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HOME EDUCATION ASSOCIATION,

Version 20190822

Minutes Approved: 3/9/2019

Support for NSW Home Schooling Applicants

To apply for registration for homeschooling in NSW, NESA provides information [on this page of their website](#).

The basic steps involved are

1. Fill in the [Application form for Initial Registration](#) or the [Application for Renewal of Registration](#) and email or post.
2. An acknowledgement letter may arrive in the post, and/or the Authorised Person (AP) will phone to make an appointment, generally within a week or so of application, or it can take longer. You can contact the NESA Homeschooling Unit on
Phone: +61 2 9367 8149
Email: homeschooling@nesa.nsw.edu.au
3. Prepare for the visit - you will need a plan linked to the NSW Syllabus, a system of record keeping, and resources to show the AP. Having a supporter is strongly recommended. For more detail see below, **The Registration Visit**
4. If your child is not able to attend school, for example if they are experiencing anxiety or trauma, removing them immediately may be advised. A GP may provide a certificate until registration is approved. See below

The Registration Process need not be onerous, but the information provided by NESA can be confusing. The Home Education Association (HEA) www.hea.edu.au encourages all applicants, whether for initial registration or reregistration, to have an experienced registered home educator provide support, by looking over their documentation, and sitting in with them at the visit.

If you have a local home educating friend, ask if they would be able to look over your programme, and provide support at your visit; you can ask the AP to come on a day and time that suits you all (it is even possible to change a meeting after the AP has made it).

Just by being there, a support person will enhance your confidence, which makes a huge difference in how you are perceived by Authorised Persons. Having an experienced, registered home educator means they have been through the process before, and that they understand how home education works. The HEA also has a document "*Support for Supporters*", especially to provide supporters with information to prepare them to sit in on another person's registration visit. APs are becoming used to



home education applicants having a support person, and are generally friendly - seeing the fact you have support as a positive thing in assisting you to provide the best education for your child/ren.

If you can't find a suitable person, the HEA can help you find a supporter. To contact HEA, email the Committee at contact@hea.edu.au, or call the HEA Helpline to speak with an experienced home educator. Phone: 1300 72 99 91

Another document is also available with information about Family Law issues and homeschooling, including links to a recent case. For a copy of this document, email contact@hea.edu.au.

The Registration Visit

The following ideas may assist you in making the visit run as well as it can.

1. Don't stress; you are your child's best teacher, and your responsibility to provide for their education is enshrined in the law -
"EDUCATION ACT 1990
s.4 Principles on which this Act is based
(b) the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents,

s.5 Principal objects of this Act
(d) to allow children to be educated at home"
2. Don't over-prepare - it's possible to create vast quantities of paperwork in the desire to impress the AP, that is not actual of any value to you. Not only is it possible to get a maximum registration period with minimal paperwork, but it's good just to meet the requirements. It is even possible to have, as in a recent case, a plan 48 pages long which still didn't meet the requirements.
3. Be prepared, and organised early, to feel settled, and have everything ready. If possible, have an experienced registered home educator look over your documents prior to the visit, so you can feel confident that what you have is sufficient. They may be able to identify areas that the AP will want further information on or may see as a weakness, and you can work out with them how best to address this.
4. Don't be afraid! For example, if the AP says that only written work provides evidence of delivery of education in a subject or that written assessments are necessary you can tell them that this is not so. You can say that it is recognised that hands-on learning and discussion are both good ways of learning and that photographs, diary entries, theatre tickets, library records etc are all acceptable proofs of delivery of learning and that one on one conversation is noted by NESA as an excellent method of assessment.
5. Sometimes APs will make suggestions that they may genuinely believe are helpful, but may in practice be onerous and unnecessary; for example that you keep a daily diary of activities or use the outcomes of the syllabuses in planning, recording and assessing. You may hear this as a directive (and indeed some APs will direct applicants to do these things), but such suggestions/directives are not compulsory and you should only do these things if you find them helpful; there are an endless variety of ways to go about home educating and APs cannot tell applicants which way to choose.

6. Some people are anxious that they haven't done what was in the last plan they showed the AP. Assure them that they have no need to worry – the AP doesn't keep a copy of the plan to check back with, and in any case, altering the plan according to the needs of the child is very important.

At a registration visit the AP may want to see these things

– **records of the child's previous educational history and attainment**

If the child was previously at school, a school report or NAPLAN results will show this. If the child has never been at school, nothing is needed. If the child is older than 6 years and has not previously been registered for home education or was previously registered, samples of work and/or a brief description of where the child is up to in each subject may be provided in lieu, but registration is regularly approved without any records of previous educational history.

N.B. Don't worry about this - whatever was going on for your child previously will not have an impact on the outcome of the registration visit.

– **an educational program based on the relevant NESA syllabuses**

There are a number of ways to show that the education program is based on the NSW syllabuses. Many families have found that the easiest way to do this is to use the Stage Statements of the syllabuses as a base. Stage statements are a brief plain-English description of each subject or 'Key Learning Area' (KLA) for each stage of the syllabuses.

