

Queensland Home Education Unit Review

A stakeholder-informed review of Queensland's approach to regulating home education



Final Report

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Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit

Acknowledgement of Country

The Review acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands, seas, skies and waterways from across Queensland. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, for they hold the memories, traditions, the culture and the hopes of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state.

We recognise Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first educators on this land and know that connections to culture enrich the learning of every child and young person and strengthen all of our work.

Acknowledgement of families engaged in home education

We extend our sincere appreciation to all the families who are actively engaged in home education. Your dedication to providing a unique, personalised learning environment for your children is recognised and valued. Throughout this review, we have heard your voices and understand the diverse reasons that lead families to choose home education.

We acknowledge the commitment, effort, and care that you bring to this important educational choice. Your insights and experiences have been invaluable in shaping the findings and recommendations of this review..

Foreword and acknowledgements

Home education in Queensland has a rich history. Leading the Review into the role of the Home Education Unit (HEU), and exploring how existing regulatory services can be improved and parents supported so that children and young people can access a high-quality education, has been a privilege.

I have travelled across the state meeting with individuals and local home education networks and co-ops to hear the stories from families and children. A heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you. The obvious honesty, passion and commitment to your child's learning journey and your experiences with home education in Queensland, interstate and abroad, have provided fabulous insights into the opportunities for further enhancements and supports for Queensland families.

Targeted yet time-limited consultations inform the Review. I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to home educating parents, Home Education Expert Group (HEEG) members, Department of Education staff, external experts, peak bodies, community groups, organisations, and the Nous Group for their enthusiastic, collaborative involvement in the Review.

I would also like to acknowledge the Department's HEU for its continuous work in helping parents understand their regulatory obligations and in overseeing the extensive home education registration and reporting process. This Unit provides regulatory services to support over 11,000 home educated children and their families in Queensland.

A special thanks to Ms Kathleen Forrester, Deputy Director-General, Policy, Performance, International & Intergovernmental, who established a team devoted to assisting with the Review.

Ms Natalie Carrigan, Director Strategic Review and Ms Kerri Lewis, Director, along with Ms Amanda Drury, Ms Caroline Hollis, Ms Celeste Cathcart, Ms Kylie Corcoran, Ms Prue Bromley and Dr Renae Acton have supported consultation, research, analysis, and report development to capture and express stakeholder perspectives.

I would finally like to share my admiration for the families and children of the home education community. I commend your dedication and commitment to provide engaging and quality home education. *"Parents are a child's first and most important teacher."*



Deborah Dunstone
Independent Reviewer
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Executive Summary

Background and context

Primarily, the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit is a story of growth. Similar to other states in Australia, Queensland has experienced a marked growth trajectory in home education, with over 11,000 children currently registered. Although the pandemic certainly put a spotlight on what home education is and is not, this is not a story about COVID-19. Working from home with a teacher providing instruction, resources and assessment is very different from the responsibilities for and commitment to home educating, where the parent is responsible for designing and delivering a quality education to their child.

This rapid growth in a relatively short period of time has resulted in significant pressure for Queensland's Home Education Unit (HEU), which regulates home education, to meet demand. The commendations around the regulatory monitoring and vital support work of the Unit and the ongoing work it continues to undertake are reflected in this report. The report envisages a change in scope for the HEU to be able to deliver further regulatory assistance and supports that meet the needs of contemporary home educating families in Queensland.

The Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 (the 'Bill') was introduced into the Queensland Parliament in 2024, after a two-year legislative review process and Queensland Government approval, and sought legislative amendments to streamline and modernise regulation of home education in Queensland. Additionally, the legislative amendments sought to support the first stage of a response to the *Child Death Review Board Annual Report 2022-23*, which recommended legislative changes to strengthen oversight of children who are registered for home education in Queensland, with a focus on upholding the child's rights, best interests, safety and wellbeing at all stages of a child's home education registration. Due to stakeholder opposition to some proposed changes to the regulation of home education pursuant to the Bill, the provisions relating to home education were removed, a home education advisory group was established and a review began into the role of the Home Education Unit.

The subsequent stakeholder-informed review presented in this report explored possible improvements to existing regulatory services to better support parents in their endeavours to provide their children and young people with a high-quality education. The Terms of Reference¹ specified that attention be directed to the diverse experiences and needs of home educating parents and the gaps and improvement areas in the approach to regulation, education and support of home educators.

The perspectives, experiences, strengths and challenges presented in this report are informed by insights generated across four methods. These are: (a) *Desk-top research* of current regulatory practices, including existing supports for parents, (b) *Comparative analysis* of regulatory and support approaches adopted by other jurisdictions, (c) *Engagement with stakeholders*, which included the Home Education Expert Group (HEEG) along with government, community and organisational stakeholders, and (d) *Market research* conducted by the Nous Group, which consolidated a survey, focus groups, and a social media scan.

¹ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Queensland Home Education Unit Review Terms of Reference](#), Department of Education website, accessed 1 August 2024.

Review findings

The recommendations reflect and relate to the findings of the Review, with an aim to enhance the availability of supports for home educating parents and the effectiveness of regulation. Both the findings and recommendations are informed by the understanding that the HEU and home educating families share a commitment to a high-quality education for children.

Finding one: A new scope is needed for the Home Education Unit to meet the needs of a contemporary high quality home education service for Queensland families.

All children have a right to a quality education. While parents have diverse reasons for and approaches to home educating, they are unified in their intention to support their children's learning and development in a way that enables their children to thrive and achieve. The overarching purpose of the current legislative framework and regulatory approach is to ensure young people have access to a high-quality education.

The scope and operation of the Home Education Unit needs to expand beyond the current regulatory and compliance functions to offer broader support services. Educational leadership is critical to the repositioning of these functions and understanding of the full range of supports families need at different stages and times in their child's education. Choosing to home educate is, for many families, a big decision and one that often comes unexpectedly. For others it is a decision made at the outset of their child's learning journey. Supporting families' transitions into, through, and out of home education in each of these situations requires very different educational advice and supports.

Regulatory practice will be enhanced with ongoing sector communication and consultation to recognise and understand parents' choices and perspectives as part of a new era. With no formal peak body for home education in Queensland, the formation of an ongoing consultative group that can contribute parent expertise and advocacy is critical. Strengthening the partnership between families and the HEU is fundamental to the success of the recommendations in this report.

A contemporary regulatory framework needs to provide both suitable supports and regulatory compliance as model practice. Educational leadership will enhance the connection with community and across schooling sectors to ensure home education is recognised, supported and understood on the continuum of educational possibilities.

Finding two: There is an urgent need for additional regulatory supports that provide clarity while retaining flexibility in relation to meeting the regulatory requirements.

Parents and stakeholders expressed a strong appreciation for the way the current regulation does not mandate a particular approach to education, which instead enables them to respond flexibly to the needs and interests of their child. Many of the issues raised during the course of the Review related to the ambiguity of requirements and what needs to be provided annually to the regulator.

Review consultation made it evident that there are an unknown number of families – who are home educating – that are currently not registered due to the perceived regulatory burden associated with registration. Clarity of expectations and associated supports are important steps for all families to meet the legal requirements under the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*

for children of compulsory school age (s176) to be enrolled in school, which if not met will result in notification from the department of the parental obligations (s178) and re-engagement activities. The compulsory schooling requirement does not apply if a child is registered for home education (s.199). It is an important legal requirement that all families that choose this form of education are registering for home education and reporting annually on the progress of their child's learning.

A range of additional supports, that better reflect learner diversity and contemporary approaches to home education, would assist parents by modelling effective regulatory options that go beyond a standardised, one-size-fits all approach. Importantly, the voices of children and young people are reflected in this report in the recommendations to provide diverse exemplars, resources and avenues for support that enable parents to provide the very best education. The current Queensland legislation is generally well positioned to enable a responsive, inclusive, and family-friendly approach to home education regulation.

Finding three: There is benefit in providing additional appropriate educational and wrap-around supports and connections for children, young people and families.

The report recognises and respects the choices families make at different times in their child's and family's life. At different times families need different supports. Many of the recommendations focus on enhancing onboarding, with supports to register, design educational programs, and meet annual reporting requirements. Some families – especially those who are experienced home educators – navigate this with ease and are comfortable with the current requirements. Nevertheless, they recognise that enhancements would be of benefit, especially to families new to home education.

The Review found that enabling parent choice in approach, style and resources is critical to supporting the individual learning needs of children as they navigate through their educational journey. Families with children with additional needs are seeking and require access to further specialised supports.

During the senior phase of learning families need to understand the full range of diverse pathways. These journeys are also important to showcase, promote and share. Stories of first year medical students, creative arts degrees, and young people with a passion for technology are just some of the graduate stories gathered as part of this review. Links with TAFE and universities are important in understanding alternate pathways to further education.

It was evident from the Review that home educated children, just like their similar-aged peers in school, complete their education and move into university placements, TAFE courses, apprenticeships, or the world of work as contributing members of our local communities.

Envisaging the future of home education

While acknowledging the ongoing work of the HEU, the Review found that the communications and processes used by the HEU often represent a traditional approach to regulation with a focus on compliance. Therefore, the identified opportunities relate to strengthening the HEU's regulatory assistance processes. In particular, the following model practices of the *Queensland*

*Government Regulator Performance Framework*² are key areas of focus in the recommendations:

- **Regulatory model practice 2:** Consult and engage meaningfully with stakeholders
- **Regulatory model practice 3:** Provide appropriate information and support to assist compliance
- **Regulatory model practice 5:** Be transparent and accountable in actions.

The Review recognises that the HEU has been under increased and sustained pressure to meet regulatory obligations due to the growth in the number of applications for registration and resulting registrations. This has likely limited the capacity of the HEU to provide the level of information and support necessary to assist parents.

