the journey to get there. Their eyes light up when asked. They are caring towards younger children in the group, courteous & engaging with adults. They have a strong sense of connection with their communities as they have been actively involved with them throughout their lives. I cannot imagine them not succeeding in their adult lives. By that I mean becoming productive and constructive members of their communities and families, and striving to be the best they can be.

7/30/2014 7:45 AM Respondent #309

After only one year in school (in the 'best' state school in our city) my son was miserable, not learning and thought learning was boring. Very quickly after being removed from school to be home educated he started to enjoy learning again. Everyone who know him was amazed during that first year at how dramatically he flourished into a happy, confident child who was able to engage with those around him, adults and children of all ages. I am confident that he is learning massively more than his friends at school and my son (now aged 8) is always astounded at the way his friends say things like 'Maths is boring'! Having the freedom to educate our son in the way that suits our family has been a most wonderful opportunity.

7/30/2014 5:32 PM Respondent #362

As a trained youth and community worker, I was taught about 'informal education' and there is a vast amount of research and evidence to show that it is a powerful method of working with children and young people. Therefore, I knew before starting that education did not need to be highly scripted and 'one size fits all' for it to be successful. This has been our experience this year.

7/30/2014 6:12 PM Respondent #372

Homeschooling IS the best decision we had ever made for our son. He is without the social hang ups we see daily when interacting with our own families public schooled peers. We are happy to see him excelling academically, mentally and spiritually and know that this is the best education for any child.

7/30/2014 10:30 PM Respondent #428

My daughter used to go to school , but over the years as it became more target driven she became less confident less able and lost her spark. We started home ed cautiously but our journey has made me deconstruct all the ridiculous education systems mechanical approach to children. It is not child focused it is adult focused and it fails to provide a proper education.

7/30/2014 11:13 PM Respondent #429

One of the greatest joys of our family is the time spent together - time we would not have if my children were in a traditional school. Our kids actually get to know and enjoy their siblings! They learn and play with children of different ages and abilities, interact with adults, and basically live and grow in the world, instead of learning about it from within a classroom and by interacting mainly with same-age peers all day.

7/31/2014 2:28 AM Respondent #451

Home education has provided our children with the very best of all worlds. They are not confined to a curriculum, a building (school), set hours, a dull routine or hours of wasted time. Their days are full of rich, educational and relevant experiences and learning opportunities. The world needs creative people and that is what we as home educators are producing - our children aren't told what is the 'right' way, 'wrong' way or 'only' way - they are creative, interested and full of self motivation and enthusiasm. And most of all they are at their happiest and they choose to remain home educated.

7/31/2014 10:06 PM Respondent #539

I have homeschooled my 4 children these last four years - they are thriving, bright and are active members of our community

8/2/2014 5:23 PM Respondent #644

Their education is more tailored to suit them, their family values are strengthened and they are more balanced in their ability to relate to others of all different ages. In

particular, they have become more confident in who they are and in trying new things. Their love for learning has not died but is growing!

8/2/2014 11:56 PM Respondent #685

One child was academically advanced but school not supporting he was bored and started to misbehave. Other child academically slow which started to effect her socially and emotionally as she knew she was behind her peers Other 2 didn't go to school as we had started to home ed and knew the benefits

8/3/2014 1:20 AM Respondent #692

Recently my 14 year old wanted to try school after being home educated all his life. After two terms he decided that he wanted to return to home education. He had mostly positive experiences at his school however he had proved to himself that he was doing at least as well if not better than his school peers. At the end of the first term he scored on or above the class average in most subjects and exceled in English. He is motivated and capable of driving his own learning at home.

8/5/2014 7:09 AM Respondent #806

Our family is more peaceful and connected. I love that we have freed our children from being institutionalised and they are get an education that is superior to the mainstream.

8/5/2014 1:10 PM Respondent #814

Children with special needs, otherwise it would never have crossed our minds. Thank goodness it did!!

8/5/2014 5:13 PM Respondent #817

My children are exposed to social diversity and have ample opportunities to problem-solve. They are good thinkers, have realistic and well-balanced sense of self, and feel like accomplished learners without comparing themselves to others.

8/5/2014 9:29 PM Respondent #830

We received constant comments on how well our children socialise with other children, how well they can carry on a conversation with adults on a range of topics and have also observed the strengthening of family sibling bonds as a result of home-schooling.

8/5/2014 10:27 PM Respondent #832

It has been an amazing time, they are so much more engaged in learning as they are learning new things and not stuck waiting for the class doing mindless repetition.

8/8/2014 1:12 PM Respondent #849

Prior to homeschooling I wondered how I would explain our decision to withdraw our children from school, to skeptical friends. However, the benefits of homeschooling compared to school became very evident to us very soon. Our confidence and happiness with our children's progress with homeschooling, made sharing the news of our decision to homeschool easy.

8/13/2014 1:32 AM Respondent #855

(ii) [Home education allows for education to suit the individual child](#)

I wanted my children to progress at their own speed and not be restricted by their 'age' or 'year-level' expectations.

7/30/2014 6:06 AM Respondent #272

We would like our children to progress academically at their own pace and have the flexibility to focus longer on specific topics which interest them, if they desire to do so.

7/31/2014 7:23 AM Respondent #484

Homeschooling is the only way to ensure the individual needs of each child are being met properly. Only in homeschooling can individual learning styles be fully catered for.

7/31/2014 8:34 AM Respondent #491

My child learns at his own pace and rhythm.

7/31/2014 4:37 PM Respondent #505

Children have different interests and learning styles, one method is never going to suit all and I believe my daughter learns better by tailoring the way we work to her personally, retains more information because we can learn about things she is passionate about at the time she really wants to find out about them and has kept the love of learning that so many children lose because she is happy in what she is doing.

7/31/2014 8:46 PM Respondent #536

we can offer a wider curriculum and better opportunities at home.

7/31/2014 9:36 PM Respondent #537

I felt I could offer a more rigorous and challenging individualised education for them.

7/31/2014 11:13 PM Respondent #541

Wanting to have more input into my children's lives and education. Opportunity for interest led study.

8/1/2014 1:36 AM Respondent #550

I want my children to learn at their own speed - not held back if they're quicker than the average, or struggle if they're slower.

8/1/2014 3:25 AM Respondent #556

Home Education is an opportunity like no other, the chance for us to give our children a decent and personalised education was something we could not afford to miss.

8/2/2014 5:16 AM Respondent #590

I am able to tailor my child's learning to their individual strengths, weakness and interests. I am able to guide my child through the realities of life such as conflict resolution, personality differences between people and so on. We do not believe in homework until the high school years. With the exception of reading books, practicing oral spelling and times tables in primary school. This is because a stable family life at home is a valuable aspect of a child's development and homework usually creates a lot of stress within the home and limits play, which is so important for children.

8/4/2014 3:21 AM Respondent #753

Flexible approaches to learning and safety are unbeatable in the homeschooling environment

8/12/2014 12:39 PM Respondent #853

(iii) [Learning from play and pursuing interests](#)

Many studies have shown that children benefit enormously from a childhood of play and discovery, and that too early an introduction to regulated and structured classes is detrimental.

8/1/2014 7:10 AM Respondent #567

Wanted children to be able to be children. Didn't want them sitting at desks all day or carrying heavy bags for health reasons.

8/2/2014 5:22 AM Respondent #591

(iv) [Homeschooling supports children's family and other relationships](#)

Our family dynamics changed for the negative after schooling commenced. I wanted more than that for the next 12 years...

7/29/2014 10:00 PM Respondent #239

I didn't have my children to give them away to strangers to raise, it is best for them and our whole family to learn together and take responsibility for ourselves.

7/30/2014 3:58 AM Respondent #256

I feel great concern about the erosion of the family and felt that home education would allow us to retain the home as the centre of the children's lives, especially when they were small.

7/30/2014 6:48 PM Respondent #382

Our house/family is one where education is valued, and permeates our life. Outside schooling is not integrated into family life - many times people have no real idea of what their children are really studying/learning.

