

Submission
No 219

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 25/08/2014

Partially Confidential

22 August, 2014

The Director

Select Committee on Home Schooling

Parliament House

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Legislative Council Home Schooling Inquiry

My name is _____ and I am home schooling my four children aged 3-7 years. The elder two are registered, being 6 and 7 years old.

I would like to comment on the following terms of reference:

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

My husband I are both tertiary educated. I have a Bachelor of Medicine, and my husband an Accounting and Arts/Law degree.

I am motivated to home school my children for a number of reasons.

I made mention above that I am home schooling *all* of my children. Registration is only applicable to children aged 6 years and over, however, learning begins much earlier. It would be difficult to say when exactly we started “educating” our children. But certainly my eldest could read and had learnt some basic maths before reaching school age. Choosing to home school, rather than enrol her in a school, felt like a natural extension of what we had

already begun years before. It was working well, we were pleased with her progress, and there seemed no reason to transfer responsibility of her education to a school.

My first 3 children all have birthdays near the cut off for NSW start of school; being born in May, June and July respectively. When considering sending my eldest to school we were faced with the dilemma of choosing between sending her “early” or “late”. This would have been a very difficult decision to make; as I consider my eldest to have been academically suited to going early, but would have benefited socially and emotionally by starting late. Electing to home school removed this problem entirely. We are now free to educate her at the level she is at, and she can grow socially and emotionally in her own time.

Learning at an appropriate level was very important to me, as I felt in my own time at school, many hours were wasted waiting for others to catch up and finish their work. It is wonderful to be able to complete the set “bookwork” for the day in a timely fashion; and then allow my children to play, read freely, complete self-directed artworks, write and illustrate their own stories making “books” (which my 7 year old now does on the computer) and more.

Deciding and preparing to home school saw me reflect on my own education. I saw clearly for the first time how limited it was. While having been academically successful at school in the 1980s and 1990s, I found even at year 1 level, I was learning alongside my daughter in every subject other than maths and science. Grammar was almost all new to me. Despite having studied geography in high school til Year 10, I was woefully ignorant on Australian geography. Art appreciation and music appreciation were never covered in my schools. We have learnt handicraft skills together. It was very exciting to discover I could provide my children with an education far superior to what I had received – and all so easily with a library card (or 6!), internet access and recommendations on excellent curriculum, picture books and other resources.

My eldest child has severe eczema. She was particularly unwell with a complication of this earlier in the year, and this would have caused her to miss a large number of days had she been enrolled in school. However, disrupted sleep with itch was more manageable at home – we could allow her to sleep in and/or nap on days she needed to, and simply fit her work in during the hours she felt okay. I found, despite her being moderately unwell for a number of weeks, she never fell behind on the work I had planned as we were able to utilise a flexible timetable.

(c)(i) Current registration process and ways of reducing the number of unregistered home schoolers

I spent what I thought was a reasonable amount of time preparing my first application to register my eldest for home school, and so I was dismayed and discouraged by the criticisms I received. We were granted only 6 months. I felt almost as soon as the registration period began, I needed to start preparing for the next. However, the next time I received the maximum 2 years registration. The following year I received 12 months for my son, the maximum registration period granted for a new applicant. While I was able to take on board the feedback and prepare more satisfactory proposals the next 2 occasions, I am a bit resentful of the amount of time I need to spend to achieve this.

Certainly I have never looked at the plans I submitted after the registration process. The plan I prepare and refer to frequently – revising on average every 3 months, is much more basic. I list the texts and workbooks I plan to cover and I record the date we start and finish them. With maths, I note the pages that will need revision. I research the curriculum I think may be suitable in the coming months and years. As time passes and I can gauge my children's progress (very easy to do when I am marking their work daily and assisting with all new concepts covered) I purchase the material I need and add it to my plan. I never look at outcomes and have zero interest in the codes I document for my approved plan. However, I am confident I am at least meeting, and usually exceeding, the requirements for NSW syllabus.

My suggestion for making the process simpler would be to require us at the AP visit to show and discuss our working plan (and I have described the plan I actually use). I haven't found a timetable helpful for anything other than swimming lessons. A portfolio of selected work would be sufficient documentation at the subsequent visit to demonstrate learning took place. Again this could be discussed with the parent and child. (At present I complete a daily diary and end of term reports as well to ensure no problems at the visit).

I feel the current registration process is time consuming and unhelpful (to me). I **dread** the extra work I will have in the next 2-3 years as my younger two will also need to have their learning documented and plans drawn up for the Authorised Person visits. However, if it is required, I will continue to do it.

(c)(iii) Adherence to delivery of the New South Wales Syllabuses

I do not have a problem adhering to the syllabus. It is important to me as I am uncertain how long we will be home schooling. In the event of my children attending mainstream schools, I would hate for them to be behind in any way. However, I believe it is easy to cover the syllabus without the current requirements of documentation and educational plans. I have made suggestions regarding this in (c)(i).

My Year 2 student has already sat 3 UNSW ICAS tests and I plan to register her for NAPLAN next year. I will use these results to confirm my children are working at an appropriate level.

As an aside, I was surprised to learn home school students are charged a fee to sit NAPLAN. Removing this fee could be considered if the BOSTES are keen to research the impact of home schooling on academic achievement.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission. I look forward to reading the outcomes of the inquiry.

Yours faithfully,