The Independent Reviewer's vision for home education as a result of this Review is for a strong and immediate shift towards a contemporary approach to regulation in alignment with the *Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework*. It involves the provision of strong educational leadership to complement the strong regulatory leadership of the HEU. This educational leadership will support the development of quality educational programs for children registered for home education, supporting their high-quality education. The expanded support function of the HEU recommended in this report should be supported by a home education consultative group, as a representative voice connected to community and broader stakeholders to inform the work of HEU.

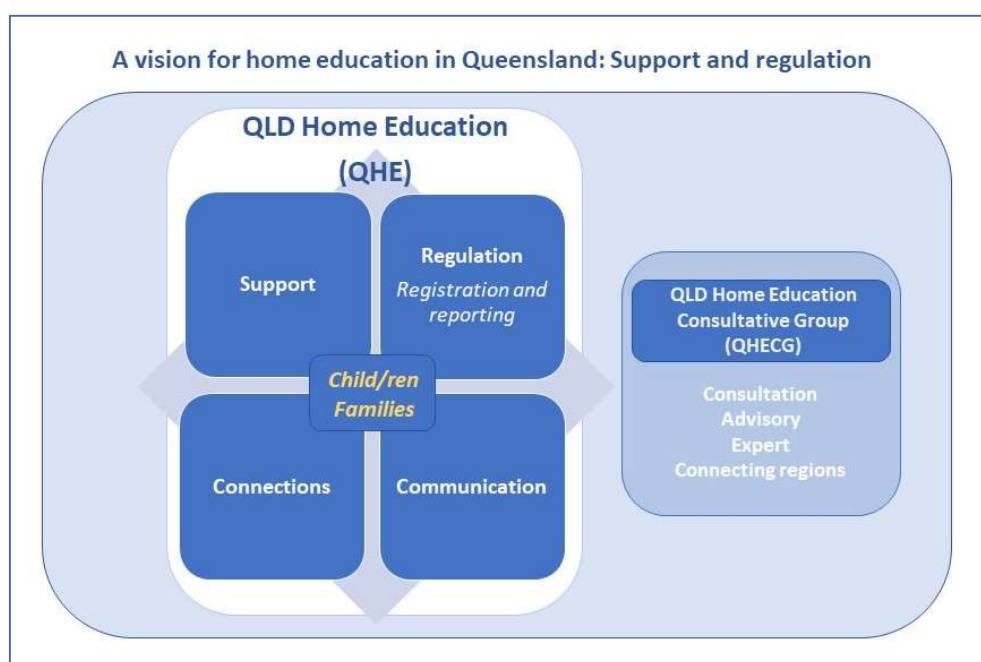


Figure 1: Envisaging home education in Queensland

Central to the recommendations are key changes in providing enhanced regulatory supports and ensuring ongoing consultation with the home educating community (see Figure 1). A new era for home education in Queensland is envisaged.

² Queensland Treasury (2023) *Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework*, Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

Recommendations

Aligned with the Terms of Reference, the recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness of regulation. This includes consideration of supports for parents, options to engage more broadly with home educators in the absence of a peak body, and additional supportive activities within the existing legislative framework.

| REPOSITIONING AND ENHANCING HOME EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN QUEENSLAND | |
|--|--|
| Recommendation 1: Reposition the Home Education Unit (HEU) for support and regulation | 1.1 Expand the role: to include both regulatory oversight and a support function to better assist home educators. |
| | 1.2 Rename the Unit: to Queensland Home Education (QHE) to reflect this broader scope, marking a new era in home education support and governance in Queensland. |
| | 1.3 Leadership and change management: Engage an educational leader to lead the transformation and implementation of recommendations to ensure effective communication with the home education community, enhanced supports for families and liaison within the Department of Education and other government agencies. |
| Recommendation 2: Enhance communication and collaboration | 2.1 Form the Queensland Home Education Consultative Group (QHECG): This group will be a departmental consultative body comprising an external Chair and regional parent representatives (including First Nations representatives), with biennial appointments. |
| | 2.2 Annual briefing for key stakeholders: QHE to provide annual briefings to key stakeholders, offering clarity on regulatory requirements and best practices, positioning itself as the authoritative source for information on home education in Queensland. |
| REGULATION OF HOME EDUCATION | |
| Recommendation 3: Enhance and expand resources that support parents to meet regulatory requirements | 3.1 Enhance education program templates: Improve and expand existing templates and exemplars for education programs, reflecting various approaches to home education, age ranges, and learning needs. |
| | 3.2 Develop exemplars for annual reports: Create a range of exemplar annual reports that show educational progress in different contexts, providing guidance for parents. |
| | 3.3 Publish compliance information: Provide clear and transparent information about how compliance with standard conditions of registration is determined for educational programs and written reports. |
| Recommendation 4: Consider trialling a new reporting option | 4.1 Consider a trial: for a new reporting option where parents can submit a concise templated written report, supplemented by an online interview to demonstrate educational progress. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Recommendation 5: Leverage technology for better support and streamlined processes | 5.1 Enhance website accessibility: to improve accessibility of information, links to supports and resources for ease of navigation for parents. |
| | 5.2 Create a social media presence: to connect with the home education community and provide timely information. |
| | 5.3 Develop an online portal: Upgrade online services to include a portal for regulatory tasks like registration and reporting, making processes more efficient for parents. |
| Recommendation 6: Review and revise all formal communications from the HEU to ensure they are clear, supportive, and family-centred | 6.1 Tone and language: Update the website, letters, emails, and other communications to be more encouraging and constructive to support families to meet regulatory requirements, with clear guidance and resources. |
| | 6.2 Consistency: Ensure that all communications are consistent in their messaging, reflect the updated role of the QHE, and reinforce the goal of fostering a positive and supportive relationship between the regulatory body and home education families. |
| SUPPORT AND ADVISORY SERVICES FOR FAMILIES | |
| Recommendation 7: Establish a home education support and advisory response for families | 7.1 Offer information at key junctures: 7.1.1. Onboarding support – provide a comprehensive guide, webinars and registration assistance for families new to home education. 7.1.2. Senior pathways advisory support – connect families with information about QCAA, TAFE, registered training organisations, and universities regarding senior pathways. 7.1.3. NAPLAN – communicate with schools, the QCAA, and families around how registered home educated children can choose and access state-wide testing. 7.1.4. State-wide services – link families to state-wide services, such as the Autism Hub, via websites offering information, webinars and support. 7.1.5. Student representative opportunities – promote and expand access to opportunities such as regional sport, Premier’s Reading Challenge, applying for The Premier’s Anzac Prize, student leadership forums or advisory councils. |
| | 7.2 Explore opportunities for regional connections: including possible use of community liaison roles. |
| Recommendation 8: Broker and expand access to educational resources | 8.1 Review student identification cards: to ensure they contain the information required to be recognised for discounts and services by government agencies, transport companies and community organisations, and communicate their availability to families. |
| | 8.2 Access to curriculum resources: Provide access for families to educational curriculum support materials as they are developed and updated. |
| | 8.3 Liaise with commercial companies: Provide information to education companies offering educational or teacher discounts to promote consideration of including home educators and children registered for home education in these offers. |

Out of scope considerations

The Review scope did not include the regulatory framework from a legislative perspective, nor any future response to the *Child Death Review Board Annual Report 2022-23*, which recommended legislative changes to strengthen oversight of children who are registered for home education in Queensland, with a focus on upholding the child's rights, best interests, safety and wellbeing at all stages of a child's home education registration.

In addition, several critical issues outside the scope of the Review were heard during consultation. These are important future considerations, particularly regarding home education and the rights of a child to a quality education. Key points include:

1. Legislation and policy supports

- **Age eligibility for registration:** The age eligibility for registration for home education under sections 206 (b) and 229 (a) of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (EGPA) means a child is only eligible for registration until 31 December in the year they turn 17 years. While they may continue to home educate, they are not eligible to be formally registered. There is strong support from home educating families for a legislative change to allow a young person to be registered for home education until 31 December in the year they turn 18 years, as proposed in the *Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024* prior to the removal of proposed home education provisions from the Bill. This amendment to the EGPA would align the age eligibility for home education registration, with students attending a state or non-state school. This change would enable children registered for home education to continue to receive benefits related to their registered status at ages equivalent to school students and is significant for all home educated young people, and particularly so for those with complex learning needs.
- **Compassionate grounds for extension of reporting time frames:** Section 217 of the EGPA sets out the standard conditions that apply to the registration of a child for home education. This includes a requirement for a parent to provide a written report on the educational progress of the child to the chief executive at least two months, but not more than three months, before each anniversary of the registration. There may be circumstances where a parent cannot provide this report within the specified timeframe. Consideration of variation to the timing of a report where a particular situation exists; for example, medical circumstances that would make it difficult or not possible for a parent to provide the report within the specified timeframe requires consideration. This should be considered in future legislative or policy amendments.
- **Common reporting timeframe for families:** Section 217 (2)(a) of the EGPA requires that a report (on the educational progress of a child while undertaking home education) must be provided to the chief executive at least two months, but not more than three months, before each anniversary of the registration. In effect, this provides for an education progress report to cover the previous 12 months of registration and operates to require an annual report (effective from the date of registration). Section 218 provides for the chief executive to impose conditions on registration that are relevant and reasonable. Section 219 provides for the chief executive to change the conditions of registration if there is a reasonable basis to make the change. Consideration should be given to whether there is legislated flexibility in the current provisions to allow for conditions on

registration to vary reporting timeframes to support an option for a family to align their children's annual plans and reports.

2. Recognising student enrolment trends

- **Home education trends:** Around 40% of children registered for home education move out of or into state/non-state schools annually. The National Unique Student Identifier (USI) should be applied to include home educated children and young people, to provide all sectors and jurisdictions with appropriate student movement data to be able to be responsive to need.
- **Visibility of children's rights to an education:** Leveraging state-based mechanisms to enable visibility of student movements between school sectors may help prevent children from disengaging from education and 'falling through the cracks.' The *Queensland Non-State Schools Accreditation Framework Review*³ and the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*⁴ similarly highlight that a system within Queensland would strengthen the protection and safeguarding of children.

