

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 23/07/2014

Partially Confidential

Submission to:

Select Committee on Home Schooling

Legislative Council

Parliament of NSW

Prepared by:

JULY 2014

Table of Contents

Summary	3
1. Introduction: Our family and why we choose to home educate	4
2. Addressing the Terms of Reference	5
(a) The background of home schooling including comparison of practices with other jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand	5
(b) The current context of home schooling in New South Wales including	6
(i) outcomes of home schooling including in relation to transition to further study and work	6
(ii) financial costs	6
(iii) demographics and motivation of parents to home school their children	7
(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers	7
(v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children	8
(vi) comparison of home schooling to school education including distance education	8
(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including	8
(i) current registration processes and ways of reducing the number of unregistered home schoolers	8
(ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons	10
(iii) adherence to delivery of the New South Wales Syllabuses	10
(iv) potential benefits or impediments to children's safety, welfare and wellbeing:	13
(vi) appropriateness of the current regulatory regime and ways in which it could be improved:	14
(d) support issues for home schooling families and barriers to accessing support:	14
(e) representation of home schoolers within Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BoSTES)	15
(f) any other related matter:	15
(i) Not all children fit into the school system	15
(ii) Immediate transfer of child from school to home education should be allowed in the best interests of the child	15
(iii) BoSTES limits education options for travelling students – home education is portable	16
(iv) No independent avenue of appeal	16
3. Recommendations	17

Summary

Drawing on our own personal experiences home educating our six children over the last five years and an extensive research evidence base concerned with local and global home education programs, this submission focuses on the following themes that underlie the terms of reference of the Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Home Schooling. The featured themes are:

- Our family and why we choose to home educate
- Home education results in financial benefits to the NSW Government. The government should not then scrimp on providing equal benefits to home educated children
- Social benefits of home education – children are happy and confident, see learning as a way of life, are self-starters and leaders, are unaffected by peer pressure and contribute to their community
- Our concerns with the current regulatory framework for home education – the BostES Home Education Information Pack 2013 and the BoSTES online Q&A clearly contradict each other, inappropriately attempts to apply a school framework to a different learning approach and is governed by an administration that neither understands nor supports home education

The submission argues for the following reforms to provide support for Home Education as a legitimate education choice NSW:

- Home Education to be administered as an alternative option that is different to school – school-based regulations are not relevant to home education
- Home Education to be administered by an appropriate body that includes home educators. The Tasmanian THEAC model is successful in both longevity and maintaining a high proportion of registered home educators.
- An appropriate registration process for Home Education, not bureaucratic regulation
- Home Educators must not be discriminated against in the services and programs available to them

Achievement of successful and meaningful administration of home education requires the establishment of a new model of administration. This in turn will necessitate removing the power of BostES to administer home education, and establishing a new independent home education administration body with significant board representation by home educators.

Home Education is the right choice for many families and the only choice for others. The school system is not a good fit for many kids. These families should be encouraged and not hindered or penalised for devoting time and resources to help their kids flourish. At school kids may be bullied, have learning disorders, become marginalised or made to feel like they can't join any groups as there is nothing they are good at. Home Educated kids always find something they love and are great at. Parents can always find activities they enjoy and do well in. They enjoy their successes and want to succeed in life.

The case for government action in this matter is grounded in the argument that recognising and supporting home education as a legitimate and distinct alternative to the school system results in more choice for parents, happier students and far better outcomes for our society.

1. Introduction: Our family and why we choose to home educate

We started Home Educating our children 5 years. Our children were academically successful, but as they were quiet, shy and tended to stand on the sidelines, they were mostly ignored. They spent most of their school social time in the library reading. One day a parent asked if we had considered Home Education. We researched it and called a few numbers on the HEA contact list. Within a few weeks, we talked to the principle to give notice that we would leave at the end of the term. She was surprised as was a very involved parent and was concerned that there must be a major problem. We thought we would just trial home education but within a month, we realised that we would never change back (D.V.).

We have 6 children - a daughter in year 11, and sons in years 9, 6, 4, 1 and a 4 year old who insists on joining in with his Kindergarten books. has a Bachelor of Computer Science and a Diploma of Audio Engineering, works in IT and is currently a Chief Enterprise Architect.

 has a Bachelor Industrial Maths (hons) and previously worked in Quality Assurance and Validation. Our children love science and music, and they excel in these areas. They do not love writing essays, but they are proficient. They are avid readers, play 2 or 3 instruments each and are highly involved in our church. They are all ahead in science, most are ahead in Math, and are on or above the equivalent school year level in English. We all love doing History, Geography, Environmental and Australian Studies together as a family.

