

24/10/13

HOME SCHOOLING INFORMATION PACK

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The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: On 19 September 2013 Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile asked me a question regarding a home schooling information pack. The Minister for Education has provided the following response:

(1-4) The Office of the Board of Studies [the office] is responsible for administering the provisions of the Education Act 1990 [the Act] for home schooling registration. The requirements and processes for registration are described in the office's Registration for Home Schooling in NSW—Information Package [the information package] as published on the Board of Studies' website. Applications for home schooling are assessed by authorised persons appointed by the office under the Act.

From time to time, the information package is amended. Previous amendments have reflected the increased school leaving age and the introduction of registration for years of schooling. The most recently updated information package was published on the Board of Studies' website in August 2013.

The main reason for updating the information package was to provide information about the staged implementation of new Kindergarten to year 10 board syllabuses in English, mathematics, science and history from 2014 to reflect the Australian curriculum.

All children in New South Wales have to follow an educational program based on the board's syllabuses in force at any given time regardless of whether they are in school or being home schooled.

The updated information package also responds to requests from parents for clarification and more explicit information about the requirements and processes for home schooling registration.

The updated information package also has regard to suggestions made by the NSW Ombudsman to improve the openness and transparency of the registration process and to raise awareness of home schooling applicants of the way in which home schooling is monitored in New South Wales.

The clarified and explicit information has not changed the requirements for home schooling registration.

(5) Extensive and open consultation was conducted during the development of the new syllabuses. Information about the development and publication of the syllabuses has been available on the board's website for more than a year. In August and November 2012 the peak body for home schoolers, the Home Education Network, provided information for families about the development and publication of the new syllabuses. The office's authorised persons have been discussing the new board syllabuses with home schooling families for more than a year.

In July and September 2013 board officers met with the Home Education Association to discuss the updated information package and other relevant issues. In September board officers also met with the Sydney Home Education Network [SHEN], another peak body in New South Wales. Further meetings with these peak bodies are planned. The office continues to be open to consideration of matters raised by the Home Education Association, Sydney Home Education Network and other home schoolers.

The office is aware that there are differing views about the updated information package within the home schooling community.

The office has published additional information on the home schooling page of the board's website in the form of questions and answers in response to issues raised in correspondence and on social media to explain areas that may be unclear and to clarify any misunderstandings. The link to the home schooling page follows: <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/parents/home-schooling.html>

For home schooling families who were meeting the requirements for registration prior to the publication of the updated information package, the updated information package has not created a need to change the approach to home schooling; nor has it created less flexibility; nor has it made it harder to be registered.

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On 13 November 2013 the Hon. Paul Green asked Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services and Minister for the Illawarra, representing the Minister for Education, a question without notice about home schooling. The Minister for Education provided the following response:

This research proposal has been approved as part of the Research and Development Program developed by the Office of the Board of Studies ["the office"] for 2013-14.

The terms of reference for this research are still in development and are not expected to be finalised until early in 2014. At this stage, the duration and timing of the period required to conduct this research has not been finalised.

The Ombudsman's suggested improvements to the office's administration of the home schooling program included that the office:

- (a) review how it could better ensure that the requirements for registration are complied with during the period of registration, particularly in relation to the quality of home schooling instruction and that the courses of study being delivered continue to meet the learning needs of the child;
- (b) review its requirements with a view to applicants providing more information in relation to the child's previous educational history, attainment and experience;
- (c) collect data about whether applicants were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds;
- (d) obtain better information about the reasons for applications for home schooling;
- (e) liaise with the Department of Education and Communities in the event that the decision to home school is the result of dissatisfaction or other difficulties associated with the child's current school.

The office responded by updating the Registration for Home Schooling in NSW Information

Package to improve the openness and transparency of the registration process to reflect these suggestions.

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On 27 March 2014 the Hon. Paul Green asked the Minister for Disability Services, representing the Minister for Education, a question without notice regarding home schooling. The Minister for Education provided the following response:

In 2010-11, the number of withdrawn and refused applications for home schooling registration were 169 and eight, respectively. In 2012-13, the number of withdrawn and refused applications for home schooling registration were 335 and 43, respectively.

The reasons for refusing the applications were: an Authorised Person finding that the requirements for registration were not met; the provisions of a court order precluded home schooling; the unavailability of the applicant for an assessment of the application to be conducted; or, the child was ineligible, for example the child was not of compulsory school age.

Applicants are not required to provide a reason for withdrawing an application for home schooling registration.

In 2010-11, the number of registration periods of three and six months were seven and 99, respectively. In 2012-13, the number of registration periods of three and six months were 49 and 242, respectively.

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On 20 March 2014 Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile asked the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, representing the Minister for Education, a question without notice regarding home schooling. The Minister for Education provided the following response:

The research will explore the academic attainment of students who have been home schooled compared to students attending school. In particular, the research will include:

1. A literature review of existing research on academic outcomes of home schooled students, both in Australia and overseas.
2. Achievement of home schooled students in NAPLAN tests.
3. Participation, completion and achievement of students who were previously home schooled and subsequently attended school, including (where applicable) NAPLAN tests, Record of School Achievement and Higher School Certificate.
4. If available, university entrance information for home schooled students.