3. Children with mental health concerns, learning difficulties and diagnosed disabilities

- **Disproportionate representation in home education:** A significant number of home-educated children have learning difficulties, disabilities, or mental health concerns. Many families report they become 'accidental' home educators when their child has not been appropriately supported in school settings. Stronger alignment between schooling systems and the HEU to understand these trends and consider future implications is required.
- **Access to resources:** Neurodiverse children (the majority of whom do not have an intellectual disability) are overrepresented in this cohort and would benefit from parental access to state and non-state school resources, such as those from the Autism Hub, and other supported non-government and not-for-profit programs.

4. Voice and choice for young people in secondary learning

- **Partial enrolment to school subjects:** Many parents and young people seek access to specific subjects during the senior secondary years. Under the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)*, a child who is provisionally or fully registered for home education may not be simultaneously enrolled at a state or non-state school.⁵ A partial enrolment process could enhance educational flexibility, choice and peer support for home-educated young people.

5. Unregistered families

- **Engagement with registration process:** The voices of unregistered families were heard through review consultation. As data becomes more visible in education it will be important for these families to engage formally with the registration process. A range of external reports⁶ indicate the number of families not yet registered may be significant,

³ Queensland Department of Education (2023) [Queensland non-state schools accreditation framework review](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁴ Royal Commissions (2017) [Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#), Royal Commissions website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁵ *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, Qld, s229.*

⁶ See, Introduction, p. 2

perhaps even double the current registrations. Families reported the ambiguity and complexity of regulatory requirements, combined with a sense of questionable benefits, contributed to a decision not to register their child/ren.

6. National funding and regulatory considerations

- **Funding:** Future national agreements should consider the funding states and territories receive to support and regulate home education. While some recommendations can be delivered within existing resources, quality education supports is likely to require further investment.
- **Increased independence:** If an independent statutory authority is to be considered as recommended in the NSSAF Review⁷, consideration could also be given to the business case, including benefits and opportunities that may be achieved by the Home Education Unit (HEU) as the regulator, being situated as part of another statutory body, independent of the Department of Education.

These issues are significant for comprehensive policy development and require attention from various government and non-government agencies.

⁷ Queensland Department of Education (2023) [Queensland non-state schools accreditation framework review](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

Note on report terminology

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Child/ren and young people | Both terms have been used throughout the report in place of 'students'. 'Child/ren' is generally intended to represent all young persons receiving home education while 'young people' may be used to specifically refer to senior secondary age equivalent children. |
| Parent | This term has been used interchangeably with 'home educating parent/s'. 'Parent' is intended to represent all persons who are responsible for home educating a child, including legal guardians. |
| Home educating community | This term has been used to encompass all persons that may be regarded as members of the Queensland home education community, including children and young people that are home educated, parents and guardians of home educated children, home education support groups and, where relevant, commercial providers of home education materials. |

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Introduction

All children have the right to education. This right is recognised in the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)⁸ and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990)⁹; Australia is a signatory to both. The *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld) also provides that every child has the right to access primary and secondary education appropriate to the child's needs¹⁰. All require that a state ensure children have access to education and that parents have the right to choose how their children should be educated.

Home Education in Queensland

In Queensland, home education is recognised as a legal education option. Home education of a child is provided by one or both of the child's parents, or a registered teacher, primarily at the child's usual place of residence¹¹. Children are eligible to be registered for home education if they are at least 5 years and 6 months of age and less than 18 years of age, on 31 December in the year the provisional registration or registration takes effect.

Other education options available to Queensland families are to enrol their children in state or non-state schools, which, like home education, present a broad range of different educational approaches and learning environments.

Home education is not well understood by the general community or the media, and is often confused with other education that might occur 'in the home'. This includes, for example, distance education, or 'learning from home' (which was common during the COVID-19 pandemic), where the education program is provided by a school at which the child is enrolled. The school is also responsible for monitoring the child's learning and reporting on their progress, responsibilities that are undertaken by parents for children registered for home education.

Growth of home education registrations

Since 2019, there has been significant growth in the number of children registered for home education in Queensland, as shown in Table 1. From 2019 to 2023, home education registrations rose from 3,411 to 10,048, an increase of 194.6%¹².

Table 1: Active home education registrations in Queensland

| Year | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 ¹³ |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------------------|
| Registrations | 3,411 | 4,297 | 5,008 | 8,461 | 10,048 | 11,314 |
| Yearly percentage increase | | 26.0% | 16.5% | 68.9% | 18.8% | 12.6% |

Growth in home education registrations is not unique to Queensland. Australian home education registrations by jurisdiction indicate a general trend of increasing registrations across Australian states and territories since 2020 (see Table 2 and Figure 2). Queensland has had the greatest increase in home education registrations of any Australian state or territory since 2020.

⁸ United Nations (1948) [Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26](#).

⁹ United Nations (1990) [Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 28](#).

¹⁰ *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld), s 36.

¹¹ *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (Qld), s 205.

¹² Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education performance](#), Department of Education website, accessed 31 August 2024.

¹³ As at census date (2 August 2024 unverified data, Department of Education verified data expected to be available in November 2024).

Table 2: Home education registrations by jurisdiction 2020-2023

| Year | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| QLD | 4,297 | 5,008 | 8,461 | 10,048 |
| VIC | 6,405 | 6,836 | 11,332 | 10,481 |
| NSW | 7,032 | 8,993 | 12,359 | 12,114 |
| ACT | 322 | 395 | 413 | 465 |
| TAS | 1,160 | 1,228 | 1385 | 1,463 |
| NT | 145 | 165 | 206 | 191 |
| WA | 4,116 | 4,562 | 6,151 | 6,466 |
| SA | 1,606 | 1,795 | 2,443 | 2,593 |

Source: State and Territory Governments (published)

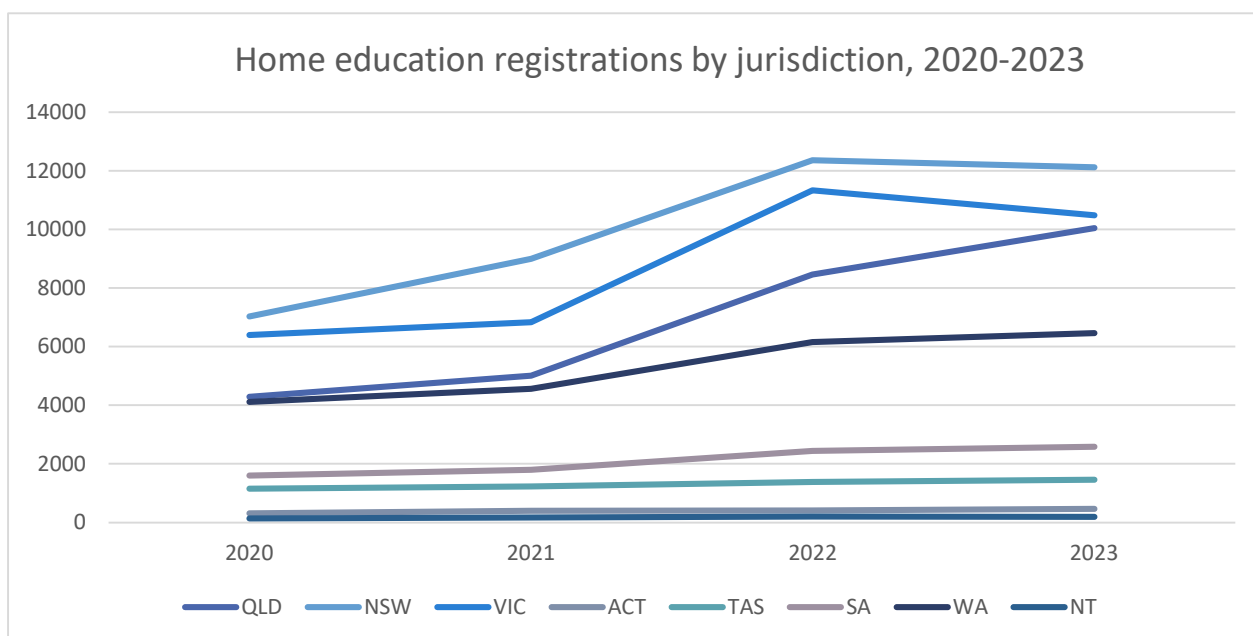


Figure 2: Home education registrations by jurisdiction 2020-2023

While some Queensland children undertake all their education while registered for home education, many move between school and home education. In 2023, 74.2% or 4,519 children who were registered for home education were reported by their parents as having been previously enrolled in a school. Of the home education registrations that ceased in 2023, 48% or 2,161 children were reported by their parents as subsequently enrolling in a school¹⁴.

Historical research notes that there is uncertainty about the true number of children who are provided home education. In 2003, the Queensland Parliamentary *Review of Home Schooling* reported on the number of home education families, but estimated that the true number of children being home educated could be much higher¹⁵. Submissions to the 2014 New South

¹⁴ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education performance](#), Department of Education website, accessed 31 August 2024.

¹⁵ McHugh B (2003) [Home Schooling Review](#), Queensland Parliament, accessed 31 August 2024.

Wales (NSW) Select Committee on Home Schooling also suggested the true number of home educating families was much higher than those registered¹⁶.

There is very little demographic information available about home educating families, noting registration processes do not require parents mandatorily or voluntarily to provide information in the same way as for school enrolment.

The lack of demographic information is the case Australia-wide and internationally. Research on home education in Australia generally points to stakeholder feedback that the home education community is diverse, including people from a range of cultural and educational backgrounds, and from different locations (e.g., remote, regional and metropolitan)¹⁷.