There are also other ways of linking to the Syllabus. Outcomes and Objectives may also be used, and are particularly useful when registering for Stage 6, as the Syllabus documents for Stage 6 do not include Stage Statements.

N.B. If at the visit the AP suggests that as your child will move onto the next Stage next year, you should only get six months, you ought to say that you are going to spend as long as necessary consolidating your daughter's understanding of the concepts covered in the current Stage, even up to 12 months, and then you will move onto the next Stage as appropriate. It is part of your responsibility as a homeschooling parent to adjust the program to meet the student's needs.

The HEA also provides a Registration Pack, including plenty of ideas to help you create a plan linked to the NSW Syllabus, which you can tailor to suit your family. The HEA Registration Pack (NSW) is available free for members. Join HEA at <http://www.hea.edu.au/members/membership-options/new-members/> . The Registration Pack contains some sample plans.

If you would like to be shown a sample plan for your child's Stage, please email the Committee contact@hea.edu.au and state which Stage you are interested in.

In the sample plans, the first page (under the name of the Key Learning Area, or subject) is the Stage Statement, reprinted from the syllabus. Cutting and pasting the Stage Statement for each KLA, and then describing how you intend to cover this, creates a broad educational plan and makes it easy for APs to see how the plan is based upon the syllabus.

The Stage Statements and Outcomes for each Stage (Stages 1 - 5) are available on the Homeschooling page of the NESA website -

[Stage Statements and Outcomes Programming Tool](#)



-records of the time allocated to student learning?

Some APs ask home educators to show them a timetable showing the time allocated for each subject. APs who request a timetable appear to want to see one so they can see if the home educator is going to spend what they think is enough time on each subject and some want to home educators to be spending time 'comparable to the time allocated by schools' on subjects. However, home educators are not required to spend their time in the same way as schools do. Rather they can spend the amount of time appropriate for their child's needs and interests.

According to the Education Act,

"Any syllabus developed or endorsed by the Board for a particular course of study may indicate generally the period of time that should be allocated to the teaching of the course, but is not to make a specific period of time mandatory" Section 14(4).

APs who insist that similar time to schools must be spent on subjects can be reminded of this section of the legislation. They can also be reminded that APs have been directed by the NES Home Schooling Unit not to ask for a timetable. Many home educators have found that using the following sentence in their plans helps prevent issues with APs about the time spent home educating, *"The time allocated to education will incorporate all the time every day from morning until evening, to allow students to complete the work, and will be sufficient to allow coverage of the curriculum proposed above, and further studies."*

- a method for recording learning activities

There are many ways of recording learning activities. Keeping samples of work, a diary, photos of activities, library borrowing records, lists of documentaries watched, tickets to events, theatre programs etc are all ways of keeping records. Many families do a combination of these. Some families write blogs and use these as record keeping. The important thing with record keeping is that it should not be onerous for the home educator. Some APs will attempt to insist that a daily diary of learning activities must be kept. This is not the case and if an AP insists that this is so he or she should be directed to the NES Home Schooling Unit for further information.

- a method for recording student achievement and progress

There is not a requirement to provide evidence that children have made particular achievements or progress, or that they are meeting Outcomes for their Stage or Year level, or that for which they were registered. Parents are only required to make their own personal assessments and adjust the educational opportunities provided, so that they are appropriate to the needs of the child.

There are many ways of assessing the work that children have undertaken. A few families like to use tests like NAPLAN but most use ongoing assessment as they observe and interact with their children. Some APs tell families that formal testing must be done but this is not necessary.

The following sentences have been used to help APs to be comfortable with ongoing assessment, *"Records of work and progress will be kept, by both informal and formal methods. By observing and discussing work, I will be able to assess my child's ability to understand the work, identify areas which may need greater attention, and adjust work accordingly, in order to best meet educational needs. Photographs of activities and samples of work will be used as a method of recording."*

– sufficient resources and a suitable learning environment

Resources can include books, television/computer, the kitchen, your backyard (including trampoline, vege garden, chicken coop etc), the local home education network, friends with expertise in particular subjects etc. It is not necessary that children have a special school desk or work area. Have on show resources to be used and list other resources in the planning document along with learning experiences/activities. The HEA website has a list of educational subscriptions with discounts available to members, and also free resources - [HEA Educational Discounts and Resources](#).

OTHER ISSUES

My child is not attending school/needs to be removed promptly from school - Your responsibility is to your child, to ensure they are safe. If your child is experiencing anxiety or trauma due to the school environment, removing them immediately may be advised. A GP may provide a certificate until registration is approved. In any case, there are no 'spot fines' and once the registration form is submitted the visit should occur within a couple of weeks. It is possible to call NESAs and ask for the visit to be arranged to occur as soon as possible.

