

Submission
No 66

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 27/07/2014

Partially Confidential

Submission to the Inquiry into Home Schooling

Background Information

My name is . I am a 29 year old, married, mother of two. I hold a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) degree, and have worked as a casual teacher in public schools, on and off, over the last six years. My husband, , holds an Advanced Diploma in IT and is a manager in his field.

We were both born in Romania, immigrated in our childhoods, and now live in Sydney's western suburbs. We are practicing Christians.

Our children are aged 5 (daughter) and 2.5 (son) years old. Our son has Autism Spectrum Disorder.

We are committed to home schooling both of our children.

Terms of Reference Covered

b (ii) financial costs

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

b (v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children

b (vi) comparison of home schooling to school education, and

Financial Costs

Whilst we are at the beginning of our home schooling journey, we have spent hundreds of dollars on books, educational resources, and excursions so far this year. Some of those books are for my own 'professional development' as a home educator because I must now reflect, and decide, on the educational philosophy which will underpin our family's home schooling, as well as gaining a better understanding of the challenges which our son faces in terms of his learning . Many more are quality children's literature and factual children's books which we wish to have accessible in our home to be able to revisit throughout the year.

Some of the educational resources which we have bought are things such as literacy games, maths manipulatives, apps for ipad and computer programs such as Reading Eggs and Mathseeds, as well as art and craft supplies and general stationery items.

We have had three excursions this year- to the Penrith Fire Museum, the Maritime Museum and the Powerhouse Museum and these have served as springboards for our learning. We are planning on three more excursions, allocating approximately \$70 for each, including travel costs. We also take advantage of the live shows at the local library during school holidays at a cost of \$5 per ticket.

We also consider our daughter's gymnastics classes to be part of her home schooling, and pay \$14.10 each week for these. We attend a social gathering of home schoolers and pay \$6 weekly for access to the community centre and use of resources. We intend to enrol her in art classes next term at a cost of \$120 for the term.

It is also worth mentioning the increased costs in electricity and water that a home schooling family incurs, compared to a home that is not lived in throughout the day.

Demographics and motivation of parents to home school their children

Our demographic information is described in the introduction on page 1.

Our motivation for home schooling our children is multi-faceted. Firstly, we see education as more than just pertaining to academics- we believe character development to be incredibly important and feel home schooling allows us to influence our children's character more than if we outsourced their education. This comes from our convictions as Christians that our children's upbringing has been entrusted to us by God and we are primary accountable for their growth.

Also, as an early childhood teacher working in primary schools I see the disparity between the theory of early childhood development about how children learn best (through play, and when following their interests, for example) and what happens in classrooms in traditional schools.

Kindergarten is the new first grade and there is a push for formal instruction to begin early, despite

the research showing there are no benefits to this approach, and may in fact be drawbacks including children being more likely to be disengaged from learning in later grades.

Other factors which influenced our decision to home school are the freedom that it gives our family in terms of setting our own schedule, living a less hurried life, and spending more time together as a family. We like the idea of learning together as a family, and following interests and passions as they arise. The ratio of one parent to two children (during work hours, on weekdays) is better suited to answering children's questions as they arise and taking time to research areas of interest. It allows us to engage in deeper learning, that is naturally tailored to the learning styles of our children, as we know them and know their preferences and needs better than anyone else.

Our son's diagnosis of ASD has also influenced our decision to home school. As it stands, he would not cope well with the transitions involved in getting his big sister to and from school every day. Thinking ahead to when he is of school age, we believe that he would learn better at home with a parent that knows him and is personally invested in him, than at school with a class full of other children and a teacher who would struggle to understand him.

Characteristics and Educational Needs of Home Schooled Children

Our daughter, (who I will discuss in this section as she is school age) is infinitely curious. Almost each day she has a 'wondering' which we record and endeavour to research. She has grown over the last six months to be in charge of her own learning- in the sense that she approaches me with ideas for what she would like to learn about, make, or do.

Our son is picking up on this and the language of our household is all about learning. They both seem to be perpetually on the lookout for 'ideas for home schooling'. At the same time that I am able to, and do, facilitate her learning in her areas of interest, can also be found independently learning throughout the day. She takes the abacus and adds different coloured beads together, or sits by the latest stack of library books and carefully examines each one. Writing and art

materials are always on hand and often accesses these of her own accord. is a motivated, independent, and inquisitive learner.

Comparison of Home Schooling to School Education

Home schooling allows for greater individualisation of the education compared to traditional schooling. We can spend the time working on a new skill or concept when we need to, and move on if it is quickly grasped. Formal instruction is more effective when used within the home given that there are fewer distractions (and no need for constant interruptions for the behaviour management of the class). Home schooling can happen in the hours which suit the family, rather than the children having to conform to the school hours, and potentially working outside of their hours of peak focus.

Home schooling allows for learning through play, and for child-directed learning to take place. Both of these are lacking in traditional classrooms. Home schooling allows us to spend more time outdoors, and being physically active. It also allows us to live our learning more frequently and authentically than can happen within a classroom setting (for example, we can learn about fractions and then bake a cake, or learn about money and go shopping). Home schooling, unlike traditional schooling, allows us to take frequent breaks.