Why parents choose home education

The reasons parents choose to home educate their children are varied, usually with multiple contributing factors. As part of the current Review, market research conducted by the Nous Group asked home educating parents to reflect on the importance of a range of factors in their decision to home educate (see Figure 3¹⁸). The survey data¹⁹ illustrate that while many of the considerations resonated with responding parents, the most important were the ability to provide 'personalised learning at my child's pace', 'flexibility in learning style' and 'better quality education experience'. Other significant considerations included the ability to provide 'support for additional needs' and 'wider learning opportunities'. The perceptions that education was 'better in the home environment' and that 'negative school experiences' were avoided were also important considerations.

Previous research into the drivers of home education in Queensland, conducted in 2022²⁰, similarly found that the 565 respondents²¹ reported choosing home education for a range of reasons, with the primary motivations related to better learning environments and responding to disability or health issues. The report found that parents viewed home education as more personalised, providing greater flexibility, better learning opportunities and educational experiences more suited to their child's learning style, with a better chance to support their child's needs.

These rationales mirror Allan and Jackson's²² research, which highlighted that parents choose home education for its perceived positive features, including flexible learning that caters to individual needs, one-on-one/low adult-child ratios, holistic learning opportunities connected to the real world, and the ability to mix with wide age ranges in a community. This study also found that parents choose home education to avoid perceived negative features of schooling such as learning difficulties not being catered for, curriculum not meeting the needs or interests of students, large class sizes, social problems such as bullying and negative peer pressure.

¹⁶ Parliament of New South Wales (2014) [Home Schooling in New South Wales](#), Select Committee on Home Schooling, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹⁷ Gamble L (2017) [The demographic profile, wellbeing and motivations of families who home educate in Australia](#), unpublished thesis, Monash University.

¹⁸ Nous Group (2024) [Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit](#), market research report, see Appendix D.3.

¹⁹ There were 1,161 complete responses from 7993 invitations, representing a 14.5% response rate.

²⁰ Enhance Research (2022) [Parent with Child/ren Registered for Home Education Research Insight Report](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August, 2024.

²¹ Of the 6075 survey invitations, there were 565 complete responses, representing a 9.3% response rate.

²² Allan S & Jackson G (2010) [The What, Whys and Wherefores of Home Education and Its Regulation in Australia](#), *International Journal of Law & Education*, 15(1), 55-77.

As home educating families choose home education for a range of reasons, the supports they need also differ. This report explores these supports for families in detail in Chapters Two and Three.

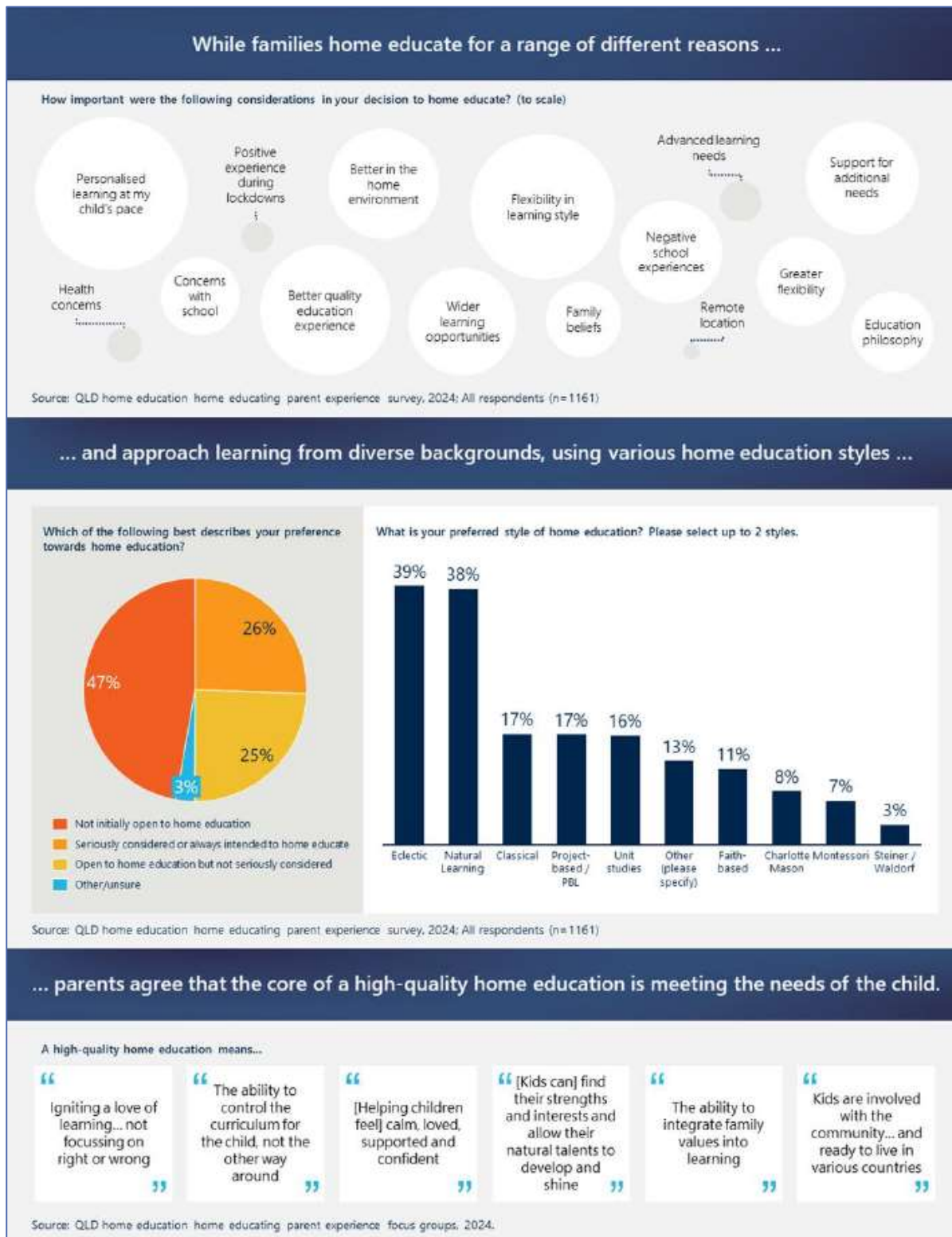


Figure 3: Reasons for home education (Nous Group, 2024)²³

²³ Nous Group (2024) Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit, market research report, p. 15.

Queensland HEU

In Queensland, the regulation of home education is performed by the HEU situated within the Department of Education. The HEU provides a number of regulatory services and supports focused on its regulatory functions. These include but are not limited to: providing information about home education to parents considering registering their child for home education; assessing applications for registration for home education; reviewing reports; engaging with stakeholders in formal and informal settings; supporting parents with regulatory requirements via the home education webpage, or by email or phone; and responding to general inquiries.

About this Review

On 6 March 2024, the Honourable Di Farmer, Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice, introduced the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 into the Queensland Parliament. After a two-year evidence-based legislative review process undertaken by the Department of Education with support of the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and Queensland Government approval, key amendments included support for the streamlining and modernising of the regulation of home education in Queensland. The Bill also sought legislative amendments to support the first stage of a response to the Child Death Review Board Annual Report 2022-23, which recommended legislative changes to strengthen oversight of children who are registered for home education in Queensland, with a focus on upholding the child's rights, best interests, safety and wellbeing at all stages of a child's home education registration.

On 15 April, as a result of stakeholder feedback to a number of the proposed home education regulatory changes, the Minister announced the removal of the home education provisions from the Bill. The announcement further specified that a home education advisory group would be established and a review into the role of the Home Education Unit in both regulating and supporting home education in Queensland would commence.

The Department of Education engaged Independent Reviewer, Ms Deborah Dunstone, to conduct the stakeholder-informed Review to explore how existing regulatory services can be improved and parents supported so that children and young people can access a high-quality education.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Review can be found in Appendix 1. The Review was tasked to:

- consider the diverse experience and needs of home educating parents;
- identify any gaps and areas for improvement in the approach to regulation, education and support of home educators; and
- provide recommendations, where appropriate, to enhance the effectiveness of regulation, including supports for home education parents, options to engage more broadly with home educators in the absence of a peak body, and other supportive activities within the existing legislative framework of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006.

The Review did not extend to: policy proposals for a different model of delivery, for example part time schooling; making recommendations about legislative provisions relating to home education; recommendations related to student-specific supports; or considering, investigating or making

findings or recommendations about: state or non-state schooling; government funding of schools; or regulatory or standards frameworks in other fields.

A Home Education Expert Group (HEEG), comprised of 12 parents of children currently registered for home education who represent a 'wide and equitable' range of perspectives and experiences, three home education sector representative organisations, three departmental or government observers, and chaired by the Independent Reviewer, was established to provide direct input into the Review. The HEEG Terms of Reference can be found in Appendix 2.

Methodology

Approach to the Review

The Review involved a range of activities to identify key issues and opportunities. Significant consultation occurred across Queensland to capture feedback from the diverse groups, organisations and individuals that make up the state's home education sector. This was supported by desktop research, including jurisdictional analysis, and market research. The Independent Reviewer was supported by a team within the Department of Education.

Desktop research

An analysis of existing regulatory practice and supports for parents in Queensland was undertaken. In addition, a comparative analysis of the regulatory and support approaches adopted by other jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally was conducted.

Stakeholder consultation (Reviewer-led)

Significant consultation occurred across Queensland from July to September 2024. This aimed to capture feedback from the diverse groups, organisations and individuals that comprise the state's home education sector. There were three key groups consulted.

- The HEEG – this group met four times between 16 July and 13 September. In accordance with the ToR, ongoing consultation will occur with this group until December 2024.
- The home education community – consultation included over nine in-person focus groups with home education groups between Cairns, the Gold Coast and Toowoomba. Attendees included parents of children registered for home education, and parents of children not registered for home education (nor enrolled in a school). Sixty-five parents attended these focus groups.
- Related services and experts – over 60 individual meetings with related service providers, regulators, schooling sectors, curriculum bodies, academic experts, home education bodies and associated organisations.