7/31/2014 8:30 AM Respondent #490

Homeschooling has the benefit of being able to address more than just academics- it can meet the child's needs more holistically.

8/4/2014 9:34 PM Respondent #790

It is important for us to be able to spend time with our children and for them to form strong relationships with us and with their siblings.

8/5/2014 12:14 AM Respondent #798

I initially started by homeschooling my stepdaughter who was struggling at school. Through homeschooling we developed a very strong relationship and I don't believe this would have been the case if she had continued in school.

8/5/2014 8:36 AM Respondent #807

(v) [Home education allows for non-standard educational approaches](#)

I wanted to teach my children Christian principles at home.

7/28/2014 7:39 PM Respondent #158

We wanted our children to have excellent educations, the local schools are either average (at best) or prohibitively expensive.

7/29/2014 7:40 PM Respondent #227

I didn't want my son to be forced to learn things he wasn't interested in at times set by someone else. I wanted him to have control over his own life and what he learns and when. I also wanted him to have a good social experience and positive emotional development, which I don't believe he would have had at school.

7/29/2014 8:27 PM Respondent #233

I wanted my children to learn with a curriculum (Steiner/Waldorf) that wasn't available in local schools. My children have never been to school. I feel that it's the parents' responsibility to make sure their children are educated, and homeschooling gave me the opportunity to do that in a way that valued each child's learning experience rather than test scores.

7/30/2014 6:48 AM Respondent #295

i want my children to have enough time for free play (which is the real, and most important work of a child). we do as much "schooling" as in school in much less time. additionally, their whole day is educational - just playing and living life in a family gives them much more education than a school could ever give them.

8/1/2014 12:36 AM Respondent #547

I wanted my children to spend their time with all different aged people not just those the same age.

8/2/2014 3:19 PM Respondent #629

We wanted a Christian-centred educational approach for our children.

8/4/2014 2:10 PM Respondent #777

After paying private fees for 4 years I was sick of my bright children not being catered for if you can do high school maths you should be doing it not being held back.

8/5/2014 10:13 PM Respondent #831

I wanted a christian education for the children and there were no suitable schools where we moved to.

8/9/2014 2:07 AM Respondent #850

(vi) [Families may travel with their children](#)

My husbands job requires him (the family) to move frequently.

7/28/2014 6:01 AM Respondent #92

We were travelling with my husbands work to India and England so homeschooling the children seemed like the least disruptive option for them.

7/30/2014 6:33 AM Respondent #283

So we can travel with my husband :)

7/31/2014 11:11 AM Respondent #495

We move often due to my husbands work so my son had been to 5 schools by grade 5 . Home schooling allows him continuity.

8/1/2014 7:10 AM Respondent #568

To travel the world with my children

8/1/2014 8:04 AM Respondent #573

(vii) [Other positive aspects of homeschooling](#)

We are a trilingual family and I want my kids to have equal exposure to all three languages.

7/31/2014 11:29 AM Respondent #49

I was homeschooled as a child myself. Positive experience.

7/28/2014 7:07 AM Respondent #93

B. RESOURCES

Our survey asked homeschooling parents about the resources they found most useful. A clear finding is that the least useful types of resources to homeschoolers, by a significant margin, are traditional school-type resources – syllabuses, curriculums, text-books etc.

	Not useful.–	Slightly useful.–	Quite useful.–	Very useful.–	Average Rating–
– Books, magazines, internet access.	0.12%	1.20%	8.62%	90.06%	4.70
– Community resources like museums, libraries, galleries, theatres, exhibitions, expos etc.	0.24%	3.86%	23.73%	72.17%	4.16
– Community resources like after-school classes and sports, people with expertise and skills, workshops, clubs and groups etc.	2.29%	18.58%	38.48%	40.65%	3.20
– Other homeschoolers, homeschooling groups.	0.96%	7.69%	26.56%	64.78%	3.93
– Syllabuses, curriculums, textbooks, school-type resources.	19.44%	37.18%	26.61%	16.77%	2.31

People also specified other resources which they had found particularly useful for their children's education. Chief among these were:

(i) [Access to outdoor areas in which to play and explore](#)

The local area, countryside, sea etc as a natural learning resource.

7/29/2014 6:13 PM Respondent #210

Nature reserves, parks, swimming pools

7/30/2014 2:08 AM Respondent #246

Access to various outdoor areas, eg woods, beaches, campsites.

7/29/2014 6:07 PM Respondent #209

(ii) [Games and Play](#)

social media

7/28/2014 7:31 AM Respondent #96

People - discussions and understanding others.

7/29/2014 4:07 PM Respondent #202

Family and friends with skills/learning to share.

7/30/2014 8:32 AM Respondent #320

Talking, talking, talking is probably what we do most!

7/30/2014 8:17 PM Respondent #406

My children learn much better through 'doing' and playing.

7/31/2014 6:34 PM Respondent #512

Play equipment in the garden and local parks for climbing, jumping, swinging, balancing, ball games etc

8/1/2014 1:09 AM Respondent #548

Family and friends with skills/learning to share.

7/30/2014 8:32 AM Respondent #852

(iii) [Time – for exploration and to follow interests](#)

Time and freedom from classroom constraints.

7/29/2014 11:12 PM Respondent #242

Endless hours available for talking. Advantages from spending time with a broader range of people. Time to Dream, muse, play, think unhindered, uninterrupted.

8/1/14 10:36AM Respondent #577

Time for play, conversation, exploration, reflection, meaningful learning.

8/13/2014 1:32 AM Respondent #855

(iv) [Travel](#)

documentaries, travelling-- we like to incorporate field trips when possible (ex. we made trips to Athens and Rome when studying ancient history).

7/30/2014 6:48 AM Respondent #295

Travel - we have tried as far as possible to give the children first hand experience of the world

7/30/2014 6:48 PM Respondent #382

Travel - only affordable to us during term time

7/30/2014 11:54 PM Respondent #435

(v) [Life](#)

Life!

7/27/2014 8:22 PM Respondent #18

Our best inspiration comes from the world around us and great books

7/30/2014 9:48 PM Respondent #422

The support and fellowship of others, plus the wealth of "real world" learning opportunities, makes homeschooling a joyful adventure!

7/31/2014 2:28 AM Respondent #451

Home-schooling is a way of life. It is bigger than school, and occurs every second of the waking day. The greatest resources are our brains with which to discover, our memories with which to recall, our hands with which to explore, and our family with which to support and guide. Every other resource is secondary in importance.

8/1/2014 7:10 AM Respondent #567

Anything and everything can be used as a learning resource. Your only limited by your imagination.

8/2/2014 5:02 PM Respondent #643

crafts, science experiments, cooking, gardening, building, watching documentaries, & general living with well developed imaginations/curiosity & exposure to plenty of practical things to "do" & learn from

8/2/2014 6:48 PM Respondent #658

Practical work and experience. Hands on activities. Living and learning.

8/2/2014 7:23 PM Respondent #660

Television, community mentors, learning through watching family-run business, outdoor exploration.

8/2/2014 10:41 PM Respondent #678

Started out with text books soon only used them on occasion - they stifled the natural flow of where the kids wanted to take a subject - we opted for natural learning.

8/3/2014 1:20 AM Respondent #692

(vi) [Volunteering](#)

Conversational learning, volunteering, informal apprenticeship, an autonomous child led approach to learning, supported by parents and others.

