

**Submission
No 222**

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Ms Mary Rose Fanning

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To Whom it May Concern,

Regarding the Inquiry into home schooling currently underway in the Legislative Council.

Having been home schooled until gaining admittance to University (where I completed a Bachelor of Liberal Arts with a GPA of 6.9) I believe that I am in a strong position to address some of the areas under review by this committee.

When addressing the current regulations surrounding home schooling and the question of whether or not these regulations should require home schoolers to meet the NSW school syllabus curriculum outcomes, one should first examine the question of whether or not the current requirements are producing citizens who are able to step out with their peers from the school system and make their mark on Australian society in a positive way. Similarly, it is a question of whether home schooled children are being (in some way) denied the privilege of an education that fits them to enter the adult world alongside their peers. That is, are the current requirements sufficient, or are they disadvantageous to those whom they effect? If they are **not** disadvantageous, is it necessary to alter the current requirements?

In my own experience (which is quite wide, since I grew up amongst many other young people who were also being home schooled) this is not the case.

On the other hand, if the current requirements are unnecessarily intimidating, it is perhaps advantageous to relax them.

Personally, I found the experience of being home-schooled very positive. Home schooling allowed me to develop an independent approach to learning and education that still stands me in good stead

(and was invaluable at university) since I have a research oriented mind set which allows me to think widely on many subjects. This assists me in meeting the practical requirements of daily life, in finding work and in ensuring that I am a good employee, well organised, reliable, and able to demonstrate initiative in my workplace.

Of my peers who also experienced home schooling, I do not know of one person who, reaching an appropriate age, has been unable to find work. I know of none subsisting on government benefits. Many of them have gone on to successfully qualify in a chosen profession: there are many teachers amongst our graduates, a handful of lawyers, some doctors, dentists and many nurses, a vet and a handful of farm workers, as well as a number of tradesmen, and many other people who are supporting themselves by working in a number of other environments and rôles. These people are self-evidently capable not only of entering university or Tafe (and often excelling at university – a fact noted by a number of my lecturers - but of supporting themselves and living as productive and positive members of society, and indeed paying back into society by the taxes they pay. Given that the state's interest in any school system is to fit young people to take their place in adult society, and to help support the society and country in which they live, there is then no reason to suspect that home schoolers are in any way behindhand in comparison with those who have attended institutional schools, or that they are being denied opportunities they would otherwise have been granted.

The other element under consideration is whether or not the education provided is always sufficient to give children the opportunities they would have had had they been in school. I would argue (given my own personal experience and the experience of others with whom I mixed) that parents are actually in many ways the perfect people to administer education to their children, since no one can have the wellbeing of their children so much at heart. This is not to deny that sometimes there are situations which do not meet this ideal. To deny that would be irrational, (just as to suggest that the school environment is always ideal would be irrational). However, the majority of those parents

who are home schooling are making huge sacrifices to provide their children with the best possible education.

It is worthwhile to note that the parents are always the primary educators of their children. It is also important to think about the practical ramifications of home schooling. Whilst a teacher in a classroom might have 20-30 children in a class, a parent might have six children being schooled at any one time, which means they will automatically have more time to spend with each student. I have never come across a family who has kept their children out of school because they are uninterested in their wellbeing, education or future. Home schooling requires too many sacrifices from the parents for it to be an easy option.

It is important to note that in the case of home schooling, parents shoulder the whole cost of the education of their children, thus alleviating the burden of educational cost that is otherwise placed on the state. Also, many parents choose to home school their children because those children have some degree of learning difficulties and are thus struggling in a classroom environment. This means that children who in a school system would be in need of a great deal of extra help and assistance (at considerable extra cost to the government) are being cared for at home in an environment that is more suitable for them and in which they are happier. This seems to be a win win situation.

The majority of parents who make the decision to home school (which is often not an easy one) do so because they are deeply concerned by and in their children's wellbeing and future. The anxiety of excessive government intervention and burdensome curriculum and regulatory requirements can be overwhelming, leading some parents who have made the decision to home educate their children to decide against formal registration. More sensible would be to retain a broader set of requirements for parents to meet, requirements that are manageable outside a school environment but which are sufficient to ensure those children will be able to take their place in adult society. The government can support parents in reaching and maintaining those requirements, (as the best of the Authorised

Persons indeed do) rather than pushing parents to decide against registering their children with the state because that prospect is too intimidating.

Certainly the requirements under which I was home schooled (from 1995-2007) were easily sufficient to help home schooled children to make the transition in a healthy and well balanced way into the adult world and workforce. It is important then that the demands made by government bodies should not be unreasonable, and should reflect the reality and needs of those being home schooled. (Home-schooled children cannot be required to fulfil requirements which are not being met by schools. Clearly schools are never 100% effective.)

In conclusion I would like to suggest that government bodies support parents who wish to home school their children in a manner that acknowledges the justice of parents making this choice and that addresses the actual needs and capacities of families in this situation. Given that the outcomes most often demonstrated by children who have been home educated are that they are good and upright citizens capable of making a positive contribution to society, and that families who home school relieve some pressure on the government system, it would seem sensible to acknowledge the contribution they make and to assist them rather than to make this choice a difficult one.

Regards,

Mary-Rose Fanning