A list of stakeholders consulted is provided in Appendix 3.

Market research

To complement other review activities and ensure a broad cross section of views were captured, market research was undertaken by the Nous Group. This included a social media scan, a survey of parents with children registered for home education, and in-person and online focus groups.

- The social media scan (for the three years between 2021–2024) was undertaken to identify topics and issues that could inform stakeholder engagement activities.
- A survey invitation was sent to 7,993 parents of children registered for home education in Queensland. In total, 1,161 eligible and complete responses were received. While the number of respondents was substantial, these responses cannot be generalised.
- Seven focus groups were conducted with in-person (n. 3) and online options (n. 4) for attendees providing access across the state. Two focus groups were dedicated to topical discussion on (a) supporting children with disability and/or neurodiversity and (b) regional and remote home education. In total, 59 people participated in these focus groups.

There is strong alignment between the outcomes of Reviewer-led stakeholder consultation and the findings of the market research.

Analysis framework

Throughout the review, the thematic analysis refers to aspects of the *Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework*²⁴, which outlines five model practices for regulators (see Figure 4).

| Model practice 1: Ensure Regulatory activity is Proportionate to Risk and Minimises Unnecessary Burden | Model practice 2: Consult and Engage Meaningfully with Stakeholders | Model practice 3: Provide Appropriate Information and Support to Assist Compliance | Model practice 4: Commit to Continuous Improvement | Model practice 5: Be Transparent and Accountable in Actions |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Supporting principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a proportionate approach is applied to compliance activities, engagement and regulatory enforcement actions • regulators do not unnecessarily impose on regulated entities • regulatory approaches are updated and informed by intelligence gathering so that effort is focused towards risk. | <p>Supporting principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal and informal consultation and engagement mechanisms are in place to allow for the full range of stakeholder input and Government decision making circumstances • engagement is undertaken in ways that helps regulators develop a genuine understanding of the operating environment of regulated entities • cooperative and collaborative relationships are established with stakeholders, including other regulators, to promote trust and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory framework. | <p>Supporting principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear and timely guidance and support is accessible to stakeholders and tailored to meet the needs of the target audience • advice is consistent and, where appropriate, decisions are communicated in a manner that clearly articulates what is required to achieve compliance • where appropriate, regulatory approaches are tailored to ensure compliance activities do not disproportionately burden particular stakeholders (e.g. small business) or require specialist advice. | <p>Supporting principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular review of the approach to regulatory activities, collaboration with stakeholders and other regulators to ensure it is appropriately risk based, leverages technological innovation and remains the best approach to achieving policy outcomes • to the extent possible, reform of regulatory activities is prioritised on the basis of impact on stakeholders and the community • staff have the necessary training and support to effectively, efficiently and consistently perform their duties. | <p>Supporting principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where appropriate, regulatory frameworks and timeframes for making regulatory decisions are published to provide certainty to stakeholders • decisions are provided in a timely manner, clearly articulating expectations and the underlying reasons for decisions • indicators of regulator performance are publicly available. |

Figure 4: Queensland Regulator Performance Framework

In particular, the framework’s practices and principles situate the recommendations and ground the rationales for change throughout the report.

²⁴ Queensland Treasury (2023) *Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework*, Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

Consultation Key Findings

Consultation revealed opportunities for more flexible and supportive approaches to the regulation of home education, improvements in communication, increased engagement and resource access. Stakeholder perspectives centred around seven themes:

- **Communication and clarity:** the need to strengthen communication, including through the use of multimedia and social media, to provide greater clarity about regulatory requirements and supports.
- **Flexibility and choice:** greater support for different types of educational programs and approaches to reporting through provision of varied templates and exemplars.
- **Simplify reporting:** simplifying reporting to be less rigid, more child centred and flexible, including the provision of templates and tools.
- **Engagement:** calls for greater two-way engagement between HEU and parents – including a parent representative consultative group, to strengthen the connection between the HEU and parents.
- **Workload:** calls to reduce workload associated with regulation and compliance, better leveraging technology to streamline and integrate processes.
- **Access:** the need for improved access to educational supports and representative opportunities.
- **Recognition and legitimacy:** calls to support home educated children and young people to gain greater recognition and acceptance in the broader community.

Report overview

This report is organised using three core areas for change that emerged during the Review. These organisers are: *Engagement and governance*, *Regulation and Support*. The report chapters are structured using these as follows:

Chapter One: Repositioning and enhancing home education governance in Queensland

This chapter considers the role of the Home Education Unit (HEU) in Queensland, and signals a shift toward greater support of, and collaboration with, the home education sector. It provides recommendations to foster a more supportive and collaborative environment for home educators, with stronger ties between the sector, the Department of Education, and other stakeholders.

Chapter Two: Regulation of home education

This chapter explores the regulation of home education and provides recommendations for a more contemporary approach to regulation services and resources, making them more supportive and user-friendly for home educators.

Chapter Three: Support and advisory services for families

This chapter considers the wrap-around supports available to home education families with recommendations to bolster this support, providing families with access to the resources and information needed at each stage of their child's educational journey.

Chapter One: Repositioning and Enhancing Home Education Governance

Introduction

This chapter considers the role of the HEU, and signals a shift toward greater support of, and collaboration with, the home education sector. The Independent Reviewer considers the recommendations in this chapter essential for the delivery of the recommendations throughout the remainder of this report.

Chapter One recommendations establish the fundamental foundations for the proposed future orientation of the HEU. These foundations will form the mechanisms to introduce a necessary balance between HEU's regulatory practices and compliance processes with the role of providing information and supports (Regulatory Model Practice 3²⁵) and meaningful and consultative engagement with stakeholders (Regulatory Model Practice 2²⁶).

Home education regulation and support

HEU current state

The HEU oversees the regulation of home education in Queensland, undertaking functions relating to home education as prescribed in the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*, Part 5²⁷. These functions include administering and making decisions about provisional registration, full registration, and annual reports (which parents must submit for continued registration) and managing ceasing registrations. In addition, the HEU provides a limited range of supports and services to assist parents to meet regulatory requirements and support the delivery of a high-quality education to children registered for home education²⁸. While part of the HEU's role is to monitor parent compliance with the standard conditions of registration, the *Home Education in Queensland procedure*²⁹ clarifies that the Home Education Unit has a responsibility to monitor compliance and to assist parents to understand their obligations in meeting the standard conditions of registration.

Rapid sector growth

The Introduction to this report considered the verified number of home education registrations from 2019 to 2024 (see Table 1, p. 1). To better understand the implications the growth in registrations for HEU, it is useful to consider the applications for registrations for home education for the same period. These data are provided in Table 3, which shows that although the number of applications peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, there has been a general upward trend in the number of new registrations since 2019.

While Table 1 shows there were 10,048 active registrations in 2023, Table 3 shows there were 6,077 applications in 2023 with 543 refused, indicating that there were 5,534 new registrations. This rapid growth in new registrations is not limited to 2023. In 2022, there were 8,461 active

²⁵ Queensland Treasury (2023) [Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework](#), Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

²⁶ Queensland Treasury (2023) [Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework](#), Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

²⁷ *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, Part 5*

²⁸ Details about the regulation of home education and the supports provided by the HEU to parents to meet regulatory requirements are outlined in Chapter 2, while additional wrap-around supports provided by the HEU are considered in Chapter 3.

²⁹ Queensland Department of Education (2020) [Home education in Queensland procedure](#), Department of Education website, accessed 8 August 2024.

registrations (Table 1). Table 3 shows there were 6,956 applications in this year with 627 refused, indicating that there were 6,329 new registrations.

Table 3: Applications for registration for home education

| Year | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Provisional | 38 | 223 | 303 | 525 | 357 |
| Registration | 1,864 | 2,605 | 2,827 | 6,431 | 5,720 |
| Total | 1,902 | 2,828 | 3,130 | 6,956 | 6,077 |
| Refused applications | 175 | 171 | 292 | 627 | 543 |

Applications are refused “when the requirements of registration are not met, even after a further information notice has been issued”. Notices are issued when there is a procedural issue with an application, for example an education program or proof of age is not included, or further information is needed, generally in relation to the educational program provided³⁰. They may also be issued when both occur.

The significant increase in new registrations has greatly increased demand on regulatory services, and subsequently supports, from the HEU. The Review acknowledges the HEU’s endeavours to be responsive by scaling up its operations to meet its regulatory commitments for this increased number of new registrations, and to provide supports to a far larger number of home educating parents than in previous years, many of whom are new to home education.

Jurisdictional examples

All Australian jurisdictions regulate home education and provide supports to assist parents to meet their regulatory obligations. The nature of these supports varies between jurisdictions and is reflective of the regulatory requirements. Regulation and regulatory supports in different jurisdictions are explored in Chapter Two of this report.

In addition to providing regulatory supports, all jurisdictions provide other types of supports to families of children registered for home education. The nature and extent of these supports varies between jurisdictions, with some common supports, such as curriculum resources to support parents to provide a high-quality education, and student cards. Chapter Three of this report considers the supports provided across jurisdictions.

Strengths and challenges: Stakeholder voices

A balanced approach: Regulation and supports

Many contributors in the consultation process expressed a wish for children’s education and support for parents and families to be centred in regulation processes. Community consultation specified that parents valued support at multiple junctures, including in their initial exploration and decision to home educate, development of a high-quality educational program, reporting of their child’s educational progress successfully, connection with the broader home educating community, and support of families and children with diverse needs and abilities. Currently, much of this support is done through parent-to-parent support and engagement with community and commercial organisations. Stakeholder organisations further reiterated that a balance is needed between regulatory compliance and supportive measures for families. Participants perceived that the provision of supports that respond effectively to a range of experiences would help to reduce

³⁰ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education performance](#), Department of Education website, accessed 31 August 2024.

the sense of anxiety, fear, and stress that can be present when parents engage in regulatory purposes.