7/30/2014 7:16 AM Respondent #305

Local environment, world travel, voluntary opportunities

7/31/2014 4:27 AM Respondent #466

C. EXPERIENCE OF HOMESCHOOLING

We also asked respondents to rank their agreement with some statements regarding their homeschooling experience.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Rating
I have put a lot of time and energy into researching home education.	0.12%	0.59%	3.07%	21.04%	75.18%	4.71
As I have learnt more about how children learn, we have moved further away from the teacher-student model of education.	0.59%	3.20%	12.80%	30.45%	52.96%	4.32
I have learnt that children can have the benefits of a wonderful education without studying according to a syllabus.	0.47%	1.30%	7.35%	26.30%	64.57%	4.53
My children have benefitted significantly from homeschooling.	0.12%	0.00%	1.19%	13.10%	85.60%	4.84
My children who were previously in school have done better with homeschooling.	0.73%	0.29%	31.48%	11.71%	55.78%	4.22
My children are actively engaged in many activities in the community.	0.24%	1.79%	9.40%	37.50%	51.07%	4.37
I recommend homeschooling to friends who are interested in it.	0.12%	0.00%	3.43%	26.71%	69.74%	4.66

Some findings from the above data:-

99% of respondents to this question, considered that their children had benefitted significantly from homeschooling, and 86% agreed strongly.

96% of respondents would recommend homeschooling, to friends who were interested.

96% of respondents had put a lot of time and energy into researching home education.

91% of respondents have come to learn that children can have the benefits of a wonderful education without studying according to a syllabus. This includes 82% of those people who considered school resources like syllabi and textbooks useful. They still considered that children can have the benefits of a wonderful education without studying according to a syllabus. Only 2% of all respondents disagreed with the statement.

83% of respondents had moved further away from the teacher-student model of education, as they learned more about how children learn.

Only 2% of respondents' children were not actively engaged in many activities in their community. Of that 2% several commented that their children were still too young to have become involved in many community activities or that disability interfered with involvement.

Only 1% of respondents considered that their children had not done better with homeschooling than schooling.

D. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR HOME EDUCATION

We asked respondents to rank in order of preference four different models of homeschooling administration.

	1—	2—	3—	4—	Average Ranking—
— A: No regulatory requirements - parents presumed to be taking responsibility for their children's education (as with food, clothing, health etc), (as is the case in the UK and parts of the US and Canada).	63.07%	16.91%	13.91%	6.12%	3.37
— B: Requirement only to submit a notification of parents' decision to home educate their children (as is the case in parts of the US).	23.62%	71.10%	3.96%	1.32%	3.17
— C: Requirement for parents to submit to a registration process committing to provide an education in key learning areas (as is the case in Victoria, Australia).	11.99%	9.95%	76.50%	1.56%	2.32
— D: Requirement for parents to submit to a registration process detailing how they plan to educate their children in accordance with a compulsory syllabus and providing evidence to an Inspector of satisfactory progress (as is the case in NSW).	1.32%	2.04%	5.64%	91.01%	1.14

Only 1% had a first preference for a model like the one currently in place in NSW.

91% of respondents put a model such as NSW currently has, last, behind the less restrictive models.

99% had a first preference for a less onerous system than is currently in place in NSW.

99% ranked either the Victorian model, or a less regulated model than the Victorian model, first.

The majority of respondents ranked the least onerous model first – no regulatory requirements at all.

The majority of respondents, 66%, ranked the least onerous option first. Their first preference is for a system in which parents take responsibility for their children's education without any reference to government bodies.

This has been the situation in the UK for many years, and has been very successful. This is also a working system in parts of Canada and an increasing number of states in the US. Half the states in the US require no notification or notification only, of parents' intent to homeschool their children. Indeed only 4% of US states still require that parents seek and gain the approval of an administrative body, prior to homeschooling, as is required in NSW.

Several studies support the legislative movement away from regulation of homeschooling parents. "Degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to academic achievement." Brian D.Ray, Ph.D., National Home Education Research Institute. This is in line with anecdotal evidence in Australia. Homeschoolers in Victoria have not fared worse than those in other states in Australia where the regulations have been significantly more onerous than they are in Victoria.

E. SUCCESS OF HOME EDUCATION

We asked respondents about any homeschooling graduates they had known:-

	None	A minority	The majority	All	Average Rating
– struggled to transition to further education (disregard bureaucratic obstacles).	83.52%	15.71%	0.51%	0.26%	1.17
– struggled to transition to work.	91.14%	8.60%	0.00%	0.26%	1.09
– are not leading fulfilling adult lives.	90.76%	7.06%	0.51%	1.67%	1.13
– are not contributing well to society.	91.86%	7.24%	0.52%	0.39%	1.09
– are especially sought after for the qualities they bring to what they do.	10.57%	3.70%	64.99%	20.74%	2.96

(i) Successful transition to further education and work

The results were very positive regarding the progress into adulthood for homeschoolers. They overwhelmingly did well transitioning to further education, work and successful adulthood. And 86% of respondents found that a majority of homeschooling graduates they know, are particularly sought after for the qualities they bring to what they do.

I only know a few homeschool graduates, but of those I know, they're doing wonderfully.

7/28/2014 12:54 AM Respondent #65

My three children are all successful adults now and the two who live near me are constantly sought after for their contributions to society and work. All three transitioned to public high school at some point and were immediately top performers in their classes.

7/29/2014 4:23 AM Respondent #183

My personal experience is that homeschooling graduates excel in creating adult lives for themselves where they are happy, healthy and successful on their own terms.

They are also community minded and politically aware. Academic studies of outcomes for homeschooling graduates backs this up.

7/29/2014 6:28 PM Respondent #214

We know many home schooling families within a vibrant and dynamic local community. ALL of the children have superb social skills, a range of specialist interests, MANY have gone on to university and colleges, ALL are happy, balanced and intelligent people - and most of all, bring these wonderful gifts for the use of their community once qualified

7/30/2014 2:56 AM Respondent #248

It is encouraging to see homeschooling families who do so well in all types of fields. Having the ability to follow interests can lead to outcomes which were not expected - thinking outside the box brings many advantages to our community as a whole. The wellbeing of individuals is the cornerstone of a healthy society. Having the option to educate families in a home school environment gives so many paths which can be followed. I have so many positive stories and outcomes from people I have met over the last 15 -20 years from the home school community. I am proud to have achieved what I have with my children.

7/30/2014 4:12 AM Respondent #259

In my experience, homeschooling graduates are (on average) better equipped to succeed in higher education and the world of work than are their schooled counterparts as they are already experienced in and skilled at managing their own learning and participating in society.

7/30/2014 4:33 AM Respondent #260

I know quite a few young adults who were unschooled all their lives - all are happy, productive and contributing towards their communities.

7/30/2014 5:26 AM Respondent #265

All of the above is true regardless of whether exams were taken & qualifications gained.

7/30/2014 6:44 AM Respondent #292

The homeschooled graduates that I know have all gone on to university. Two have graduated with highest honors, another was approached by Harvard University in the US. Homeschooled children seem to have the benefit of being mature, self-directed, engaged, and enthusiastic learners, qualities that their traditionally-schooled peers are often lacking, which is what increases their success rate in higher education.

7/30/2014 6:48 AM Respondent #295

My own children have all been highly sought after and done well, as have most home educated adults I know or have heard about. My children manifest a strong sense of responsibility and always give more than is asked of them, and this is not something we ever overtly taught them. They are better people than we are.

7/30/2014 7:16 AM Respondent #305

As a teacher I witnessed too often school shutting down children's motivation, confidence & therefore opportunities. The older children in our home-school group are clear about where they want to get to, what they want to achieve, and own the journey to get there. Their eyes light up when asked. They are caring towards younger children in the group, courteous & engaging with adults. They have a strong sense of connection with their communities as they have been actively involved with

them throughout their lives. I cannot imagine them not succeeding in their adult lives. By that I mean becoming productive and constructive members of their communities and families, and striving to be the best they can be.

7/30/2014 7:45 AM Respondent #309

All homeschool graduates that we know personally are well capable adults, working or doing study at university with no problem whatsoever. They are great people, making positive contributions to society and are very succesful in their chosen fields.

7/30/2014 9:23 AM Respondent #326

My older children are always praised for their work ethic and initiative. Work experience always leads to offers of paid work. It is a sad reflection on society that they are remarkable for not needing to look at their phones all day.

