

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Ms Jacki Oliver

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Jacki Oliver

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

Legislative council home schooling inquiry

Dear Sir/Madam,

I submit the following information for your consideration as part of the Parliamentary inquiry into homeschooling.

I am a mother to two children aged eleven and nine, and with the support of both of their parents, my children have chosen home based learning. I would like to comment on the following terms of reference:

(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 a facilitator to my children's learning in a home based environment, I see my children growing holistically at a pace suited to them. My children are active members within our local community as well as the greater community. My son has initiated and is the co-ordinator of a 'lego club' in the Lismore region. He also has been involved in running a market stall at the local farmers market. My daughter has developed her confidence in performing on stage to audiences. She is in the process of developing a product which she plans to sell. These are just a couple of examples of their growth and learning. They have the ability to adapt to any path they choose in the form of further study, work, etc.

I regularly receive comments from people that we meet regarding the person's enjoyment in connecting with my children - their maturity, their politeness, their friendliness. I haven't 'taught' them anything including their manners or how to interact with people. I have facilitated their journey as they grow and develop their own understanding of how to be a part of this world. Home

based learning allows them space to develop this understanding in their own unique way and at their own unique pace.

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

My own experience of schooling has obviously influenced my choices to offer my children home schooling as an option. I enjoyed my primary education in a public school in South Australia and I can see now why I was able to fit so well into the system of schooling that has an emphasis on 'book learning'. I enjoy 'book learning' (studying, reading, writing, etc.) and this, combined with my eagerness to please resulted in me being an 'A' grade student consistently throughout my primary years. This continued in early high school but by mid high school I started to rebel against this system as I pushed against the pressure of 'conforming'. It is my desire to avoid this pressure on my children to conform to someone else's ideas of how to be in this world and for them to be free to create their own ideas of how they want to be and experience their existence in this world.

I have studied at a tertiary level both in TAFE and university and moved into a career of financial administration starting off within my parents business and learning most of my knowledge and skills on the job. I also became a freelance bookkeeper, managing the accounts for several businesses in a variety of industries.

As I move through parenthood and tune into my children's needs, and as I grow and understand more about what motivates people and inspires learning, I discover that people learn most when they are enjoying what they are doing. I choose to offer my children home based learning so they can learn at their own pace, retain connection with their own rhythm of learning and growing and being in this world, retain connection with their own internal motivators rather than external rewards/punishments, provide a more holistically focussed learning environment than what I have found elsewhere, provide 'real life' learning, allow them the freedom to learn what is relevant to their lives, honour their individuality. I am continuously reminding myself that they are the ultimate authority of their own lives (just as we all are the ultimate authority of our own lives) and my role is to guide and facilitate and assist them in feeling empowered and finding what it is that they are here to offer to the world.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers

I first registered my children for home schooling when my son was nine and my daughter aged six. I chose to register at that time to be able to receive an exemption from looking for work as a single parent in receipt of Newstart allowance. This government financial support gratefully enables me

to fully support my children in my role as facilitator in their learning, and to provide them with the resources that support their learning. If I had another way of supporting myself financially during this time I would not register my children for home schooling. The reason for this is because I am very challenged by the unreasonable expectations placed on me to provide an education that fits into the boxes that the government/Board of Studies have created.

I do not agree with the model of education that, as a registered home school parent, I am expected to fit into. And as per the Principles on which the Education Act is based (*Part 2 Objects of Act: (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*) it is my opinion that my children are receiving an education of the highest quality through natural learning/life learning. I would like to be supported in meeting my responsibilities for the education of my children, not being pressured into conforming with an educational model that does not meet my children's needs.

(v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children

Having the freedom to choose to attend school or continue with home based learning, my children have consistently chosen home based learning. My son has never expressed a desire to attend school, easily recognising that his needs are better met through home based learning. My daughter has twice expressed a desire to attend school. The first time at the age of five when she was aware of the general pattern within our culture of children starting school at this age. We attended the local school for a morning session and she decided to continue with home based learning recognising that school was different to what she thought it would be. At the age of seven she again tried out a different local school where some of her friends attended. Once again she quickly recognised that home based learning was more fully meeting her needs.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

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

I would like to experience a greater acknowledgement of the value of wisdom that can arise from a home based learning environment. I would like to experience a greater acknowledgement that the current model of education is just one model and that other models exist that are equally valid.

These other models hold the potential to resolve many issues currently being experienced in our society (eg, bullying, violence, disconnection with each other and the earth) if they could be embraced more fully for our children.

By learning to value and validate our own wisdom and that of our children, we place the authority within ourselves, where we can then make choices and decisions for the greater good of humanity and the earth instead of feeling disempowered by having the authority externally enforced upon us (how can someone who doesn't even know me or my children possibly know what is best for us?)

I would like to experience a registration process that acknowledges first and foremost, my children's wisdom and their knowing what it is they need to be learning for their unique life experience. Secondly, I would like to experience a registration process that acknowledges my wisdom and knowing as their mother (and for other families, the person most significantly involved in the child's life) in my role as facilitator and guide as they grow into adulthood and independence.

The Education Act (*Part 2 'Objects of Act' '4 Principles on which this Act is based', (b) the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents*) acknowledges the role of the parent. The Education Act also acknowledges that "*it is the duty of the State to ensure that every child receives an education of the highest quality*". Therefore it should be the duty of the State to support families in reconnecting/allowing/honouring each child's wisdom and supporting parents as they facilitate their child's journey of learning.

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

Within our family we do not adhere to the delivery of the NSW syllabus because it is clear to me (as my children's facilitator) that it is not relevant to my children's learning and not satisfactory as an 'education of the highest quality' for my children's growth.

My children learn what it is they need and desire to learn from being immersed in life and following their interests. They learn to read through their own desire to learn because they have realised that being able to read fluently is a highly beneficial skill in our culture. They learn to calculate numbers because they realise it is beneficial to their life to be able to rapid mental calculations and so I facilitate them in finding methods of calculation that work for them. And just as they learnt to walk and to talk without me *teaching* them, they learn to read and calculate and sew and cook also.

I would like to see the role of the Board of Studies to become a valuable resource to homeschooling families in offering inspiration and ideas to facilitate a wholesome learning environment.

Thank you for considering my submission. I trust that we are all working together to meet the needs of our children.

Yours faithfully,

Jacki Oliver