These stakeholder perceptions were reiterated in survey findings, which provide insight into the regulatory and non-regulatory matters for which respondents currently seek support from HEU. Responses suggest a significant number of parents would like to seek support from HEU, but currently do not (see Figure 5³¹).

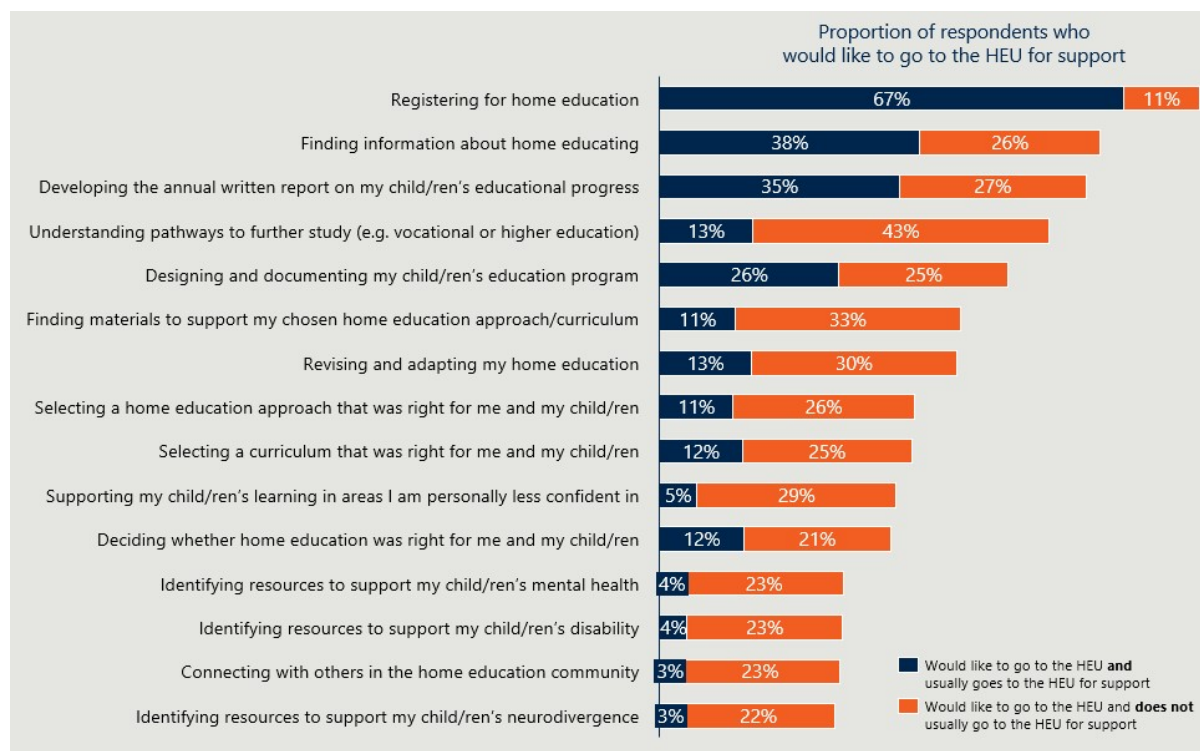


Figure 5: Proportion of respondents who would like to go to the HEU for support

These findings illustrate parent perceptions of the gaps between the current state and desired state of support and assistance provided by the HEU. For the majority of listed matters, these differences are significant (ranging from 21% to 43% of respondents for all but one of the 15 areas). The HEU currently provides a range of supports for some areas, such as ‘developing the annual written report on my child/ren’s educational progress’, and less for others, such as ‘connecting with others in the home education community’.

The largest gaps are for support in ‘understanding pathways to further study’ (43%) and ‘finding materials to support my chosen home education approach/curriculum’ (33%). It is noted that a number of the matters for which support is desired relate to educational, rather than regulatory matters. In addition to finding materials to support a chosen home education approach or curriculum, these include ‘selecting a curriculum that was right for me and my children’ (26%), and ‘supporting my child/ren’s learning in areas I am personally less confident in’ (29%).

These data also highlight the significant proportion of respondents who would like to go to the HEU for support identifying resources to support children with mental health challenges, disability and/or are neurodiverse.

³¹ Nous Group (2024) *Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit*, market research report, p. 27.

For the majority of matters listed in Figure 4, the proportion of respondents who would like to seek support from HEU significantly exceeds the proportion of respondents who currently seek support from HEU. Reasons for this are not provided, but this is an area for future exploration by HEU, in considering the supports provided to parents, and the communication of these supports.

The rationale for change

Stakeholder perceptions indicate that the twin responsibilities of the HEU – to monitor regulatory compliance and to assist parents to understand their obligations – are currently out of balance. Unprecedented growth in the number active registrations and new registrations for home education and stakeholder feedback on current and needed additional supports provided by HEU, inform the recommendations for change in the function of the HEU to provide both regulation and significantly enhanced regulatory supports, along with additional wrap-around supports.

Aligned with the Regulator Performance Framework, the recommended changes support:

- **a balance in regulation and support:** expanding the function of the HEU to include enhanced regulatory supports will support compliance and reduce regulatory burden for both HEU and parents. This aligns with Regulatory Model Practice 1 which aims to ensure regulatory activity minimises unnecessary burden and Regulatory Model Practice 3 which articulates the importance of appropriate information that support and assist compliance³²). Expanding the non-regulatory supports provided by HEU will more fully support the importance of delivering a high-quality education for children registered for home education.
- **strengthened educational supports and communication with the home education community:** engaging an educational leader to lead the provision of enhanced supports and ensure effective communication with the home education community will bring an improved educational perspective to support the delivery of a high-quality education. This reflects a commitment to model regulator practice³³ through meaningful consultation and communication with stakeholders (Regulatory Model Practice 2) and continuous improvement (Regulatory Model Practice 4).
- **the elevation of the unit:** a name change presents several benefits. It signals a change following this Review, and reflects the expanded functions proposed. A name change also responds to stakeholder feedback, that the name ‘Home Education Unit’, reflecting an organisational structure of the Department of Education, is not readily recognised within the community as the regulator of home education.
- **an educational leader:** with expertise in the development of educational supports, and who can leverage connections within the Department to better support and advocate for children who are educated at home, is crucial to realising an enhanced support function within the HEU.

³² Queensland Treasury (2023) [Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework](#), Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

³³ Queensland Treasury (2023) [Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework](#), Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

Recommendations

These recommendations are designed to enhance and expand the role of the HEU, signalling a shift toward greater support and collaboration within the home education sector.

1. Recommendation 1: Reposition the HEU for support and regulation

- 1.1. **Expand the role:** to include both regulatory oversight and a support function to better assist home educators.
- 1.2. **Rename the Unit:** to **Queensland Home Education (QHE)** to reflect this broader scope, marking a new era in home education support and governance in Queensland.
- 1.3. **Leadership and change management:** Engage an educational leader to lead the transformation and implementation of recommendations to ensure effective communication with the home education community, enhanced supports for families and liaison within the Department of Education and other government agencies.

Communication and collaboration with the home education sector

HEU current state

The Home Education Unit engages with stakeholders both formally and informally. Examples of engagement include:

- a quarterly meeting between the Home Education Association of Queensland (HEAQ) and the Executive Director, Registration Services and senior HEU officers. These meetings are an opportunity to discuss issues and trends relevant to home educating parents
- regular communication with the Queensland Department of Education regional offices, Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) and TAFE Queensland in support of parents' needs
- regular communication (phone calls and emails) through the year to support parents to meet the regulatory requirements of their child/ren's education plan and annual report. The HEU call centre responds to a range of general enquiries daily. During 1 May 2024 and 31 July 2024, the HEU received 1,892 phone calls from parents, stakeholders and the public. During the same period, HEU officers made 1336 phone calls to parents³⁴

Jurisdictional examples

New South Wales and Victoria have standing parent consultative groups while Tasmania has an advisory council for home education, separate from the government office that regulates home education (see Table 4).

In addition to ongoing advisory groups, in New South Wales, consultation also occurs in relation to emerging home education matters. For example, the NES Home Schooling Unit's TAFE working group has been established to develop stronger links with TAFE NSW. The group aims to improve the user experience for home schooling families when their children are seeking to engage in courses offered by TAFE NSW.

³⁴ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

Table 4: Jurisdictional examples of home education consultation

| | New South Wales | Victoria | Tasmania |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Group | Home Education Consultative Group (HECG) ³⁵ | Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee (VHEAC) ³⁶ | Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council (THEAC) ³⁷ |
| Established | 2014 | 2018 | 1993 |
| Aims or Terms of Reference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - oversee consultation between the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and the home schooling population - provide input to and review the design and implementation of home schooling policies and procedures provide ongoing advice and assistance to NESA - provide feedback on curriculum reform support materials, survey questions, new website design, and resource updates to support planning and reporting requirements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide guidance, information and feedback to the Victorian Department of Education and the Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) about the regulation of home schooling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide advice to the Registrar in relation to applications for approval of a home education program - provide the Minister and the Registrar with advice in relation to home education generally, providing a reference point for queries, responses to community concerns and liaison with other agencies about home education³⁸ |
| Membership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - four home schooling parents and - four NESA nominees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - members of the home schooling community - representatives from the Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and the department - representatives from the disability sector - a home education researcher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seven voluntary members, including a Chair and Deputy Chair - all members are appointed by the Minister as a result of public expressions of interest. - at least half of THEAC must consist of people with experience in home education |

Strengths and challenges: Stakeholder voices

In the absence of an ongoing parent advisory mechanism to communicate with and provide feedback to the HEU and no established peak body, consultation revealed a range of areas for enhanced communication between the HEU and home educating parents.