7/30/2014 6:48 PM Respondent #383

I have observed several families who have children moving into further education or the workforce after being home educated. in all cases, these children have become adults who: 1. Think for themselves, and think creatively 2. Are contentious and motivated, because they are working for their own motives, not to please others 3. Are self assured and confident interacting with adults - they have learned how to interact among other people without the pressures of peer pressure, bullying and conformity 4. Discover their strengths and interests and are freer to persue them and to excel in them. 5. Generally more accepting of and kinder to other people.

7/31/2014 12:47 AM Respondent #444

I know several home educated adults who are thriving in their careers and family lives. This obvious success was part of why I decided to home educate my children.

7/31/2014 3:41 AM Respondent #461

My two cousins, now in their late 20s were both homeschooled, one is now working as a doctor, and the other is following his natural talents as a professional snooker player. All other home educated children I know have continued onto higher education and are happy with their chosen area of work.

7/31/2014 6:22 AM Respondent #475

I have noticed, among older home educated teenagers, that they have more confidence to make decisions about their own education and to apply themselves whole heartedly to pursuing their education and employment goals.

7/31/2014 6:44 PM Respondent #515

The adults I know of who were home educated all seem to be leading successful and fulfilling lives; many of them are self employed, having created their own jobs. This is truly inspiring in the current climate of unemployment and dissatisfaction among young people.

7/31/2014 7:21 PM Respondent #523

The adults and young adults we know who were home educated are very well adjusted, productive, happy people. They have the ability to mix with all ages and fit in in a wide range of situations. They speak enthusiastically about the benefits of home education in their experience. Rather than struggle to get into further education their applications have been looked on positively with praise for their independence, self motivation, communication skills and ability to think independently.

7/31/2014 8:46 PM Respondent #536

My children are all adult now, ages 22 through 36. All are leading highly productive fulfilling adult lives. Only the oldest was ever in school before college, and he is the only one who struggled with further education.

8/1/2014 1:38 AM Respondent #551

I have met some very inspiring people who have been home educated and have wanted to provide that level of education to my family, and I have seen how forced curriculum can decrease the love for learning.

8/1/2014 5:52 AM Respondent #562

I've never heard of a home-school drop-out. I've never heard of a home-school delinquent. Every home-schooled child or adult I know is a well rounded, mature, responsible citizen, with a community conscience, and a strongly ethical attitude to the world, who loves learning, and who is an asset to everyone.

8/1/2014 7:10 AM Respondent #567

As studies in Canada have shown, while 10% of school leavers end up on government support, no home schooled children ended up without work. There is a completely different work ethic when children are encouraged to learn from home. Those who have schooling given to them on a plate expect the world to continue to owe them, and this has been borne out time and again.

8/1/2014 7:30 AM Respondent #570

the home educated students that we know have shown such passion and enthusiasm for their learning, and for the lifestyle and family unity enabled by time shared together, learning together, growing together. they have all gone on to pursuits of interest to them, or studies continue, working towards those aims. They are determined, ambitious and self motivated.

8/1/2014 11:20 PM Respondent #585

People who were home educated as children that I know are now nurses, studying a Bachelor of education, and other further studies through tafe and uni

8/2/2014 2:14 PM Respondent #612

I have been homeschooling for 21 years and have four children who have graduated. I am still homeschooling two younger children. They have all transitioned into work and further education with little problems and have contributed to society. One is a St Johns Ambulance Primary care officer after hours, after being a qualified mechanic during the day, and married. One is a coastguard trainee, scout leader and works full-time as a mechanic/road-side assistance person. Another has a Early Childhood degree, a mother and works in daycare, Another is a qualified full time nanny and is married. They have all achieved well and are happy, contributors to society. Their success is a motivating reason why I have continued to school my two youngest at home.

8/2/2014 3:50 PM Respondent #632

Weekend know several families with now adult home schooled kids. They would some of the nice set most successfull Happy young people I know

8/2/2014 5:47 PM Respondent #653

All that I know personally have transitioned into tertiary study or gainful employment as part of their final years of home education. One 21 year old saved \$30K and is

looking at buying a home - how cool is that?! Studies in the US by Brian Ray show the many varied and positive outcomes of home educated students.

8/2/2014 6:49 PM Respondent #657

Wisdom beyond their age, self-reliance, self-control, appropriate social manners and sensitivity to others, are qualities I've seen in homeschooled adults, in the past 18 months that I've been homeschooling. I am extremely surprised now I'm in the system, at how well-adjusted they are. I regret our hesitation in commencing homeschooling now I see the outcome of homeschooling for children who just didn't fit into the typical model of current school life.

8/2/2014 8:37 PM Respondent #668

I have been in homeschooling circles for 15 years and I am yet to meet an unemployed homeschooler.

8/2/2014 10:13 PM Respondent #674

*I, myself, am a home-educated adult. I went on to graduate from university (without a high school transcript, I simply found out what I needed to do to gain entry and did it). After 3 consecutive years on the Dean's list, I then went on to post-graduate studies. After pursuing the corporate world for far too long, I decided that running my own business was better suited to my family's needs, and in just two short years my husband and mother have been able to leave their employment and join me in our family-run venture. My step-father gleaned inspiration from us, and began a successful business of his own. I have taught myself languages (5), instruments (3) and countless other subjects. Our children benefit immeasurably from seeing this, as well as from being encouraged and supported to follow their own interests, wherever that may lead them. . Until schools can comprehend that passionate learning comes *from learning* rather than from "being taught" (this distinction is HUGE), our children fare far better with us. I am the rule when it comes to the face of home education. I am not the exception.*

8/2/2014 10:41 PM Respondent #678

Most I know are at the top of their area of expertise and highly valued not just for their intelligence but for their character and reliability also.

8/2/2014 11:56 PM Respondent #685

Wide spectrum of kids - uni offering work within uni when courses finished, offered places to teach with in uni, Often unique work choices away from the norm of teachers, nurses, builders. Very able and capable young adults, proactive in the work place. Our family business medium sized employs 3 past home ed guys, in addition to our own 2 sons. The business itself is 2 of our sons home ed project - they started at 12 and 13!!

8/3/2014 1:20 AM Respondent #692

It is always encouraging for parents to hear about home educated graduates succeeding. I am always hearing about them traveling and working around the world, studying at uni or TAFE or working in a field they are passionate about. The most encouraging thing I find is that most parents report that their kids are doing something that they love -be it study or work- and that is what I want most for my children and how I define home ed success.

8/3/2014 8:28 AM Respondent #707

Research in the USA shows that home education produces well-educated learners who become successful and socially responsible citizens as adults. Studies in the USA, which focused on adults who were home educated, indicates that they are considerably more active in community service than the general population. According to a 2006 study, 71% of home school graduates versus 37% of all adults of similar age, participate in community service. Eighty eight percent of homeschoolers, but just 50 percent of all adults in the population, belong to a church, civic or professional group.

8/3/2014 6:03 PM Respondent #718

One young man I know well who secured an excellent accountant's position at a young age was approached by his employer and asked if he had any siblings as they would like to employ them also!

8/3/2014 6:58 PM Respondent #728

Many have skipped into jobs (after volunteering and showing what they are capable of) ahead of peers who have studied 3 or 4 years in a specific field

8/3/2014 7:13 PM Respondent #730

My elder child who struggled for 13 years at a public school has not transitioned to further education after numerous attempts. This has contributed to her believing that she is 'dumb', right up to now, at 32 years of age. This child struggled to transition to work. All in all my daughter is not fulfilling all that she could be.

8/4/2014 3:21 AM Respondent #753

All the home schooled students I know that have continued into mainstream year 11 or 12 (for easier UNI entry) have been well equipped for handling the work- in fact they have invariably been towards the top of their classes. Others I know have been sought after by UNIs based on their knowledge of course subject matter. Those going into trades have been successful. I don't know of any home schooled students who have failed to 'launch' successfully into society or to further themselves with careers or further study.