Our children have changed significantly. They are now strong, confident young people that are compassionate and step up to any challenge. When we look back, we realise that if we had kept them in school, they would only be a shadow of the person each of them is today. They are the ones to step forward and include shy or left out children. They are willing to lead groups and participate in events where they do not know other people. They love learning and are intensely interested in current affairs and finding out more about people groups. They excel in their studies and are free to follow their interests to further their 'normal' education. Home Education has been the best lifestyle choice that we could have made for our family in every aspect. You are not only welcome to visit our home anytime and interact with our children, but we ask you to do so, that you may understand what makes home education such an important and valid option for families.

2. Addressing the Terms of Reference

We 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

We have researched the way each state administers Home Education. It seems to us that while other states vary in how prescriptive their registration process is, they are all more positive or supportive. While we may like the hands off approach of Victoria, we understand a signed statement is not viewed as enough of a check by most people unfamiliar with home education.

We would love to have a model similar to the one in Tasmania. An independent board with a mix of home educators, child psychologists and educators is an appropriate administration body for those undertaking home education. Having experienced Home Educators making home visits is a benefit, as they can be trained by the board to not only check any gaps in education, but they are also able to understand and provide guidance – especially to new home educators. Tasmania has run with this system for 23 years and has the highest rate of registered home educators in Australia.

Quotes from Facebook discussion of registration in September 2013 by Tasmanians:

A: *“Home schooling in Tassie is wonderful as you are able to develop your own system. The monitors are so supportive ... I put SO much effort into the process and it turned out they were overwhelmed by our efforts. The visitor who came was gorgeous, supportive and encouraging.”*

B: *“It is rare for Tas people not to get registered – THEAC is very supportive. There are info sessions coming up. I think Hobart in a week or so. In our group we have lists of local home ed activities, etc. you can join in with. Lots of helpful people if you want to ask questions.”*

We ask that the focus be on an appropriate registration and not purely regulation as it is at the moment. We ask for a supervising body over us and not imposition of a school system which is vastly different to home education. Several home educators need to be on the board and all involved need to understand it is fundamentally different to school. To us, the Tasmanian system looks good and has stood the test of time!

(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 daughter would like to teach piano and flute as she loves them so much. She would like to attend Wesley Institute as it is a Christian college. She has already attended the open days and met with them several times to discuss enrolment and entry requirements. She will complete her year 12 equivalent next year, as well as her practical and theory requirements in piano and flute, and attend an interview and performance. She is hoping to do a double major music degree. She would also like to be able to develop music and art workshops to take into schools and interested groups as a side job. If this takes off, she will reduce the amount of instrument teaching she does to spend time drawing kids into a love of creativity.

Our sons seem interested in engineering at the moment. They are ahead in science and math. They will either do a TAFE course or Open University to do some subjects during years 11 and 12, prior to entering University. When they reach year 11 equivalence, we will talk to the admissions office at the relevant institutions to find out what their prerequisites are. Most likely they will also need to sit the STAT or the SAT.

(ii) financial costs

We currently spend \$18,000 p.a. which includes computers, books, excursions, science equipment/experiments, subscriptions, sport, camps, and advanced learning kits, etc. We also currently spend \$12,000 p.a. on instrument lessons for our older four, only because mum teaches them piano without cost and teaches drums, guitar, etc. This is a significant financial commitment even without taking into account the loss of a second income and commitment of time (24/7).

Most people say that they pay their children's school fees in their taxes. We pay a lot of tax, yet take on the full cost of educating our children ourselves. Using the figures from 2009/10, we are saving the government $3 \times \text{primary } (\$12,540) + 2 \times \text{secondary } (\$15,136) = \$67,892$.

People who do not understand home education do not understand the enormous commitment it brings. Some comment that it is an easy way out. It seems ludicrous to us

that we would take on such a huge financial and time commitment if we meant to, as some commentators seem to imply, neglect or abuse our children. It is SO much easier and cheaper to send them to school. We note that in NZ, home educators get financial support. In order to ensure fair government support for all students, home educators should receive funding for at least computers and software regardless of income.

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

This was covered in our introduction.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers

NSW home education registration is onerous. It is hard to describe the fear and the stress of registering. I had to register after the new 2013 Information Pack. I spent hours each day for a few months trying to understand the outcomes. In contrast, school teachers get training programs and fellow experienced teachers available to help them AND they only have to do one year level. I have FIVE children that I needed to document in FIVE different levels.

