

**Submission
No 110**

INQUIRY INTO HOME SCHOOLING

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 8/08/2014

Partially Confidential

Legislative Council Home Schooling Inquiry

We are a home educating family and would like to address some of the terms of reference of the inquiry into home schooling.

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

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

own a large successful company with a turnover of more than \$25 million, over 150 employees and head quarters in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from McGill University. works full time in his capacity as Managing Director of our company while is currently the primary carer of the children.

We did not intend to home educate our children and only came to do so after our negative experience of preschool for our eldest son. He attended a preschool where he was also enrolled to begin kindergarten. Our son experienced bullying which despite months of meetings and discussions was unable to be resolved by the school. On top of not being able to protect our child from the bullying the school was unable to adequately support our sons special needs - he has a sensory processing disorder and also suffers from anxiety. We attempted to make school work for our son for over 18 months before deciding finally to pull him out and to home school him.

(ii) financial costs

While we had previously made a commitment to send our child to a private school, the money we have spent and continue to spend on his education far exceeds what we would have paid in private school fees. Beside the professional support mentioned below we spend money on many other aspects of our child's education from resources to weekly piano lessons, group activities including science classes, sport and physical education, language, art and music. We

employ a qualified tutor for 10 hours per week. We also pay for our son to attend a wide variety of one off workshops, concerts and performances.

(v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children

We have been home educating our son for the last four years with great success. We have been able to access professional support for our sons anxiety and learning difficulties and he has made remarkable progress. The professionals we have engaged for him over the years have all concluded that our sons educational needs at this time are best met in a home education environment and that mainstream schooling does not offer a learning environment that he would be able to succeed in. These professionals include a clinical psychologist, GP and pediatrician, audiologist, occupational therapist, music therapist and various qualified teachers and tutors.

We have several school teachers in our extended family and each of them has remarked that the support our son has needed and received is almost never available to children like him within the school system. Each has been impressed with our child's progress and feels strongly that they would be unable to adequately meet the needs of a child like ours in their own classrooms due to a large number of factors.

(i) outcomes of home schooling including in relation to transition to further study and work

Despite us initially being lead to home education due to the school system not being able to meet the needs of our child we find ourselves thoroughly enjoying the experience and the lifestyle choices that it allows. We get immense joy from being so deeply engaged with our children's learning. We love how much time

we can spend together as a family. Our three children are able to spend quality time together and not be separated for 6 hours a day, 5 days per week.

By not being constricted by the timetable of a regular school day we feel like we're able to successfully step away from the rat race and enjoy a better quality of life. We can schedule our activities and classes around avoiding peak hour traffic for instance!

With our business being such an integral part of our lives it's important to us that the children feel connected to all that we are doing as a company and our flexible timetable allows for this to take place in a natural way.

As we often travel overseas for business we are able to include our children on some of these trips and offer them life experiences that enhance their education. We enjoy the flexibility homeschooling allows us when it comes to travelling and not needing to seek approval from the school when we choose to do so. We feel quite literally that the world is our classroom and education can take place anytime, anywhere. We access a large variety of resources, many online, making it easy to take them with us. We don't think of our children's education as only taking place between the hours of 9am and 3pm or bundled into 10 week terms.

Our sons mental health has improved immensely and in many ways he is like a different child from the very stressed and unhappy young boy he was while attending school. He has been able to achieve academically and has developed a natural curiosity and love of learning that was not possible in a classroom environment. Family members and friends who have known him for a long time often comment on the difference in him.

(iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers,

We have not registered for home education and the reasons are many. In part it is because we have heard from other homeschooling families how time

consuming and stressful the process can be. Many of our homeschooling friends have had negative experiences with an AP. It appears to us there's a lot of jumping through hoops required in order to satisfy the APs and the Board of Studies. The Information Package is not very helpful in preparing for registration. We have 3 children age 1 to 8 and are busy meeting their needs – educational and otherwise - and running our very busy business. We're too busy to bother with the registration process!

Another reason for electing not to register is more philosophical. We feel as parents that it is our intrinsic right to decide exactly how our children are educated and the default shouldn't be that we are required to seek permission to *not* outsource our children's educations to an institution.

(c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:

(iv) potential benefits or impediments to children's safety, welfare and wellbeing

Our child was suffering mentally and physically whilst attending school. Home education has allowed us to protect his wellbeing.

(vi) appropriateness of the current regulatory regime and ways in which it could be improved

We would like to see the registration process in New South Wales altered to more closely resemble the process in places like Victoria and Tasmania.

(d) support issues for home schooling families and barriers to accessing support,

We would like to see home educators given access to Educational Support Services, which are currently available to those in the school system such as access to the hospital school, travel passes, TAFE, TvET courses, part-time schooling, school libraries etc.

(f) any other related matter.

There's a recurring sentiment that I hear expressed in the media that only qualified teachers are capable of teaching children and homeschooling parents lack the ability to successfully teach their children. This notion is flawed in that it assumes that parents who are home educating their children are the only ones 'teaching' the content. For our family and all of the home schooling families we know this simply is not the case.

While we do play a teaching role when it comes to home educating our children we predominately see ourselves as facilitators. For instance in our family while both parents have some music ability neither of us feel equipped to teach our children how to play an instrument so we pay for a qualified piano teacher to give them tuition. We outsource the teaching of Spanish to a qualified language tutor. They learn soccer from a soccer coach, attend science classes run by scientists, participate in music therapy classes taught by a music therapist. Our children have attended courses at museums and universities covering topics as diverse as Ancient Egyptians and coral reefs, each taught by professionals in their field.