8/4/2014 9:34 PM Respondent #790

Taking our 4 children out of school ged 13, 11, 9 and 9, we observe school graduates and homeschool graduates and see that the latter are far better prepared for ALL areas of life and are more ready, able and willing to get on with others, work well, be socially adept and reliable and skilled! By comparison, many schooled children have large gaps in development and seem to be often damaged by the narrow skill focus and awful social setting in schools. Put twenty homeschool graduates and twenty schooled graduates in any setting and observe. The fruit speaks for itself.

8/5/2014 6:32 AM Respondent #805

I don't know too many home-schooled graduates, but all the ones I do know are an inspiration to society. Words can't say enough, unless you want an essay.

8/5/2014 11:36 AM Respondent #811

Homeschooled teens that I have known are now very happily working in areas that they enjoy, or toward goals of their choosing. I know no grown homeschoolers who are unhappy with their experience; in fact they are very well-balanced individuals.

8/5/2014 9:29 PM Respondent #830

don't know many but those that i do are far more balanced and mature in their outlook

8/12/2014 12:39 PM Respondent #853

My children are unschooling graduates and they delight everyone they meet. They have excelled academically in their tertiary courses, are confident, well-liked and thriving. They did not do any secondary schooling, nor receive any secondary qualifications. However the unschooling lives they lived as children have equipped them brilliantly to lead fruitful adult lives, contributing to society, holding good jobs etc.

8/13/2014 1:32 AM Respondent #855

(ii) [Homeschooling graduates who had difficulties](#)

Of the few respondents who had known homeschooling graduates who were less successful in their transition to adulthood, several made qualifying comments pointing to non-homeschooling reasons for this:-

The kids who I know who have struggled after homeschooling are those who have had other issues, such as mental health, learning challenges or long-term disability. I believe these individuals would have struggled regardless of the method of education chosen, and in most cases, other children in the same family have not struggled.

7/28/2014 12:44 AM Respondent #63

I think the transition to adulthood is a difficult process for any person. Sadly, I have known a few (schooled) people who have struggled with this in different ways for shorter to longer periods of time. I see a similar thing with homeschooled students, however, IN MY EXPERIENCE, this transition has been shorter and less traumatic in homeschool families.

7/28/2014 12:21 PM Respondent #127

The reason I ticked a minority rather than none is that there are some homeschool kids who have been removed from school because they have special needs that cannot be met within the school system. In these cases, they might struggle to further education or work, but no more so, and probably less so, than if they had been in school. I'm thinking of the outcome for two boys here, both Aspergers' and very similar in personality and outlook. One homeschooled, is in a guitar band, and a rock band, training to be a computer programmer, but very quiet and socially awkward. In contrast, the other (similar) boy has just been removed from school aged 16 because of several suicide attempts and self-harming caused by the social pressure of school (academically he is very successful). Neither will be completely 'normal' in their life, but the homeschooled boy is not a suicide risk. One size does not fit all. Mass education cannot serve everyone equally or equitably. An alternative is needed for parents who know their children best of all, who are responsible for their children, who want the best for their children and know that in their case the best cannot be provided through the state. State pressure to try to prevent or discourage homeschooling has nothing to do with what is best for the child and everything to do with ensuring that both parents out at work full time. Although individual Government officials may have good intentions, the underlying drive to undermine homeschooling as an option is fundamentally economic.

7/30/2014 6:39 AM Respondent #288

I know adults who were educated at home (and of course by implication in the community) who are doing well for themselves. I have only ticked a minority for those who are not leading fulfilling adult lives as my son has developed health problems that very much interfere with his life.

7/30/2014 8:40 AM Respondent #322

Those who struggled with the above have significant special needs and therefore would have the same struggles regardless of way of education.

7/31/2014 2:22 AM Respondent #449

Some of the homeschool graduates we know have special needs which inhibit their ability to pursue higher education.

7/31/2014 9:58 PM Respondent #538

I had to put minority as I know one young man who did not do well but I think he had a mental illness so probably would have happened even if he went to school.

8/2/2014 3:19 PM Respondent #629

F. NSW HOMESCHOOLERS WHO HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO REGISTER

We asked respondents who had been homeschooling in NSW without registration, for some feedback about their considerations.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Rating
I choose to take on my responsibility for my children's education.	1.41%	0.00%	2.82%	4.23%	91.55%	4.85
I chose not to register as I was concerned about the possible consequences for my children, were my application to be rejected.	7.04%	5.63%	22.54%	16.90%	47.89%	3.93
Our homeschooling is progressing very well without altering it to meet the NSW registration requirements.	1.45%	0.00%	11.59%	8.70%	78.26%	4.62
My educational approach does not fit within the narrow parameters of the Board of Studies requirements.	1.45%	1.45%	21.74%	18.84%	56.52%	4.28
I chose not to register as I have seen the stress caused by the registration process in many other homeschooling families.	4.35%	1.45%	15.94%	21.74%	56.52%	4.25
I have seen attempting to maintain registration, hinder other families' success with homeschooling.	4.35%	4.35%	5.80%	34.78%	50.72%	4.23

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Rating
I don't consider that I should ask the state for permission to educate my children.	1.45%	0.00%	11.59%	11.59%	75.36%	4.59
The registration requirements are not relevant to my family's homeschooling.	2.90%	1.45%	14.49%	17.39%	63.77%	4.38
My family lives with concerns about not being registered, as we are otherwise law-abiding citizens.	5.88%	2.94%	16.18%	17.65%	57.35%	4.18
I am not comfortable with being unregistered, but see no choice with the current Board of Studies prescriptive requirements.	5.88%	4.41%	22.06%	23.53%	44.12%	3.96
I would be prepared to register if my educational approach fit within the registration requirements.	7.35%	8.82%	29.41%	16.18%	38.24%	3.69
I would be prepared to register if it would result in my children gaining better access to schools; school programs, school resources.	25.00%	14.71%	26.47%	16.18%	17.65%	2.87

Findings from the above data:-

96% choose to take responsibility for their children's education.

65% were concerned about the possible consequences for their children if any application they made for registration were to be rejected. This is a serious concern for those parents who do not choose to follow the NSW syllabus, yet who nonetheless take great care with their children's education.

87% considered that their children's education was progressing well without altering that in order to meet the current NSW requirements.

75% reported that their educational approach with their children does not fit within admissible approaches for NSW registration.

78% were mindful of the stress caused to many homeschooling families in NSW in the registration process.

86% had observed the registration process in NSW hinder families' success with homeschooling.

87% did not consider it reasonable that they should be required to ask the State for permission to home educate their children.

81% did not consider the registration requirements relevant to their homeschooling their children.

75% of unregistered homeschoolers lived with concerns about their unregistered status.

68% of unregistered homeschoolers are not comfortable with being unregistered, but see no choice for their family with the current requirements in NSW.

54% of currently unregistered homeschoolers would register if the requirements encompassed their educational approach.

Some comments made by respondents elucidated their responses:-

Even if my educational approach fit within the registration requirements, I would only register if the system was simply a matter of advising the government of our intent to home educate, and if I was absolutely confident that the registration system would not become more onerous and invasive in the future.

7/27/2014 3:02 AM Respondent #1

I couldn't be bothered because I didn't get anything for registering- no benefit.

7/27/2014 8:37 PM Respondent #22

I am registered. My AP is lovely. I would prefer to be unregistered.

7/28/2014 9:31 AM Respondent #105

I have one unregistered child at this time. His learning difficulties mean that I cannot meet all the BoS requirements for his registration. We largely follow the National Curriculum anyway. I am not sure what I will do when my older child's re-registration comes due.

7/28/2014 12:27 PM Respondent #127

Registering is a time consuming process which takes precious time from my dedication to educate my children.

7/28/2014 1:47 PM Respondent #137

There is NO fit for children with Autism!

7/31/2014 3:34 PM Respondent #501

I feel as though I am being blackmailed by the NSW government to send my child to school. All resources, programs and financial assistance are withheld from our family because we refuse to send her. As a child living in NSW, she should have access to what ever she needs in order to receive the best education. Not only are these valuable resources, programs and financial avenues withheld, we feel under threat by the authorities. All we want is to give our child the best possible education available.

