

**Submission
No 199**

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Mrs Emily Ventura

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Submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly Inquiry on Homeschooling

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To whom it may concern,

August 7th, 2014

Hi,

My name is Emily Ventura. I am a homeschool graduate of 2008. I come from a family of six children, of whom I am the eldest. I am a graduate of 2012 with a Bachelor of Music and am recently married as of April 2014. I have heard about the inquiry that is happening and wanted to take a few minutes to let you know how homeschooling has benefited my siblings and me. Thank you for taking time to read and consider.

I was homeschooled by my mother for my year of kindergarten. She used material that she compiled herself and some kindergarten level books, that were purchased from Big W, to teach me the basics of reading, writing, and maths. I thoroughly enjoyed my kindergarten year, but as a young five year old, I had seen many other children my age start going to school and so at the end of my kindergarten year, I decided that I wanted to go to school just like everyone else.

My mother had taught me well and I went in to first grade competent in maths, spelling, and writing and even had a grade two reading level. Consequently, I would often finish my work much more quickly than my classmates and was often bored at the lack of challenge. Although, it should be said that I had two very lovely and good teachers for my first year of school.

In my second year, I was not so fortunate. My teacher was abrupt, very strict, and was not engaging in the way she taught. As I was starting second grade, my younger brother began his kindergarten class. He began the year as a happy five year old, excited about a new challenge and new friends. By the end of the year he was a completely different child. He had separation anxiety and would often run screaming and crying after my parents as they left in their car. To complicate things further, he had quite bad dyslexia (which the school refused to acknowledge) which made it extremely difficult for him to read and write. He was also bullied by his grade six buddy (so much for the 'buddy' system) and was sexually abused by the school counselor (although he felt so ashamed about it that we never found out until he told us at 19 years old).

Since we were at the same school, I would often go to his classroom at lunch so that we could eat together (we've always be best friends). I was always turned away by his teacher because, for some reason, siblings shouldn't be allowed to be friends.

By the end of those two years, we were both very different children. My brother was quiet and withdrawn, as opposed to the happy go lucky kid that he had been before, and I was loud, brash, and angry, instead of the happy, caring big sister that I had been before those school years

My parents made the decision to bring us home at the end of 1998. They had seen my brother and me change dramatically into children who were unhappy. They found a course called Australian Christian

Academy (now called Australian Christian College) which had previously been recommended to them back in 1991.

This course is a completely registered course, now with a recognised year 10 and 12 certificate. It has all the core subjects, as well as many electives, set out in a sequential order, with a Scope and Sequence chart so that you, as a parent/supervisor, can follow along and see where your child is up to.

One aspect I especially like about this course is how flexible it is. It can be tailored to suit any child's needs. If they're ambitious and quick minded, they can plow ahead as fast as they like! Or if they're struggling to understand certain concepts or have learning difficulties, they can take it one step at a time and not feel that they are inferior because they can't keep up with other children. It can also be changed to fit the child's learning style. If the children are more kinaesthetic, then they can do more activities rather than having to sit at a desk and feel constrained. Or if the child prefers aural learning, he/she is free to read aloud the texts from his study books.

Another aspect that I think is particularly excellent is the high level of achievement expected in the testing system. No less than 80% will be accepted per exam. This encourages children to aim high because they know what the expectations are, but this does not worry them because they know that they do not have to keep up with the rest of the class and can take enough time to ensure that they properly understand the concepts being taught.

Due to the approach of the curriculum, it also helps to teach self-motivation. Each text book, or PACEs as they are called, is laid out in a self teach manner, so that the child can learn to teach himself to understand, but can still seek help if he does not.

I know that one question people often ask "But...what about socialisation?". Our family never seemed to struggle with this. We participated regularly in dance classes and concerts for 10 years, and I have been around and/or learning music for as long as I can remember (I achieved my 8th Grade AMEB Piano exam with a B+). We also met regularly with family friends and often invited new families around for dinner.

I believe that not being constantly around a group of children my same age enabled me to improve at relating to people of all ages, from caring for infants to conversing with adults, I had experience in this from a young age.

Being homeschooled has also given me a very close relationship with my family, merely from actually being around them for most of the day. As cheesy as it may sound, we are each other's best friend. No one knows us like each other does.

As far as University goes, the transition was overall smooth. Yes, it was a slightly different environment than I was used to, but the social skills and self-motivation and time management skills I had learnt served me well in adapting to a new learning environment and in staying on top of the course work.

I met many new people and heard many different experiences with education from both state/private schoolers and homeschoolers.

Where am I now?

I am two years out of Uni, working as a private music tutor and happily married to another homeschool graduate, who just happened to complete the same curriculum as I did. We can't wait until our children are old enough to being formal learning and are planning to homeschool them just as we were, if it is at

all possible.

I believe some of the positive effects from homeschooling, for me personally, were the ability to be able to learn at my own pace (with encouragement to always try my hardest) and the love, nurturing environment, discipline and guidance that my parents were able to give me as a result of being at home with them, rather than in a classroom with teachers and peers who did not really know me. It has given me great friendships with all seven of my family members.

It enabled me to pursue several interest in the area of dance and music, as well as reading anything and everything I could get my hands on .

The system that my family used (and still uses for my younger siblings) taught self-motivation and time management, was flexible and enabled our family to tailor it to what would best suit our needs, rather than a one size fits all approach.

It encouraged my parents to become involved and take responsibility for their children's education and development. As well as learning good, solid character traits from the curriculum and the constant presence of parents and mentors for guidance.

I was well prepared for Uni and ever better prepared for life, because I had been around real life every day.

I'm sure that the school system can and has worked well for people and although it may fit some children/people it definitely does not fit all, and in my family's case, did more harm than good. I believe that education should be done in a way that does not just expect children to conform to be like everyone else, but rather to have the freedom to find their own interests and passions and pursue them within a structured environment which gives them the tools to do so.

Thank you very much for taking time to read this.

Kind Regards,

Emily Ventura