

**Submission
No 170**

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

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Partially Confidential

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee with this submission with regards to Home Education.

Firstly we would like to acknowledge the importance of the educational system that the NSW government provides to most children in NSW.

This letter is not about being opposed to the education system, but more about parents having choices to educate their children in different ways and for those choices to be respected and acknowledged by the NSW government.

The NSW Education act of 1990, Part 2(b) states that the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents, and the government's responsibility, Part 2(d) the principal responsibility of the State in the education of children is the provision of public education, it doesn't state that the parents must teach according to this system.

As Home Educators we have chosen not to use the NSW public education system, mainly because we believe that children learn differently and each child deserves to be educated in a way that is best for the individual, to maximise their strengths and talents.

As parents that home educate our children we have not given the responsibility to the government but have chosen to accept responsibility to educate them ourselves.

That in itself is an onerous task that we do without hesitation or regret, but feel privileged and honoured to part of our children's daily lives to see them grow, learn and develop into young adults that function effectively in society.

We do this without any financial support from the government and in fact save the government thousands of dollars by home educating our children.

Many families sacrifice a wage to stay home to be able to do this.

Home Educators are seeking to offer their children an education that is not about a system, outcomes or fitting into a box but an education that offers individual programs for each one of their children.

We appreciate and respect that this is not possible in an educational system that caters for thousands of children where teachers can only offer minimal individual programming in their classes when they have 20 to 30 children to cater for.

We believe that a system of "one type fits all," is not what we want for our children and have chosen to home educate to offer experiences and learning opportunities that are unique to their abilities and strengths, by doing this we believe we are able to help them understand themselves and in return contribute effectively in the community.

We would like to give you two examples of this.

1. Our daughter who is now 17, has a passion for horses, and has been volunteering with the Riding for the disabled for 4 years. She started when she was 13. Her love for horses motivated her to get involved, but her interaction with the riders has encouraged her to continue for many years. Her ability to grow and develop herself in a team environment has been a wonderful educational experience, but more importantly, she has learnt to serve others less fortunate than herself, with sensitivity and dedication. We believe because this has come from her own motivation, she has chosen to continually self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. Many people ask her whether she gets to ride the horses. She is amazed at this question because people assume it has to be all about herself. Her reply is, "Well it's not about me but helping the riders with the disabilities." We could do with more teenagers with this serving attitude in our society.
2. Our son, who is 13, has just started volunteering for the Guide Dog Association of NSW. His love for dogs has motivated him to serve others less fortunate than himself. He could have just brought a dog for himself, but instead he has chosen to puppy raise a dog to help the visually impaired. He came to this decision after much discussion with us and his siblings. Again this is a very unselfish act. He has had many people comment saying that they couldn't do it because you have to give the puppy up, and again he is surprised at their self-centred nature. His reply is that it's all worth it because he knows it is helping others that need help to improve their standard of living.

We as a family have helped to instil these values in our children, and yes, I have heard of some wonderful opportunities schools have provided for students, but we feel that they are not always based on the individual's gifts and talents, so the motivation of the child isn't always the same. We believe that our children have learned the value of intrinsic motivation, and how fulfilling it is to work with their strengths and abilities.

We would also like to comment on the value of learning as a family and how that unites and strengthens a family.

We can see how the family unit is falling apart in society and we believe that in a home schooling environment, we use daily life to learn and grow together and strengthen our family relationships. We believe that this will greatly benefit our society.

We are thankful that in Australia we have the freedom to Home educate, but we would love to see the NSW government understand and respect what home schooling really is. A choice made by parents to whole heartedly be responsible for their children, and that is a major decision that we have not taken lightly.

We believe, Home educating children is not for everyone, and not all families are in the position to do so. We appreciate and respect the NSW public education system and what it provides for many families, however we have just chosen not to use it, and believe that for our family we can offer a more specific educational environment that is suited to the needs of our children and our family as a whole.

We value the opportunity to make decisions according to where our children's strengths and abilities lie, and work on their weaknesses in an encouraging environment with love and acceptance.

This is our story and we are sure there are families who need the education system and the government to protect and care for them. When you look around at our society it is evident many parents are not able to take this position, and love and care for their children, due to their own problems, however we are willing, honoured and blessed with being fully involved in the process of educating our children at home on a daily basis, watching them grow and learn, being part of their everyday successes and their struggles. We don't feel that an educational system can take the place of that for our family.

Regards

Philip and Alicia Parker