Registering for a particular 'Year of Schooling' – It is not necessary for children to be registered for a particular year of schooling. Registering for “primary”, or “secondary”, or “primary/secondary” can give more scope for children to work at different levels (according to other children of their age, or different levels for different subjects).

Short Registration Periods – in the last few years there have been many families given short registration periods (less than the maximum registration periods - 12 months for initial and 2 years for subsequent registrations), which has been a real problem for some families (particularly those whose children have been traumatised at school) . It is extremely stressful to have registration visits close together. If this occurs, ask the AP what the reason is for giving a short registration period. They ought to provide a clear reason - not “we generally give six months to see how you are going”. It is possibly better to be rejected than to be given a short registration period because a rejection can be appealed (and many individuals get the maximum registration period on appeal without another registration visit). Short registration periods are a problem because every AP visit involves weeks of stress in the lead up, and it is far better to have as long as possible between AP visits, so we can get on with the actual home educating! Short registration periods cannot be appealed.

Withdrawal or Rejection of Application - If, in the worst-case scenario, the AP doesn't want to recommend registration at all, the AP may suggest that the family withdraw their application. However, a rejection is better than withdrawing the application because a rejection can be appealed.

Work required to be done by child – Occasionally the AP will say that, “unless a child does more written work they won't be able to be re-registered”. This statement cannot be sustained as there is no requirement for work to be written in the NSW syllabuses and to require so may be considered disability discrimination for children who have language differences (such as dyslexia). It also is in direct contradiction of the Education Act S74(2) which states that registration cannot be cancelled even if a child doesn't do any work if this is because they are sick or just refuse to do work.

“The Minister may not cancel the registration of a child for home schooling under subsection (1) (a) if:

- (a) the child was prevented from receiving instruction by sickness, permanent or temporary incapacity or some accident or unforeseen event, or
- (b) the child has not received instruction for only 3 school days or less in any period of 3 months during which the child has been registered for home schooling, or
- (c) any failure to ensure that the child received instruction was a result of the child's disobedience and was not due to the default of the parent."

Registration outside compulsory school ages – Registration of children under the age of 6, and over the age of 17, up to almost 20 (as long as the application is made before the student's 18th birthday), is now an option, although it is not required. It may be helpful to do this for a variety of reasons, including claiming [Assistance for Isolated Children](#) funding from Centrelink (for children who are unable to attend school due to medical reasons or geographical isolation), student travel concessions for children aged over 17, etc.

Assistance for Isolated Children funding from Centrelink - is available for children who are unable to attend school due to medical reasons, including anxiety or school refusal. If your child is likely to miss 20 or more days of school due to medical issues, then download the form from the Centrelink website, and take it to your GP or other health professional. They will need to state the number of days likely to be missed, the medical reason (note: 'anxiety' is a medical reason, but 'bullying' is not) [Assistance for Isolated Children](#)

TAFE - TAFE courses may be included as part of the learning plan for home educated Students over the age of 15. Smart and Skilled funding for TAFE courses is now available for home educated students. When enrolling for TAFE, the best course of action is simply to take the attitude that your student has every right to be there, rather than asking if the provider accepts home educated students. The following factsheet contains the information about eligibility of home educated students [Smart and Skilled Factsheet](#)

The HEA also has information available about 'Pathways to Further Education for Home Educated Students'

Note: If you experience any issues with TAFE enrolment for registered home educated students, email contact@hea.edu.au - there is a contact number available for TAFE enrolment issues.

Will the AP be more likely to approve me if I purchasing a 'Complete Curriculum'? The short answer to this question is 'no'. You need to have a plan, linked to the NSW Syllabus, and resources. Whatever books or online programs you provide - library books, purchased books (including textbooks and workbooks, whether 'syllabus-linked' or not, and general books), online programs, or entire all-in-one curriculums - are still just resources. Many parents are registered for maximum registration periods without purchasing a 'Complete Curriculum'. Many of those who spend money 'in order to make the AP happy', later regret having spent money on resources that are not a good fit for their child/family.

Complaints - The AP handbook now includes a complaints process, which can be used to address issues such as short registration periods. If you would like assistance to lodge a complaint, please contact HEA contact@hea.edu.au.

[Authorised Person's Handbook](#)



“From time to time, issues or circumstances may arise in the home schooling program that may lead to a person and/or an organisation with a legitimate interest in the issue to lodge a complaint.

Complaints can be made to NESA at any time. An individual or organisation may contact NESA for advice on how to raise an issue or proceed with a complaint. Complaints must be made in writing and include details of:

- *the name, address and contact details of the individual(s) or organisation making the complaint*
- *the individual(s) against whom the complaint is being made*
- *how the complaint relates to the requirements for registration for home schooling as detailed in the Guidelines*
- *the substance and basis of the complaint,*
- *a description of the issue or matter to which the complaint relates*
- *an account of any action already taken in relation to the complaint, if relevant.*

Complaints should be directed to the Director, School Registration and Accreditation Standards. NESA will deal with complaints relating to home schooling registration according to the relevant policies of NESA.”