

**Submission
No 200**

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Mr Joshua Ventura

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Submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly Inquiry on Homeschooling

Joshua Stephen Ventura

To whom it may concern,

August 7th, 2014

I am writing this letter as a submission to the inquiry to inform the readers of my interactions with homeschooling. I thank the reader for their time and for considering my story.

I have been homeschooled for the entirety of my schooling, right from pre-school up to year 12. Many of my childhood friends were also homeschooled, and I have seen it in many different contexts and families.

I have also been out of school for a number of years, having graduated and been accepted into the University of Newcastle in the Bachelor of Surveying. This has provided me with many opportunities to meet new people from different backgrounds; most of my friends are from a non-homeschooling background. Having this chance for reflection has enabled me to talk to lots of people about their experiences, and make up my own mind as to how I feel about my education, and what I would consider as the best options for my children.

My experience with homeschooling while I was in primary and secondary schooling was generally a flexible, motivating, and equipping relationship with an organised curriculum. My family used the ACE curriculum as the basis of our schooling, and added in other activities such as sports, music, and social events.

The coverage and depth of the curriculum we used was generally both very thorough and well explained & delivered. In many areas such as math, english, and religious studies, the level of understanding acquired was, I believe, better than average.

The provider and curriculum we used enabled us to gain academic credit for extracurricular subjects such as music. I played piano, sitting the official AMEB exams up to grade 6, and received credit for this in my year 9 and year 12 certificates. Families were actually encouraged to tailor the schooling to suit the talents and needs of their individual situations, and we found this process easy and well supported.

Another way in which homeschooling has supported my family's involvement in music has been its flexibility (while not at the expense of loss of structure). All the members of my family have been very much into music of some sort (one of my brothers has gone on to study the Bachelor of Music in the Australian National University), and the fact that we could be motivated to finish our schoolwork early so that we could put extra time into practice, or to sit for lessons, really allowed us to balance our days out in a way that gave us both self-motivation, and the acquisition of music skills.

Another way that my parents ensured a wide range of experience and learning was maintained was by getting the children involved with sport. All of the children have been involved in the local soccer club, and on top of this, there were regular sports days with other homeschooling families where sports like cricket, soccer, tennis, etc. were played.

My parents took care to ensure that our social development was being fostered in a way which gave

us the ability to relate to people of all ages. We had no lack of friends, and we certainly were given many opportunities to interact with people of different age groups. This was just a normal part of our life, and this manifested itself in the fact that we children found it very easy to relate to (for example) elderly people from totally different generations, as well as being comfortable around younger children and adults.

The transition from high school to university was, on the whole, smooth. (There was some confusion and complications, but they were due to bureaucratic processes rather than any academic deficiencies. I am very grateful to my mother for working very hard to make this process very easy.) I gained my Year 9 and Year 12 certificates from the Australian Christian College with high average grades in all my subjects. I gained an ATAR (then UAI) by sitting the S.A.T. exam and the S.T.A.T. exam. There were no real barriers in the way of me applying to a university course, and I was accepted into the Bachelor of Surveying at the University of Newcastle with a UAI of 96, for which I received the "High Achiever's Scholarship" with a cash prize of \$2,000.

I am currently 6 months away from graduation, and am working 4 days a week at a local surveying firm where I am likely to stay after finishing my degree.

To summarise, my experience of homeschooling was a system that:

- taught self-motivation,
- taught time management,
- was flexible, and allowed the devotion of time to activities like music,
- can be tailored to the individual circumstances of a family, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach,
- encouraged the parents to take responsibility for, and be involved in, their children's education,
- gave me the chance to learn good, solid character traits (both through its curricular content, and the presence of parents & mentors for guidance),
- emphasised thorough, first-principles learning,
- spurred me on to academic excellence,
- is imperfect, as all systems are; but one that can easily be complemented, and any identified blind spots compensated for,
- prepared me well for university,
- prepared me even better for life,
- is the best schooling system that I know of, and one which I strongly hope to consider for my children's education.

I thank the reader for their time, and hope that this account has been relevant and informative in your investigations.

Kind regards,

Joshua Ventura