³⁵ NSW Education Standards Authority (2024) [Home Schooling Consultative Group](#), NSW government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

³⁶ Victorian Department of Education (2023) [Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee](#), Victorian government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

³⁷ Office of the Education Registrar (2021) [Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council](#), Tasmanian government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

³⁸ Office of the Education Registrar (2021) [Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council](#), Tasmanian government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

Direct stakeholder consultation

In consultation meetings, stakeholder organisations and HEEG members expressed support for an ongoing home education parent advisory group, and more engagement by the HEU with the home education community. This was viewed as an opportunity for continuous feedback from the community to support child-centred home education policy and practice.

The HEEG suggested that a parent consultative group, chaired independently, be established with clear roles and functions. It was identified as important that the group be representative of the diverse experiences and perspectives of parents across different communities to consider issues and provide feedback on home education.

Market research also found support for a parent consultative group, finding that parents who were aware of the HEEG expressed their support for an ongoing advisory group with membership terms of appointment, and viewed this as a positive step towards productive parent engagement³⁹.

“These are such a lovely and experienced group of homeschool parents. They will represent us well!”
- Facebook user, commenting on the HEEG

Parents also indicated that improvements could occur in the usefulness of communications. For example, parents expressed support for the re-introduction of a parent newsletter that had been previously distributed. Most parents indicated that if value-adding, targeted supports were provided, they would welcome the opportunity to engage more frequently with the HEU.

Among the most popular ideas shared in focus groups was the perceived opportunity for departmental officers to attend in-person home education community events to meet families and connect face-to-face⁴⁰.

Consistent, clear Information

Community groups, organisations and social media play an important role in supporting families with information and resources about home education, however, consultation found that parents can encounter conflicting views and misinformation via these channels in relation to regulatory requirements and supports. Non-profit and commercial organisations are active participants on social media and play a significant role in sharing information and shaping perceptions of home education. Parents reported that commercial interests could have their own agenda in these forums.

“Advocacy for all home education families – including rural and regional families – is needed in governance and structures so that decisions made reflect the diverse needs of the community”

- Stakeholder Consultation

³⁹ Nous Group (2024) *Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit*, market research report, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Nous Group (2024) *Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit*, market research report, p. 36.

The rationale for change

Sustained and formal parent representation through a consultative group and proactively sharing clear and consistent information with key stakeholders offers an opportunity to enhance and expand the HEU's consultative approach to regulation. This aligns with the goal of the *Regulator Performance Framework*⁴¹ to consult and engage meaningfully with stakeholders (Regulatory Model Practice 2). Greater opportunities for shared input into decisions will go some way to building trust and transparency between the HEU and families who home educate and will reduce the stress and anxiety experienced when parents are uncertain of what is required to meet their regulatory responsibilities. Enhancing and expanding the HEU's consultative approach to governance can address several challenges:

- **understanding diverse needs and perspectives:** Home educators in Queensland come from varied backgrounds and have different educational philosophies. Balancing these diverse perspectives can ensure representation and advocacy for home educators in discussions with policymakers, educational bodies and other stakeholders.
- **access to clear information:** Improved collaboration and consultation can help ensure that parents have up-to-date and accurate information about home education requirements, and that resources and support options are easily accessible and consistent in key messages.
- **strengthening communication and collaboration:** Working with parents and stakeholder groups can establish effective channels for information sharing and feedback with the home education community. This can help identify common concerns, assess needs, improve responsiveness and monitor the effectiveness of current policies and initiatives. This relates to regulator practice that includes formal and informal consultation and engagement mechanisms allow stakeholder input (Regulatory Model Practice 2).⁴²

Recommendations

These recommendations aim to create a more supportive and collaborative environment for home educators, with stronger ties between the sector and the Department of Education.

2. Recommendation 2: Enhance communication and collaboration

- 2.1. **Form the Queensland Home Education Consultative Group (QHECG):** This group will be a departmental consultative body comprising an external Chair and regional parent representatives (including First Nations representatives), with biennial appointments.
- 2.2. **Annual briefing for key stakeholders:** QHE to provide annual briefings to key stakeholders, offering clarity on regulatory requirements and best practices, positioning itself as the authoritative source for information on home education in Queensland.

⁴¹ Queensland Treasury (2023) [Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework](#), Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

⁴² Queensland Treasury (2023) [Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework](#), Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

Chapter Two: Regulation of Home Education

Introduction

This chapter explores home education regulation and the supports provided by the HEU to assist parents to meet regulatory requirements. It considers practices in other jurisdictions and stakeholder views, and provides recommendations to enhance regulation services and resources to support the delivery of a high-quality education for home educated children and young people.

The need for enhanced regulatory resources

HEU current state

Explanation of the current state focuses on the two major processes used to determine compliance with the standard conditions of registration, rather than the procedural aspects of registration. The HEU provides assistance to parents to meet these responsibilities.

Demonstrating a high-quality educational program

Parents provide a summary of the educational program to be used. This occurs initially as part of the registration process and then as part of the annual reporting process.

A written summary of the educational program should demonstrate that a child will receive a high-quality education, which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways⁴³. The home education website states that parents may wish to consider whether the program addresses the following matters:

- is responsive to the changing needs of the child as indicated by the short and long term educational and personal goals
- has regard to the age, ability, aptitude and development of the child concerned;
- is conducted in an environment conducive to learning
- is responsive to the child's need for social development
- utilises suitable and relevant teaching strategies to deliver the educational program to the child
- engages the child in a range of rich and varied learning experiences
- is supported by sufficient and appropriate resources
- uses strategies for monitoring educational progress.⁴⁴

Along with this guidance, the HEU website provides three templates to help educational program planning. The website states that 'use of these templates is not mandatory'⁴⁵. The templates provided use different education program approaches: a home education program based on the Australian Curriculum; goal-directed home education; and thematic home education⁴⁶. Each

⁴³ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education: Registration](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁴⁴ Queensland Department of Education (2019) [Home education in Queensland procedure](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁴⁵ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education: Registration](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁴⁶ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education: Registration](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

uses a similar table layout and structure, with some changes in presentation to reflect the different educational approaches represented by the templates. All three have links to the Australian Curriculum, with two of the templates using the Australian Curriculum learning areas of English, Maths, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, Technologies, the Arts, Health and Physical Education and Languages. Templates for diverse learning needs programs are also available upon request or where the HEU is notified a child has a disability⁴⁷.

Annual reporting that demonstrates educational progress

Prior to the due date of the report each year, the Home Education Unit provides several notifications to parents. Six months after registration, parents are sent a *Report Pack*. The *Report Pack* provides assistance to parents to meet their regulatory reporting requirements and is available as a download from the website.

The *Report Pack* details guidelines for choosing work samples that demonstrate educational progress, gives annotated examples of children's work with commentary that outlines why these are/are not effective work samples, and includes a template that provides an optional structure for writing contextual information relating to the selected work samples⁴⁸. The final page concludes with information about parents' legal obligations.

The *Reporting for Registration for Home Education form*⁴⁹ (which must be submitted with the report) specifies that use of these templates is not mandatory. Further to the *Report Pack*, one month before the due date parents are sent a unique link to their online reporting form, which specifies the due date. Two weeks before the due date parents are sent a reminder email.

A summary of the reporting process, as depicted in the *Home Education in Queensland Procedure*⁵⁰, is provided in Figure 6. Once received by the HEU, the report and supporting information and documentation are reviewed to determine compliance with the standard conditions of registration.

⁴⁷ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

⁴⁸ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁴⁹ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Reporting for Registration for Home Education form](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁵⁰ Queensland Department of Education (2019) [Home education in Queensland procedure](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

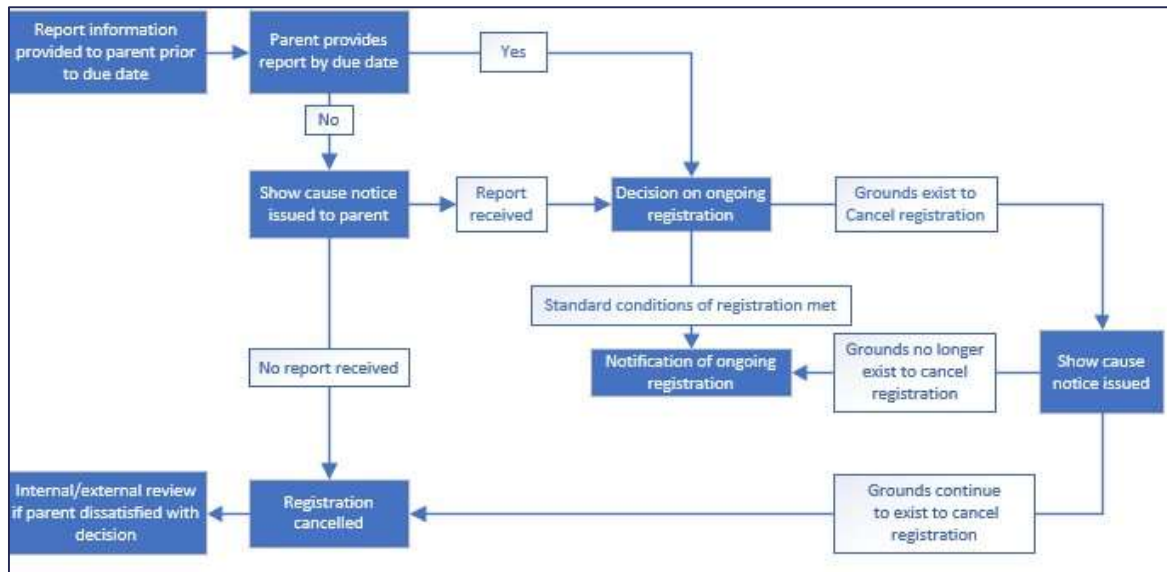


Figure 6: Summary of reporting process flowchart

In cases where a report is not provided by the due date, parents are issued a Show Cause Notice and asked to show why the child’s registration should not be cancelled. Parents then have 30 days to respond and may request an extension to this timeframe, provided the request is made before the due date to respond⁵¹. Not submitting a report is the main reason for issuing a show cause notice to parents⁵². In 2023, HEU performance data indicated that out of 5,562 reports assessed, only 100 show cause notices were issued for reasons other than the non-submission of a report, with only 30 registrations subsequently cancelled as a result⁵³.