8/2/2014 2:54 PM Respondent #623

I'd never live in NSW now!!!

8/2/2014 8:37 PM Respondent #668

I have been registered very successfully in the past but I found the registration process very stressful to the detriment of my children's education. I choose not to register because I believe in what we do and that my children gain no benefit from being registered.

8/3/2014 8:38 AM Respondent #707

I have never been registered, but have seen the huge amounts of stress, and time away from home education that the process currently requires.

8/3/2014 1:54 PM Respondent #712

It was a constant stress, especially for my children, to be unregistered. They were conscious that they needed to not let the many people they mixed with know about our family's unregistered status. At the same time they knew that they were having an awesome preparation for productive adulthood which their schooled friends were missing out on. They knew what their friends' school experiences were like and how miserable they mostly were at school. They saw that the BoS regulations made no sense.

8/13/2014 1:43 AM Respondent #855

G. NSW HOMESCHOOLERS WHO HAVE REGISTERED WITH THE BOSTES

We asked respondents who had been registered for homeschooling in NSW during the past few years for their considerations:-

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Rating
I found the registration process stressful.	5.00%	2.00%	8.00%	26.00%	59.00%	4.32
I found the requirements of the Board of Studies for registration, easy to fulfill.	21.21%	39.39%	23.23%	9.09%	7.07%	2.41
I found the registration requirements irrelevant, in the context of our homeschooling.	2.00%	12.00%	17.00%	25.00%	44.00%	3.97
The registration process helped me to provide a better education for my children.	41.00%	30.00%	17.00%	8.00%	4.00%	2.04
My interactions with the staff of the Home Education section of the Office of the Board of Studies were positive.	8.08%	11.11%	29.29%	35.35%	16.16%	3.40
The Information Pack reveals a lack of understanding at the Board of Studies regarding home education.	2.00%	4.00%	15.00%	18.00%	61.00%	4.32

85% found the registration process in NSW stressful.

16% found the registration requirements easy to fulfil.

69% found the registration requirements irrelevant to their children's homeschooling.

12% considered that the registration process assisted them to provide a better education for their children.

51% considered their interactions with OBoS Staff positive.

79% consider that the Information Pack reveals a lack of understanding regarding home education.

Some comments elucidated respondents' considerations:-

i think the Board of Studies are the wrong people for the job. They don't understand home education.

7/27/2014 8:39 PM Respondent #23

I found a Senior I talked to at Boste very understanding and helpful. But I found the actual AP that came to my home for the initial registration very militant and set in Mainstream ways and I felt she had no idea what Home Schooling actually is. I did not like her dictating to me how our Home School journey should go or telling me I have to do everything her way if I want 2 years at my next registration, I felt I was being forced to do things her way, and this is not what I know Home Schooling to be. I found she wanted everything to be like Mainstream School and that did not work for my child, and that is why I chose to Home School. I think the AP need to be re-trained across the board and actually learn what Home Schooling is all about from the perspective of Home Schoolers.

7/27/2014 8:57 PM Respondent #29

The APs with whom I have dealt, have had a great understanding of how home education works, but I fear the system that can tie their hands, and mine.

7/28/2014 12:27 PM Respondent #127

My recent AP was concerned with the needs of my child not the check boxes of the system but this is very rarely the case

7/28/2014 2:44 PM Respondent #142

If would be good if their was a way for the registration process to include alternative styles and approaches to learning while still observing the children's progress. So parents felt supported and not judged by the board of studies for their alternate approach.

7/28/2014 8:06 PM Respondent #160

Its only fair that parents all around Australia, including NSW, are able to educate their kids in the way they see fit.

7/29/2014 4:08 PM Respondent #202

I am a qualified teacher and I feel the registration process changes depending on the assessor and their own ideologies.

7/31/2014 9:23 AM Respondent #493

Inconsistency of approach between the authorised people, whilst one ap may register for 2 years, the same program may very well be rejected by another. New curriculum/outcomes are to confusing for untrained parents (although providing a sound education is not) There is no way of knowing before registration if you are prepared enough

8/2/2014 5:41 PM Respondent #651

If I didn't have to register, then our home educating journey would've continued without any stress. The only stress in our lives comes because we have to be answerable to the requirements of the board. AND THESE DONT FIT OUR FAMILY! Yet my children are always learning and growing and developing in all areas of life! They are more "educated" than their schooled peers and have so many more opportunities of learning and developing and retaining the knowledge given them.

8/2/2014 7:32 PM Respondent #660

There was definitely a lack of understanding of alternatives to the more traditional model of schooled learning (whether in the home or at school).

8/2/2014 9:05 PM Respondent #670

Registration has recently caused us concern mostly due to the excessive administrative requirement to document everything the children do against the syllabus outcomes. We feel this burden has wrongly shifted the focus from education to administration. Proof of academic achievement and co-curricular activities should be the aim, rather than excessive record keeping. Better government support, access to resources, equipment (such as laboratories) and opportunities (such as the Spelling Bee) would also assist our children's education.

8/6/2014 12:00 AM Respondent #836

I appreciate a process that is reflective of where we are at as a family. I am concerned by the onerous and stressful nature of having an authority approve of what my family does however.

8/6/2014 8:24 AM Respondent #842

Registering took one stress away, but added another. We were no longer homeschooling outside of the law, but now needed to meet the BoS requirements, which for unschoolers, is currently not possible. Even though my kids have achieved many things impossible for their schooled peers to achieve, the BoS considers school-work essential. The BoS's narrow-mindedness regarding educational methods is appalling, given their position as arbiters as to whether an educational program is acceptable or not.

8/13/2014 1:43 AM Respondent #855

H. PHILOSOPHY AND LEGISLATION

Respondents made comments throughout the survey which pointed to their approach to homeschooling and their considerations about homeschooling legislation.

Even if my educational approach fit within the registration requirements, I would only register if the system was simply a matter of advising the government of our intent to home educate, and if I was absolutely confident that the registration system would not become more onerous and invasive in the future.

7/27/2014 3:02 AM Respondent #1

Freedom from an education decided by political interest in favour of best educational theory and practice.

7/27/2014 4:34 PM Respondent #9

i think the Board of Studies are the wrong people for the job. They don't understand home education.

7/27/2014 8:39 PM Respondent #23

I found a Senior I talked to at Boste very understanding and helpful. But I found the actual AP that came to my home for the initial registration very militant and set in Mainstream ways and I felt she had no idea what Home Schooling actually is. I did not like her dictating to me how our Home School journey should go or telling me I have to do everything her way if I want 2 years at my next registration, I felt I was being forced to do things her way, and this is not what I know Home Schooling to be. I found she wanted everything to be like Mainstream School and that did not work for my child, and that is why I chose to Home School. I think the AP need to be re-trained across the board and actually learn what Home Schooling is all about from the perspective of Home Schoolers.

7/27/2014 8:57 PM Respondent #29

I think homeschooling is a lot of work. It takes thought, preparation, and energy. I don't think it's the best solution for every family.

7/27/2014 10:46 PM Respondent #51

I don't think homeschooling will be a fit for any family, so I don't generally recommend it unless people come to me already very interested.

7/28/2014 1:00 AM Respondent #66

I am registered. My AP is lovely. I would prefer to be unregistered.

7/28/2014 9:31 AM Respondent #105

Our homeschooling style has evolved. When we first pulled our son out of school we followed a school-at-home style of education. This style didn't suit my son's learning style when he was in school and it became apparent very quickly that if I wanted better results than the school was able to achieve I had to find more appropriate ways of approaching education - ways that suited his learning style. We moved through natural learning and ultimately found our groove with Unschooling. With the Unschooling approach my son, who is a talented sportsman and not terribly academic, embraced learning in subject areas he had previously resisted. Whereas previously he had resisted any activity he suspected was meant to teach him something he found joy in discovery and new information. He now as a young adult he brings that same zest for learning to his study and workplace.

