

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

NSW Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Home Schooling

As the parent of two registered homeschooled children, I would like to make a submission to the Committee regarding:

- (a) the background of home schooling and comparison of practices with other jurisdictions;

I would like to point out the success of the Victorian model in requiring the parents to take **full responsibility** for the education of their homeschooled children and the few cases where “abuse” was an issue - in spite of the absence of the State monitoring the progress of the home educated child. There also the excellent insightful study done by Harding and Farrell from QUT. Copy included.

- (b) the current context of home schooling in New South Wales including:

- (i) outcomes of home schooling including in relation to transition to further study and work; We are aware of homeschooled students, that, having completed their secondary education material by age 16, had been interviewed-and-accepted for university studies in medicine. This was a few years ago. I often find homeschooled children as “better-equipped” for adult life – ready to accept responsibility – than their age-peers.

Feedback from adults regarding my two children (and their homeschooled friends) has consistently confirmed that they are more socially adept, confident in conversing with adults (their ultimate work environment), quick to understand, inquisitive and more mindful of outcomes/objectives than children who have been “schooled” with other children.

- (ii) Financial costs;

these can be significant. The most obvious is loss of income from a second full-time or part-time wage that is negated by the parent’s decision to home school. The issue of inequity is often raised in discussions with other parents: taxes are paid **by the family** to support an education system, but the family receives **next to no financial support** from the state in educating their own children.

If the state is requiring a certain syllabus be taught, then **a minimum** equitable compensation is that the state should similarly fund the costs of the child’s education to the parents – either in-kind, or at least in the form of a “refund” arrangement - for course material/external tuition (music/excursions etc)!

(iii) demographics and motivation of parents to home school their children; many of my contacts say they believe that it is not the state's role to require or to stipulate the education material of their children – and that they are educating their children due to religious or ideological conviction. Many have children with “special needs”. Religious conviction surrounds the no-negotiable commands (given by God, from scriptures, to parents) in Deuteronomy 6. It is my understanding that this makes parents who take their responsibility seriously “prisoners of conscience” regarding their children's education. It is my own view that I would rather have a clear conscience before God than either defer to The State or ignore this specific instruction – when I know that the state will be working to undermine the work I am to be held accountable for - and that scripture supersedes all legislation.

Discussions have even touched on families moving states – even closing down businesses and “changing careers” – depending upon the outcome of this Inquiry.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers; the more dominant reasons discussed by unregistered home school parents include the distrust of the state to refrain from coercive/invasive practices, as well as the requiring of certain syllabus/texts be taught. As above, some families have discussed moving states – even closing down businesses and “changing careers” - to avoid government involvement in their personal/family affairs.

(v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children; many have “special needs” – ADHD or learning challenges (eg. Downs syndrome) that the parents would rather not out-source to others. Some are especially bright – years ahead of their age-peers. Others have a “creative” or trade/practical-focused child that will not prosper in the standard “intellectual” teaching environment.

(vi) comparison of home schooling to school education including distance education, See (b)(i) above. Most material we use is imported from the USA. Much of it is excellent. We would use more, if costs were not so high. A selection of many syllabus types are available, suiting a wide range of learning styles.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

(i) current registration processes and ways of reducing the number of unregistered home schoolers; rather than being coercive, a financial incentive to register – along with a “light-touch” registration regime - similar to Victoria (as mentioned in (a)) – would remove much of the distrust of The State in involvement in the lives of homeschooling families.

(ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons; or whether AP’s should be required at all – or not. Feedback to the department heads (not middle-management) should be sought from each family on an ongoing basis as to the relationship and helpfulness of the AP, who’s role it should be to facilitate and assist – rather than to “police” - homeschooling families. Objections to either manner/attitude of AP should have a “3-strikes-and-you’re –out” approach. An AP who is offensive or unhelpful to home schooling families is entirely unsuited to the role.

(iii) adherence to delivery of the New South Wales Syllabuses; as discussed in (a), I and others, including the likes of [John Gatto](#), are unconvinced that there is any one correct syllabus for each-and-every student - given different learning styles and that the strengths-and-weaknesses of each-and-every individual child cannot possibly be catered for in the standard classroom environment. Those children who “don’t fit” (square peg, round hole) only contribute to the vast child delinquency problems - leading to adult social dislocation. Although not solely responsible for this, an inflexible education system leads to this for the few who “do not fit the model” - contributing to this problem.

(iv) potential benefits or impediments to children’s safety, welfare and wellbeing; I would think that those who know and love their child are better suited to educate their child than a “one-size-fits-all” education system – no matter how well-trained the teacher– especially given the parent is willing to bear the burden (both time, and money – see (b)(ii)) of homeschooling the child the parents have raised.

(vi) appropriateness of the current regulatory regime and ways in which it could be improved; See (a) above -, especially given the renewed ongoing engagement of parents and homeschooling community following the implementation of the present regulatory framework/registration regime. Given the cost (to the state) involving the education of each child, there is an annual savings amounting to several millions-of-dollars (\$3,000-7,000 per child) to the state each year. One would suggest that, on a cost-basis alone, the state would want to encourage homeschooling!!

- (d) support issues for home schooling families and barriers to accessing support,
Some units of study (experimental sciences, trade-based-learning has limited options available to the home schooler unless the father is also a tradesman. It may prove beneficial if homeschoolers were able to benefit from these facilities in local high-schools. The HEA response (included) from Ryan Park(?) addresses many of these issues.
- (e) representation of home schoolers within Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BoSTES);
See (c)(i) & (c)(ii) above. A set syllabus is counter-productive to meeting the needs of students that do not “fit-the-model” who are preparing for [careers in the new millennia](#). Most do. Some do not. The Victorian model has been successful in “engaging” the home school community, gaining participation and permitting flexibility where students (and families) do not “fit” the standard education system “model”. A variation of that may assist in attracting those who choose not to register.
And
- (f) any other related matter.
These are the ‘quick-and-dirty’. This really needs a “working committee” - where families can be represented and issues dealt with.

There are too many issues/details and too little time.

Next: submissions to the Financial System Inquiry.
Bye-for-now,