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NSW Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Home Schooling HEA Guide to the process and making a submission

On May 28, 2014 the Legislative Council of the NSW Parliament announced that a Select Committee would be convened to look at the issue of home schooling in NSW. What does this mean? What is going to happen? How can home educators be involved? This document aims to answer these questions.

What is a Select Committee Inquiry?

The NSW Parliament website states that, "Parliamentary committees inquire into issues that are important to the people of New South Wales. Parliamentary committees are appointed by one or both Houses and are made up of members of Parliament. Committees increase public awareness and debate on issues under consideration by Parliament. They benefit the community by reviewing proposed laws, facilitating more informed policy-making and ensuring greater government accountability...They provide a forum for the public to have their say on issues before the Parliament. Committees report their findings and recommendations for government action to the Parliament."

A Select Committee is appointed to investigate a particular issue, in this case "home schooling." The Committee consists of members from different political parties. The Home Schooling Committee contains three members from the Government (David Clarke- Lib, Catherine Cusack Lib, Trevor Khan-Nat), two members of the Opposition (Adam Searle, Helen Westwood) and two from the cross benches (Paul Green-Christian Democratic Party, John Kaye- Greens). Paul Green is the Chair of the Committee and John Kaye is the Deputy Chair.

How does the Committee work?

Committees use public submissions and public hearings to gather evidence. The Inquiry has already called for public submissions to be made to it. Individual members of the public as well as organisations will make written submissions to the Inquiry. Submissions are required to address the terms of reference. Individuals can choose to address any or all of the points of the terms of reference. Issues that are outside of the terms of reference will be discounted by the committee. Submissions are published on the Committee website but a request can be made for a submission to be kept confidential. It is up to the discretion of the Committee whether they agree to make a submission confidential. While it is not possible for submissions that are sent anonymously to be accepted, anonymous submissions can be made via a 3rd party. Thus, individuals who wish to remain anonymous can ask someone else to send in their submission for them. This other person could be another home educator or a friend in NSW or from elsewhere in Australia.

The terms of reference of the Inquiry into Home schooling are to inquire into and report on home schooling in New South Wales, and in particular:

- (a) the background of home schooling including comparison of practices with other jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand,
- (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,
- (ii) financial costs,
- (iii) demographics and motivation of parents to home school their children,
- (iv) extent of and reasons for unregistered home schoolers,
- (v) characteristics and educational needs of home schooled children,
- (vi) comparison of home schooling to school education including distance education,
- (c) regulatory framework for home schooling including:
 - (i) current registration processes and ways of reducing the number of unregistered home schoolers,
 - (ii) training, qualifications and experience of authorised persons,
 - (iii) adherence to delivery of the New South Wales Syllabuses,
 - (iv) potential benefits or impediments to children's safety, welfare and wellbeing,
 - (vi) appropriateness of the current regulatory regime and ways in which it could be improved,
- (d) support issues for home schooling families and barriers to accessing support,
- (e) representation of home schoolers within Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BoSTES), and
- (f) any other related matter.

The Committee will invite some individuals and organisations to give evidence at public hearings. At a public hearing the Committee will ask questions directly of those giving evidence.

What happens after evidence is collected?

After the Committee has finished the collection of evidence they will write a report of the Inquiry. The report will contain a number of recommendations. There is no requirement that the government implement any of the recommendations of the report. However, recommendations hold some weight and are often implemented, especially if the government is lobbied to do so.

What can home educators do?

The HEA would encourage home educators to make submissions to the inquiry. Submissions should address some or all of the terms of reference and may include: facts, opinions, arguments, recommendations for action. The HEA has resources to help individuals who wish to make a submission. The HEA will need assistance in preparing their submission and offers of help in putting this together will be greatly appreciated. Continuing contact between home educators and their elected members of Parliament will assist in getting favourable recommendations implemented.

Other Resources

The inquiry web page can be found at

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/homeschooling?open&refnavid=C04_1

Previous inquiries and reports can be found at

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/V3ListInquiries?open&vw=v3currentinquiriesbydatebyhouse&vwCat=Legislative+Council&refnavid=LC5>

Legislative Council guide to making a submission

[http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/web/common.nsf/key/CommitteesLCSubmissionsHowToGuides/\\$file/Making+a+submission+brochure.pdf](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/web/common.nsf/key/CommitteesLCSubmissionsHowToGuides/$file/Making+a+submission+brochure.pdf)

Radio National Program on how to make the most of an inquiry

http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2013/09/bia_20130918_2005.mp3