7/28/2014 9:56 AM Respondent #108

The APs with whom I have dealt, have had a great understanding of how home education works, but I fear the system that can tie their hands, and mine.

7/28/2014 12:27 PM Respondent #127

Registering is a time consuming process which takes precious time from my dedication to educate my children.

7/28/2014 1:47 PM Respondent #137

I know for policy makers and politicians, that educating children at home can seem so unconventional, in ways it has similarities to natural and traditional medicine, both have their place in our society, and it is my belief that both ought to be supported. Just because we don't understand something, or because it does not fit into a conventional box does not mean that it does not work. Our current education system, and the new Australian Curriculum, does not succeed 100%, similarly all the previous Education policies on paper look great, and still not completely succeed and are updated, revised or thrown out. I believe in the basic principles in education, there are so many ways children can learn, and all children are at different levels, particularly when they are very young. Talk to teachers that have a class of mostly boys, and how their productivity in traditional teaching is so varied to a class of the same age, yet mostly girls, children that have illness, or if there's problems at home, death of a family member, the list goes on, all affect the child's learning ability on the day. If I were to assess a fish's ability to climb a tree, it would fail, and if I were to assess a cat's ability to swim, it would not do well either, therefore, I do not believe that we can expect exactly the same standard for each child, or expect to teach them all the same way, when they are all so unique, in their learning style, abilities, given strengths and talents. As people there are some things you pick up quickly, other things you don't. and this still applies to children, Homeschooling gives the children an opportunity to thrive and flourish, at their natural pace, and to succeed, not just in academics but in life too. Nearly all the homeschoolers I know continue to learn something new on a regular basis, as they have a passion and love of learning that has been cultivated and encouraged, not inhibited. May I ask you when was the last time you tried to learn something completely new? Did you have a natural desire to learn it or was it just something you had to learn? how much were you challenged, how did you learn it, were you taught from a teacher? did you learn it from a book, or the internet, or a youtube demonstration? I believe there ought to be a lot more support for homeschooling in the form of, rebates/ resources/ and concessions to museums/art galleries, national parks, zoos, public transport, etc. And it would be highly commended if the government of the day, recognised the extraordinary commitment of these families, to often become a sole income families, because they

are convinced that this will and does succeed. Australia, is known to be one of the most expensive countries to live in, and we produce and export so many primary products, within the food industry, yet the cost of living is extreme. These committed, and amazing homeschool families give, 100% of themselves, their resources, and network together for support. Our society is then enriched with, well balanced, young adults, who will possibly be the leaders in our society when you are heading towards retirement, what sort of people do you want in those positions, making policies of the day, people whom appreciate people of all ages, that can value and see the benefit of each age group from babies to the elderly. People whom can think outside the box, and come up with creative ideas and solutions, people whom like to find things out, not just be spoon fed the statistics and not question how accurate they are, or were the surveys manipulated. In conclusion, I believe that you should be much more supportive of home education, starting within the government policies, to the support in rebates and resources. And lastly that if there are to be Homeschool Education Moderators, that they be expected to be supportive and to assist with resources, ideas, rebates for learning disabilities diagnosis, and support to access relevant information. and the best Moderators I have had dealings with are the (Older in age) school principals,

7/28/2014 3:00 PM Respondent #144

We used textbooks for four years and the past 3 years we have unschooled, using texts only occasionally.

7/29/2014 1:47 AM Respondent #175

I place great value on education and learning, and I feel that school by its very nature is unsuited to meet the needs of most children, both educationally and socially. Additionally I feel that school does not support the family unit as evidenced by the many families where siblings don't get along while at school but when home educated together, after an adjustment period become friends and more supportive of each other. School has the best of the child's time and energy and appears to show very little of any quality as a result. Studies repeatedly show that how well a child does at school is directly related to how involved the parents are in supporting their children at school (in other words, how much 'home ed' takes place alongside school). I firmly believe that parents can even better support their children at home and that home education is a way for children to learn about the real world alongside both vocational and academic studies that take their interest. Home education requires a big commitment from parents and so it is imperative that government authorities recognise this and respect it and at the very least, minimise any interference.

7/29/2014 7:16 PM Respondent #224

My children have not been to school. Home education is ideal for our family but it isn't for everyone.

7/29/2014 7:40 PM Respondent #227

Learning is a 24/7 experience! Learning comes from all sources, positive and negative experiences. I am proud to have children who contribute to our community in voluntary ways (we are non-religious so not affiliated to church-like activities) and that my children consider all age groups as friends - from babies to the very elderly. I work for a government agency dealing with welfare and child youth and family and see many sad stories of children and families who have not managed to navigate the traditional education system and feel abject failures - and how this translates in to life-time failure patterns and leads on to downward spirals and really bad outcomes for our community as a whole.

7/30/2014 4:12 AM Respondent #259

The very best support for a child's education is a loving mother and father who are eager to research what they need and to meet those needs in a variety of flexible ways. The worst hindrance to a child's education is a bureaucratic system which predetermines often wildly inappropriate goals and which attempts to undermine the confidence and effectiveness of the parents as educators.

7/30/2014 6:26 AM Respondent #280

I think home education (schooling) is a good way to enable a person to grow to their full potential. There are things that I am learning along side my children that I don't remember being taught at school. It also helps a person to develop themselves personally, grow confidence and self esteem. A self directed learner is a great asset to college's, universities and the work place.

7/30/2014 6:34 AM Respondent 285

The reason I ticked a minority rather than none is that there are some homeschool kids who have been removed from school because they have special needs that cannot be met within the school system. In these cases, they might struggle to further education or work, but no more so, and probably less so, than if they had been in school. I'm thinking of the outcome for two boys here, both Aspergers' and very similar in personality and outlook. One homeschooled, is in a guitar band, and a rock band, training to be a computer programmer, but very quiet and socially awkward. In contrast, the other (similar) boy has just been removed from school aged 16 because of several suicide attempts and self-harming caused by the social pressure of school (academically he is very successful). Neither will be completely 'normal' in their life, but the homeschooled boy is not a suicide risk. One size does not fit all. Mass education cannot serve everyone equally or equitably. An alternative is needed for parents who know their children best of all, who are responsible for their children, who want the best for their children and know that in their case the best cannot be provided through the state. State pressure to try to prevent or discourage homeschooling has nothing to do with what is best for the child and everything to do with ensuring that both parents out at work full time. Although individual Government officials may have good intentions, the underlying drive to undermine homeschooling as an option is fundamentally economic.

7/30/2014 6:39 AM Respondent #288

I believe that Parents are best placed to know and appreciate their children's abilities and talents and the way that their children learn, all child learn in their own way and should be allowed to learn without added pressure being put upon them and their parents.

7/30/2014 6:46 AM Respondent #294

I believed it was the right decision for our whole family, to raise our children with our values, giving them the best education & childhood.

7/30/2014 6:18 PM Respondent #374

I understand that the best education for my children can only be facilitated by the person who's most interested in it - their parent.

7/30/2014 7:52 PM Respondent #397

Home educating your own child(ren) and being forced to follow a syllabus is not conducive to good learning outcomes.

7/31/2014 12:33 AM Respondent #442

Home schooling helps children to love learning. This drives them to succeed! They are very emotionally and socially stable as they have such a strong and positive relationship with their committed parents. Homeschooling has strengthened our family unit, made us more positively involved in our community and helped our children develop their gifts in a way they never could have done at school. In my opinion, it's needless too say why famous homeschoolers such as Einstein achieved all that they did. Given the space, innovation and love of learning, we're shaping a generation of children who are not squashed into a mould but are able to flourish.

7/31/2014 12:58 AM Respondent #445

My child has thrived by being home education, he is sociable with all age groups and is an important member of the community, both home educated and wider community, that my child is learning all the time, I strongly believe that parents have the right/responsibility to educate their children.

7/30/2014 6:46 AM Respondent #491

I am a qualified teacher and I feel the registration process changes depending on the assessor and their own ideologies.

