

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Ms Anne Regan

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I am a mother of three children who are registered for homeschooling in Victoria. I appreciate the opportunity given to me by the Victorian Government to register my children in the method of education we have chosen to be most appropriate for our family. I also appreciate the Victorian Government's trust in homeschooling parents to provide the most appropriate form of education to their own children.

As a former teacher I have witnessed first hand how documentation requirements and continual checks on progress can get in the way of teaching and learning. When extensive documentation is required, teachers can become focused on having all the paperwork up to date and ready for presentation, while the students are missing out on real learning opportunities. Parents who feel that the school system is currently not the best fit for their child's education, will be able to provide a more thorough education if they are free to concentrate on the learning opportunities they can present to their child, without spending time writing it all up beforehand and then trying to stick to this plan regardless of circumstances.

One big advantage of homeschooling is the ability to tailor a learning program to each individual student. In Victoria, most parents have an outline of what they would like to cover in terms of their child's education in a given year, and an idea of how each of the Key Learning Areas will be presented. However, as each child has differing needs, and life can present unexpected circumstances, parents are able to change the program they are offering so that it best meets the needs of the child and the family at that time.

My children have never been to school and are exposed to learning opportunities in each of the Key Learning Areas every week, usually every day. In situations when they have been required to demonstrate their knowledge and learning in public situations they have always shown that they are keeping pace with their schooled peers. While their literacy and numeracy skills are on par with their school year level, their science, history and geography knowledge levels, and confidence in social situations, are generally ahead of their peers, as we have had ad hoc opportunities to expand their knowledge in these areas, and as a consequence continue to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. If we were following a pre-approved program we would not have been able to take advantage of these opportunities and my children's knowledge and skills would be less as a result.

The idea of increased regulation and checks on homeschool program's concerns me greatly. The workload that this would impose on parents on top of the full time job of providing their child's education would put a great strain on families, and the prescribed program can cause lack of motivation and learning opportunities in students. Homeschooling is a valid and ideal option of a number of students, due to their unique learning needs, bullying, health reasons and so on. If further regulation is introduced then some parents of these children may choose to leave them in school where their individual needs will not be met and the student and society will miss out as a result - as

students who are not adequately catered for at school can have more trouble finding a job and/or need help with mental health issues in later years.

I hope that the NSW government can see the benefit of homeschooling as a valid and valuable option for some children, and can extend trust and responsibility to parents to provide the best educational environment and outcomes for their child, without having undue regulation.