The requirement was that I write the outcome numbers for every task for every stage. In Maths alone, that is over 100 outcomes, each with their own number. It is not that I am not capable of understanding them, but rather that they are written in jargon specific to the BoSTES and I am too busy educating my 6 kids 24/7 to decipher and translate them to real-world meanings. **The only reason that they are necessary? Beurocratic red tape.** Does it improve my kid's education? No! Does it improve my comprehensive program to put in the numbers? No! Does it improve my record keeping? No! Do I get any benefits from registering? No!

There are many who believe that they should register, but it makes their lives so difficult that it is not worth it. What we need is *appropriate* registration. We believe an onerous registration system and the lack of any benefits are the major reasons for unregistered home educators in NSW.

(v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children

Home educated children have the same needs as those at school. We should be given access to TVET, TAFE, Open High school, hospital school, concession for over 16yrs, travel passes, and education being recognised from 4 to 18 years old. It does not make sense for us to be instructed to study for actual HSC when we are not given the award (we should be allowed to continue normal home schooling). There should not be any discrimination between the government's treatment of school students and home school students as home education is a valid option for parents to choose... and the best choice for our family.

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

Home education is different to school as our children have learned that there is no 'switch'. We do not turn learning on and off. It is not restricted to 40min per subject. If we do an activity on Saturday, we don't groan and say, "Are we finished yet, I want to go and play". Our kids love learning and won't stop a project at a designated time, but will keep going at home and other locations. We do not limit education to 'school hours' or 'school locations'.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including

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

From August (when the 2013 Information Pack was released) until December, we were under a lot of stress. We were in disbelief at the content of the 2013 IP. The changes in it fundamentally changed the whole concept of home education. They were not minor changes and adjustments. Please note that the crossed words were in the previous pack and are now removed and that the underlined words are new to the 2013 IP. "Home schooling, also called referred to as home education, allows requires a parent to integrate deliver the NSW Board of Studies curriculum with the learning processes that occur naturally in the home throughout a child's development." This fundamental difference is evident all the way through the 2013 IP in regard to many different issues. These so called minor changes caused an uproar through the home school community as parents frantically tried to determine how to comprehend, deal with and comply with these new and prohibitive restrictions.

The HEA requested a meeting with BoSTES (at that time known as the OBoS). The HEA made it clear that this was not a consultation as they were there to request that the 2013 Info Pack be withdrawn. BoSTES acknowledged that this was not a consultation and stated that they were not willing to withdraw or amend the 2013 IP. This clearly did not constitute consultation in any way; however, later the Education Minister claimed the opposite; that this was consultation at the Community Cabinet we attended in Sutherland. So who is right?

Sydney Home Education Network (SHEN), also requested a meeting with BoSTES and sent a delegation on 10 September 2013, which included both of us. SHEN also made it clear that this was not a consultation meeting and made the same request as the HEA; namely, that BoSTES withdraw the 2013 IP. We met with _____ and _____. When they recognised us from our personal letter to the Education Minister, they talked about our home education program. **They said that the way we educated our children was a good example of what they would like to see and we did not need to change anything to continue or to re-register. We tried to explain to them that the way we home educated, did not fit in with the requirements of the 2013 Info Pack. They kept insisting that it did, and that all we had to do was add in the objective numbers. Our letter to the Education Minister is attached.**

The OBoS then released a Q&A supplement to their Info Pack in response to the overwhelming number of letters and phone calls they had received. The home school community found this new document confusing and dubious. It directly conflicted with many of the directives set out in the actual Info Pack. **We wrote a document that compares the 2013 IP directives with the directives given by the Q&A. Please see the attachment. It clearly shows that the BoSTES have stubbornly refused to withdraw a document that is virtually redundant due to the content of the Q&A.** The problem for us is that the Q&A is not a legal document and can (and is) be changed at will by BoSTES. In a few years, they could change the Q&A and the old one will disappear into cyberspace. We will then be left with the original 2013 IP document and asked why we did not object when it was released. This provides the BoSTES with an unjust opportunity for a fait accompli should it wish to prosecute a campaign against home schoolers. It is vital that this document be withdrawn and the whole registration framework redesigned.

(ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons

Our Authorised Person (AP) is an ex-principal. She can read our program and fully understand what we are doing and she can see if there are holes in our plan. Her goal is to see that we achieve a quality education for our children. She was also used to looking at the whole school. That is important for us as we teach Kindy to year 11 at the same time. We do not believe that APs should be ex-school inspectors. Their goal was to tick boxes and to find fault. They bring that characteristic into our homes. Some of our friends were inspected by ex-school inspectors and they were told that study before 9am did not count, that the child must work in the car while the parent dropped another child at school as it was after 9am, and that unless the parent conducted the class at home, group activities did not count. APs should be trained by home educators to understand why we home educate and to understand the different home education methods.

Experienced home educators would make excellent APs. They would operate best under a board similar to that used in Tasmania (THEAC).

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

We have been told by _____ (reps of BoS) at our meeting with BoS and SHEN, our program complies with the Syllabuses. We have been told by our AP that we comply. What they mean by comply, is that we comply with the Education Act. We provide a quality education for our children. *We do not comply with delivering each stage requirement of the syllabuses for each child during the stage that they are currently in. As such, we would say that we do not follow the syllabus.* We achieve the same outcome, but do not follow it.

For Maths, we use a combination of NSW Signpost (mostly primary), 'The Life of Fred' – a modular literary approach written by an American professor (mostly high school) and Khan Maths – an online progressive system that gives great explanations with a teacher. We learn programming appropriate for every age. We would cover the overall content of the syllabus, but not in the same sequence and not even in the same year level. Maths is maths. Kids loving it and doing it with ease is the goal. We do not follow the syllabus.

For English, we use some grammar, comprehension, spelling books in primary and an English Workbook in secondary. We do the rest of our English together, exploring poetry, essays, plays, reports, etc. each writing at their own level. We attend Shakespeare, read and discuss many novels and articles, play word games, etc. We do not follow the syllabus.

For science, we study one topic for the year in primary (botany, astrology, physics & chem, human anatomy, etc.) and individually complete a year level course in high school, both with American curriculum. We do experiments, build radios, electro-magnetic cranes, lego Mindstorms robots, watch current science and global issues, etc. Five of our children, aged 6-16, write computer programs and incorporate real-world problem solving into that framework. We do not follow the syllabus.

For history, see the example about Ancient Rome in the letter to the Education Minister that is attached. This is the example of learning that _____ and _____ loved. We do this as a family, studying topics together, not each child according to the topics assigned for each stage. This is the main example of multi-age learning. We do not follow the syllabus.

For Australian studies, we are reading and discussing the novel “My Australian Story: Refugee”. We attended the Auburn ‘Refugee Camp’ for Refugee week in which we went on a tour as a refugee through different rooms/phases of being a refugee. The children were able to walk through a life-size model of a refugee camp. We are meeting with a worker for refugees this week and she will go through the story of particular refugees with us. We have watched all the ABC TV ‘Seeking Refuge’ clips about kids that came to Australia under various circumstances as refugees, and are keeping up to date with the current refugee incidents and policies in the news, and thus seeing both sides. When we do a topic, we get fully involved and learn a ton of things in all mediums. We do not follow the syllabus.

For geography, we are studying mapping. We built a model of Uluru from a contour map. We study the country where the current Olympics are being held. We watch and discuss the details in shows like ‘Dick Smith’s population puzzle’, ‘The People’s supermarket’, ‘Catalyst – Antarctic special’, etc. We do not follow the syllabus.

For music, we are all completing an aural music course for HSC in addition to learning instruments and completing grades in music theory. We listen widely to all periods and genres of music. We are exploring the meaning of musical terms and listening to many pieces. We do not follow the syllabus.

For visual art, we completed paintings of the four seasons – one season per child (as we love listening to Vivaldi's Four Seasons). We explored blending brush techniques, we sewed heat bags for local nursing homes, designed and decorated t-shirts, etc. You are welcome to come to our house to see them. We do not follow the syllabus.

For sport, our children attend weekly gymnastics and basketball. Socially, we have a picnic after basketball each week. We meet monthly for the whole afternoon with home schoolers in our area. We used to attend drama, art and dance classes, but are giving them a break this year as we focus on other things. Our children choose to visit a local nursing home every Tuesday to chat, play games, paint nails, etc. The older ones help run a kids club on Fridays.

This is our life. We do not do this between 9am and 3pm. In fact, there is not enough time in the week to fit in all the wonderful things that are available to learn and do. Choosing what to learn is **the** hard part. Fortunately, we have a lifetime to fit it in. It is only a matter of teaching a love of learning and exploring, to facilitate this. Our daughter struggled between choosing between science (industrial design) and music. She finally decided on music as she can continue to study science and design things in her free time.