7/31/2014 9:23 AM Respondent #493

Home education is a delight. The wonderful sense of community, the happy, thriving, confident children. It is a system that works. It requires little or no Government input but produces excellent results. Any arguments against home ed are unfounded and easily disproved. I can't imagine how my family would cope without it.

7/31/2014 6:34 PM Respondent #512

I was home educated in the UK, along with my 4 siblings. One brother is a scientist, one a renewable energy engineer, and both of my sisters work in senior management. I now home educate my own daughter and feel I can offer her far greater opportunities than the state can. LESS RESTRICTIVE REGULATION AND JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS FOR HOME EDUCATORS PLEASE! Time is better spent empowering children to learn and problem solve effectively than dicatating to them and spending days on end ticking boxes and recording work!

7/31/2014 9:36 PM Respondent #537

Please think about what education really means, it does not mean something that only happens in school

8/1/2014 4:08 AM Respondent #557

Home Education is as much a human right as your free choice to have a family. World governments could learn a lot from home education as the worldwide failings in schools and society demonstrates that the current system as it stands is not working.

8/2/2014 5:16 AM Respondent #590

Some children do really well in the public schooling system. Some don't! Why punish the ones that don't fit into those boxes. Homeschooling is a big commitment. In fact a lifestyle. A journey we all enjoyed. Parents should have the freedom of choice to do what is best for their children.

8/2/2014 5:02 PM Respondent #643

Would never have had children, if I Had to surrender them to the state.

8/2/2014 5:47 PM Respondent #653

If someone thinks they can home educate their children they are correct. Parents successfully teach their children to use the toilet, to tie a shoe lace, to wash their hands and to put their t-shirt on the right way around. Parents are children's first teachers. For those willing to take the baton we ought to fully support their freedom to do so instead of paving the road with red-tape and nay-sayers.

8/2/2014 6:49 PM Respondent #657

If I didn't have to register, then our home educating journey would've continued without any stress. The only stress in our lives comes because we have to be answerable to the requirements of the board. AND THESE DONT FIT OUR FAMILY! Yet my children are always learning and growing and developing in all areas of life! They are more "educated" than their schooled peers and have so many more opportunities of learning and developing and retaining the knowledge given them.

8/2/2014 7:32 PM Respondent #660

I want my children to have freedom to play experiment and learn. I want to introduce literacy and numeracy in real world contexts, and I feel learning will be more memorable and meaningful for my children in this environment.

8/2/2014 7:40 PM Respondent #661

I don't understand why parents whose child is miserable at school, force them to attend. Fitting in with society is not as important as ensuring your child is well educated as well as happy. Some children just do NOT fit into the system, and breaking them to make society feel more secure about itself is a very strange ideology indeed. The bigger question is, why is society so uncomfortable about children being educated without being part of a pack?

8/2/2014 8:37 PM Respondent #668

There was definitely a lack of understanding of alternatives to the more traditional model of schooled learning (whether in the home or at school).

8/2/2014 9:05 PM Respondent #670

I have been registered very successfully in the past but I found the registration process very stressful to the detriment of my children's education. I choose not to register because I believe in what we do and that my children gain no benefit from being registered.

8/3/2014 8:38 AM Respondent #707

I have never been registered, but have seen the huge amounts of stress, and time away from home education that the process currently requires.

8/3/2014 1:54 PM Respondent #712

Homeschooling is not about delivering a curriculum to meet the requirements of Ministers/ Government and or funders. Its about meeting the learning and educational needs of the child and focusing on their strengths/ learning desires and preferred occupational/ professional pathways into adulthood. Happy child Happy adult entering life

8/3/2014 6:20 PM Respondent #720

My eldest child is almost 6 but I consider that we have been home educating since birth

8/3/2014 9:17 PM Respondent #737

Parents are responsible for the upbringing of their children. They are not property of the state. While I agree that the state has a role in safe-guarding the rights of children with regards to their physical, social and mental wellbeing, the state (in any given country) would do well to encourage involved and responsible parenting rather than stepping in to assume the role and place of parents. This extends to every choice that does not infringe on the rights of another, which home-education does not.

8/3/2014 10:33 PM Respondent #744

Free play is one of the most important way young children learn and schools do not accommodate this.

8/3/2014 10:47 PM Respondent #747

Loving parents are the ones who know what's best for their children!

8/4/2014 12:52 AM Respondent #751

We want to continue to allow the children to learn from what is interesting and relevant and be part of the society to learn how things work in the real world, rather than having that real life info and skills delivered remotely via a curriculum.

8/4/2014 4:02 AM Respondent #755

I feel certain that without time out of school, my children issues would have escalated, and they certainly would not have been in the position there are now - back in school and thriving. We need to hang onto the rights to step back from the system, and give the child what they need at that time - and the parents are the best people to see those needs, be they social, motivational, or just about the person they are, or stage that they are at. I also feel strongly, that in our children s lifetime, the world is going to change dramatically, and in ways that we cannot predict. Our society will need people who can think, to deal with environmental crises that arise - and the more diverse ways that they can think the better. Even though we have chosen for our kids to return to school, for our own reasons, I would defend fiercely the right to home school.

8/4/2014 10:43 PM Respondent #793

The longer we homeschool the more advantages we see and the more we feel that the freedom to make the decisions about our children's learning is very important.

8/5/2014 12:14 AM Respondent #798

I hadn't really thought about it, but then thought why would I want to send them to school, and couldn't see a good reason.

8/5/2014 8:57 PM Respondent #829

After paying private fees for 4 years I was sick of my bright children not being catered for if you can do high school maths you should be doing it not being held back.

8/5/2014 10:13 PM Respondent #834

We always enjoyed being with our kids and the thought of them being in school 5 days a week, 6 hours a day didn't fit with our desire to be together as a family

8/5/2014 11:28 PM Respondent #835

As parents we should have the right to choose what we consider to be the best way to home educate. The NSW curriculum is not the best. I have been a teacher in NSW, so I know from experience.

8/6/2014 3:43 AM Respondent #839

Homeschooling nurtures not just the mind, but the heart and soul of children, and this is what is missing in schools. In schools, they must use a herd mentality to teach, otherwise it becomes untenable. My kids need more than that to thrive and do well.

8/7/2014 3:23 AM Respondent #846

Discovering unschooling and seeing the enormous benefits of it, have been life-changing for our family. My children would not be thriving as they are now as young adults, were it not for our unschooling approach to their education. It helped them thrive everyday. And that's a wonderful start in life.

8/13/2014 1:32 AM Respondent #855

I. SUMMARY

It is very clear from our survey and elsewhere, that homeschooling constitutes a vital safety net for the many, many children who are suffering at or whose needs are not being met by, school. In NSW currently, there are significant regulatory impediments in place, which interfere with parents' rights and duty to ensure their children's wellbeing; if those parents determine that homeschooling is in their children's best interests.

We believe that it is imperative that homeschooling be respected as a valuable means of education of our young, that parents who accept personal responsibility for their children's education should not be deterred from doing so, or impeded in doing so, by a regulatory system. The regulatory system in place in NSW does not facilitate this and has been badly in need of major reform for decades.

Parents wishing to homeschool their children in NSW are required to teach their children in accordance with narrow parameters set down by the Board of Studies. The Board of Studies shows very little understanding of home education and this is reflected in their requirements which are typical of school requirements, and not well-suited to the broad diversity of children's needs which are better able to be met in the family setting.

In Victoria, the whole of the UK, parts of Canada and the USA, parents who wish to take on their children's education are trusted to have their best interests at heart, and no legislative impediments are placed in their way. The results are highly successful, as has been documented in many studies.

Parents in NSW should also have the right to determine and implement their own children's education, without being required to meet requirements relating to school education. Overwhelmingly, home educating parents are highly committed to their children's current and future wellbeing. They go to great lengths to give their children the opportunities which will best meet their children's needs. Meeting the Board of Studies' requirements is frequently irrelevant, brings unnecessary stress to children and parents, is a waste of time, energy and government resources which could be utilized more productively elsewhere.