We provide our children with a quality education as required by the Education Act. It is time that the registration requirements are adjusted to reflect that we are assessed for the quality of the education that we provide our children, rather than adherence to the syllabuses. It is not right that the 2013 IP requires strict adherence to a school based model, when the Q&A allows for the assessment to include a quality education for a multi-aged family. It is not right that when the BoSTES see examples of quality education, they not only pass us, but commend us – the Info Pack should match up. Following a school model at home does NOT work, especially when teaching multiple ages with multiple children. It may work for one or two children, but after that, it is too onerous for a parent to manage.

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

As mentioned elsewhere in this document, our children were ignored and occasionally bullied at school as they were shy and quiet. They were well-behaved and achieved academically in class, but did not enjoy actively participating. As such, they were largely ignored by teachers also. There was a discrepancy in the way that they were cheerful and interactive at church, but like church mice at school. They have totally changed. They are now confident and are able to walk into a group of strangers and hold their own. This is due to training them step by step in this, at all the home education events that we attend. Many events have different groups of kids. They need to be able to walk in and introduce themselves, make friends quickly and enjoy the time they get together. Now they look around for shy kids and include them as they know how it feels. This change did not happen overnight, but they themselves are in greatest wonder at their own transformation.

Our children would say that one of the reasons that they love home education is that we get to experience more than they did at school. They are privileged to attend several shows at the opera house each year, they love attending Shakespeare (for fun), they are able to get involved in the community and go weekly to a nursing home, join the local neighbourhood centre, done the flying trapeze, and are currently doing a term of fencing (sabre). They love doing more hands on things and getting to try things rather than just read them. For example, when we read about the giant leatherback turtle, we drew it's actual size in chalk on the driveway. It didn't take long, but they still remember it today. Life is so much broader, gifting them with possibilities and a love of life and learning. They are much better off in the home education system.

As for safety, they are under our care. We love our children and make great sacrifices in their best interests. They are protected, but not sheltered. They are shown the world, and get to experience more than a school student. They are supervised while exploring and are totally safe. They are watched over in a ratio of 1 to 6 instead of 1 to 30 (worse on a school playground). Our children should be the envy of society for their safety, welfare and wellbeing.

Is there the potential for our children to be abused? No more than any school student. It is impossible to have your children with you all day, every day and never go out. If we don't have an activity on, we go to the park. Our children are visible to people in the community every single day. They are seen by the nursing home on Tuesday, instrument teachers in our home on Tuesday and Wednesday, gymnastics on Thursday, basketball, kids club and youth group on Fridays, fencing on Saturday and church on Sunday. Add into the mix the friends and relatives that drop in to our home unannounced to see what they are up to. Our children are much less susceptible to abuse now than when they were the invisible and timid "mice" at school.

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

As you can see, home education is vastly different to school education. A good home education can NOT look like school at home when you have multiple ages. It is inappropriate to compare teaching 30 children of the same age, the same topic, with teaching 6 children of vastly different ages 6 different topics ... just because the syllabus says to. It is appropriate for some home education subjects to be worked on individually (math, grammar), and some subjects to be studied together, but worked on at the age appropriate level (English, history). When we tried to do school at home and each child was working on their own topic according to the syllabus, the children found it isolating as there was no group discussion or enjoyment. What works for 30 kids doing the same topic at the same age, is inappropriate for us.

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

Our daughter turns 17 in January next year. She will be finishing the equivalent to year 12 in her studies and also preparing for her performance and interview with Wesley Institute. She will be studying full time. However, as she is not a school student, she will not be eligible for Austudy or travel passes. She (we) will have to pay adult fare wherever she goes and for everything she attends. We have six children. It is hard enough paying for eight people. We should not have to pay adult fare for a high school student just because she is home educated.

As we stated earlier, we should be given access to TVET, TAFE, Open High school, hospital school, concession for over 16yrs, travel passes, schooling being recognised from 4 to 18 years old, etc. We save the NSW Government around \$68,000 this year and \$83,000 next year as all six will be school age. It is discrimination to deny us any of these services.

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

Home education is the only section of BoSTES without a representative. While it is imperative that home educators be represented on their governing board, we recommend that home education have a separate governing board similar to that in Tasmania (THEAC).

(f) any other related matter:

(i) Not all children fit into the school system

Glenn Brookes (MP East Hills) told us that it is good there is an alternative to school, as he himself did not fit into school. He spent his school years helping the janitor as he could not read or understand and keep up with the work. He said he learned to read at age 33 when he was motivated to do so because he had become a successful businessman and then a business partner had embezzled his monies. There are many kids whom the system fails in the same way. Parents and carers who see this happening to their children should be commended for taking them out of a system that is not working, and putting in the extra effort, time and money to help their children succeed

(ii) Immediate transfer of child from school to home education should be allowed in the best interests of the child

In situations where the child is experiencing extreme bullying, displaying suicidal or self-harm tendencies, repeated suspensions or interventions, there should be an allowance made for any parent or carer to immediately transfer the child to home education. This removes the child from harmful influences immediately. This would make the rules consistent across different administrative bureaucracies; that is decisions are to be made in the best interests of the child. Parents should be given temporary registration for three months, giving them time to stabilise the child's situation and prepare the home education plan.

(iii) BoSTES limits education options for travelling students – home education is portable

The BoSTES limits the options for education for students who are travelling more than the allocated school holidays. They say that Home Education under the Education Act must be interpreted as schooling must occur in the home. Just as modern tele-working is not tied to a specific address, home education also should not be. Our computers and schoolbooks are totally portable. We VERY rarely go on any holiday where we do not 'school'. Experiencing different locations, cultures and situations actually facilitates and enhances learning. People need to understand that home educating families have a different mindset regarding school and holidays. To us, they are not opposites. Learning is an everyday experience. We don't switch off. We make the most of every opportunity.

There are two cases where it would not be in the best interest of the child for home education to be tied to the home address. Firstly, if the breadwinner is required to work in a different location for three months, it would be better for the family to go with them. It would be no big deal to pick up and move books, computers, library, etc. The regular activities the kids miss would be offset by the new places and people that they would meet. Secondly, if the family had the opportunity to travel around Europe for 6 weeks, again, they could easily take their work with them. There is plenty of time to do work while travelling, and enjoy the amazing opportunity to experience history, architecture, etc. first hand. It would be an invaluable learning experience. In both of these cases, the children would be disadvantaged should they have to switch to distance education for such a short period of time. It would be far more disruptive to their education, and of no benefit to any party

(iv) No independent avenue of appeal

There is currently no independent avenue of appeal, nor independent and open, comprehensive arbitration when home educators have issues with BoSTES. In our own experience, we wrote to the Education Minister specifically stating we did NOT want the letter forwarded to OBoS, nor a reply from them. You can imagine our surprise and dismay when we received a letter in response from the OBoS!

The entire home education community had to go to our MPs and raise the issue in the political arena to get our case heard. There should be an appropriate independent avenue of appeal without making our issues a political problem.

3. Recommendations

We make the following recommendations to the Select Committee:

1. **Home Education to be administered as an alternative option that is different to school**, and thus is not administered in the same way as the check-box system used in schools. Families cannot operate and must not be compelled to learn in the same way as a class room of same aged children. Apart from high-level education (not school) outcomes, the regulation structures and the artefacts used by the BoSTES for compliance in the school system have no relevance in home education. APs should be trained to determine if we are providing a comprehensive quality education and not that we are ticking the boxes of the school system.
2. **Home Education to be administered by an appropriate body that includes home educators** so that problems, like that of the 2013 IP and those taken to Parliament in 1998, do not surface again and again. In fact, a system like that in Tasmania (THEAC) has stood the test of time and encourages a high rate of registered families.
3. **Home Education has an appropriate registration process, not bureaucratic regulation**. At the moment, it is purely a set of regulations that do not match up with the Q&A, the verbal advice being given by BoSTES, nor the approvals/denials being granted by APs. We had different APs conducting extremely different registration checks. There needs to be a consistent approach focussing on quality of education.
4. **Home Educators must not be discriminated against in the services and programs available to them**. All Australian students should have access to public services, regardless of their education choice. What is available for school students should also be available and accessible for all home educated students aged 4 to 18 years
5. **There should be a suitable and public appeal process outside BoSTES for home educators so that we do not have to escalate to parliament in order for the issues to be heard and solutions actioned**. If a segment of the home school community is standing together on an issue and asking to be heard, it should not require an inquiry for this to take place. We should be able to go to an appropriate body that are willing to listen rather than insist that the only way to deal with us is to increase regulation. It is right that there be some kind of regulation; we just want to be heard and have appropriate regulation.

Thank you for the effort that you are putting into understanding home education. Thank you for the opportunity we have to give our input and recommendations. We appreciate the time you are putting into sorting out the dilemma of how to successfully manage the system by which we can enjoy incredible responsibility of our children's education.