These figures show that the vast majority of reports submitted by parents demonstrate their child’s educational progress and are determined by the HEU to be compliant with the standard conditions of registration.

Jurisdictional examples

Home education regulatory requirements, and supports to parents during regulatory processes, vary across jurisdictions.

Most jurisdictions incorporate a higher level of direct personal interaction between the Home Education Unit staff and parents to assess new applications and compliance with regulatory requirements. Salient examples are outlined below.

- There are home visits scheduled in NSW, Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia⁵⁴ for new registrations to discuss and review the education program with the parent.
- In the ACT, within three months of registration, new home educating families meet with an ACT Education Directorate authorised person online or in an agreed upon public location such as a library.

⁵¹ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

⁵² Queensland Department of Education (2024) *Home Education: Performance*, Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁵³ Queensland Department of Education (2024) *Home Education: Performance*, Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁵⁴ In the case of Western Australia and Tasmania, there is an option for the visit to take place at a location other than the home. In South Australia, a visit may also be conducted online.

- For renewal of registration, home visits are scheduled in NSW, Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia⁵⁵ for an evaluation of the implemented education program.

Curriculum requirements for education programs also vary across jurisdictions, as outlined.

- All children registered for home education in NSW must have an educational program based on and taught in accordance with the relevant NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabuses⁵⁶.
- In Western Australia, a home educator moderator will arrange visits to check on educational program alignment with the Western Australia Curriculum⁵⁷.
- In South Australia, a home education program needs to address eight learning areas as defined by the Australian Curriculum⁵⁸.
- In the ACT, home educating parents are not required to follow a specific curriculum, though they are encouraged to be aware of the Australian Curriculum⁵⁹.

Most jurisdictions incorporate reporting on a child's progress into the assessment of an education program for approval. For example:

- In South Australia, home educating families must participate in a review process (usually once every 12 months) and provide evidence that an appropriately planned and resourced learning program has been regularly implemented⁶⁰.
- In NSW, records of assessments must be kept to show how the education program has been delivered and how the requirements for registration are being met - those records are reviewed by an AP during the assessment of an application for registration renewal⁶¹.
- In Victoria, up to 10% of families each year are selected for a program review to check whether regular and efficient instruction has been provided.⁶²

A range of different regulatory supports for registration and reporting are provided in other jurisdictions. In NSW, for example, information and resources available to parents include:

- a guide that provides written and visual instructions for locating syllabus information, supporting documents and examples
- syllabus overviews for programming, planning and tracking a child's learning;
- a programming tool to help document an educational program
- sample scenarios showing ways parents can engage with the registration requirements;

⁵⁵ As with new registrations, visits may not always take place in the home, depending on the jurisdiction.

⁵⁶ NSW Education Standards Authority (2022) [Guidelines for home schooling registration](#), NSW government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁵⁷ Western Australia Department of Education (n.d.) [Homeschooling](#), WA government website, accessed 24 August 2024.

⁵⁸ Government of South Australia (2024) [Guide to Home Education in South Australia](#), SA government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁵⁹ ACT Department of Education (n.d.) [Frequently Asked Questions](#), ACT government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁶⁰ Government of South Australia (2024) [Guide to Home Education in South Australia](#), SA government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁶¹ NSW Education Standards Authority (2022) [Guidelines for home schooling registration](#), NSW government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁶² Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (2024) [Understand home education reviews](#), Victorian government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

- templates for monitoring and recording progress and learning activities⁶³.

In Victoria, information is provided about:

- registration and appeal processes, with downloadable copies of application and registration amendment forms and the *Home-schooling assessment framework and review process* document⁶⁴
- the annual review process, with downloadable copies of the *Home-schooling internal review policy*, review application forms and templates and samples to help parents provide the required information and evidence, along with a suite of videos that explain how home education reviews are conducted⁶⁵.

Strengths and challenges: stakeholder voices

Parents noted several strengths of the current regulatory requirements in Queensland. HEEG members valued the flexibility to design an educational program that meets the needs of their child, without the requirement to implement the Australian Curriculum, as is mandatory in some other jurisdictions. Others recognised that ‘that the HEU accepts a diversity of approaches, in not stipulating one particular approach’. Other comments included that the resources on the Queensland Department of Education website for learning@home⁶⁶ are ‘a fantastic free resource’ that could be ‘updated more regularly’. Stakeholders recognised these existing strengths as they also considered areas for improvement.

Market research across focus groups and the survey identified that parents considered Queensland’s current approach to regulation and the regulatory experience had the following strengths:

- flexibility in educational approaches and philosophies
- provisional registration
- processing times for applications for registration
- understanding home educating families’ needs⁶⁷.

Provide supports that reflect a range of approaches to learning

Parent participants reiterated that supports that exemplify child-centred learning programs would enhance existing resources. There was a view that a range of authentic, and practical templates for home education environments could support parents to flexibly adapt to the unique needs and interests of each child. The currently available templates imply a single approach to reporting. Comments suggested that this approach reflected ‘a school mindset’ that is at odds with parts of

“Existing templates are school-oriented. There is a desire for more adaptable planning tools”

- HEEG meeting

⁶³ NSW Education Standards Authority (2024) [NESA syllabus support material](#), NSW government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁶⁴ Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (2024) [Register to home educate](#), Victorian government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁶⁵ Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (2024) [Understand home education reviews](#), Victorian government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁶⁶ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [learning@home](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁶⁷ Nous Group (2024) *Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit*, market research report, pp. 17-18.

the home educating community (organisational stakeholder comment). Stakeholder comments reflected a view that a wider range of educational resources could reflect broader and more contemporary approaches to individualised learning, common in the home educating community.

Clarify program and reporting expectations to reduce stress

Parents often reported feeling 'stress' and 'worry' about meeting the regulatory requirements related to submitting a high-quality educational program and reporting educational progress. There was a sense that there was a 'fundamental fear' throughout the process (repeated across Bribie Island, Yeppoon, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Berrinba community consultations). Parents felt that what 'passes' isn't always clear; as one parent commented, "*I have seen someone 'fail' with a 30-page report while a 1-page report is 'passed'. How does that happen?*" Similarly, market research found parents report experiencing 'inconsistency in the types of plans and reports being approved year to year'⁶⁸. Some parents considered that the challenge of reporting discouraged some families from completing the registration process.

Effective models of successful reporting from home educating parents were highly valued as a support for families, particularly for those who are new to home education. Without clarity on reporting requirements, many parents turn to other community members or commercial entities for assistance with understanding the reporting process. Ideally, this wider information seeking should be supplementary rather than a necessity or first port of call.

Inclusive reporting

For parents and stakeholders, the value of the reporting process was the opportunity to 'tell the story' of their child's learning. HEEG members observed that reporting was not only a regulatory

"... children's interests are important to the home educating parent, e.g. fishing and movies. Curriculum needs to be applicable to culture – it needs the right mixture"
- Gimuy First Nations Home School Co-op

requirement but could (and should) be a supportive, reflective, and educational part of home educating a child or children. Some parents felt that the 'story' of a child's learning could be lost when constrained to a written template, particularly for children who are neurodiverse or those who experience mental health challenges. It was reported that progress can be difficult to demonstrate in a written

report. Parents reiterated that a phone call or an option for an online meeting could be a way to assist in conveying the circumstances of a child's experiences and may allay parents' fears or concerns, noting their child's progress may be easier to communicate and clarify in conversation.

The rationale for change

Although HEU performance data indicates that the vast majority of reports submitted by parents are compliant with the standard conditions of registration, the Review found that many parents report uncertainty about requirements and how to demonstrate the educational progress of their child through a written report. Consultation conducted by the Independent Reviewer and the market researcher confirmed the consistent theme that there is an opportunity to consolidate, make explicit, and enhance supports for regulatory processes. Options that assist parent choice

⁶⁸ Nous Group (2024) *Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit*, market research report, p. 18.

and model successful high-quality education programs would reduce the regulatory burden for both parents and the HEU. The Review found benefit in providing the following:

- **enhanced and expanded models of summaries of educational programs:** These could illustrate ‘a range of rich and varied learning experiences’⁶⁹ and aligned reporting options that demonstrate high quality educational programs and educational progress. A curated range of templates and reporting examples may assist parents in their decision-making about the most appropriate approach to their child’s education, allowing choice that is ‘responsive to the changing needs of their child’⁷⁰ – as required to meet regulatory responsibilities.
- **effective front-end supports and reporting:** Exemplars that model different approaches to learning that reflect diverse learning needs would reduce the stress and anxiety experienced by some families in meeting regulatory requirements. The requirement that a high-quality education is suitable for a child’s ‘age, ability, aptitude and development’⁷¹ could be better supported by a range of templates and successful educational program and reporting examples that reflect different ages, abilities, and stages of education. For example, these might include successful examples of a young person in the senior (age-equivalent) years who participates in some TAFE learning experiences, or a First Nations learner in the middle years whose ‘rich and varied’ learning experiences occur on Country.
- **transparent guidelines that inform HEU decision-making:** Explicit guidelines that frame HEU decisions about compliance of educational programs and reporting in meeting regulatory requirements would assist parents to understand expectations and decisions and improve quality in the first submission. This would align with Model Practice 5 from the *Regulator Performance Framework*⁷², which guides regulating organisations to be transparent and accountable in action.
- **online interview reporting trial:** A reporting option that allows parents to opt-in for a concise written report supplemented by an interview would allow for personalised support and provide the HEU with data about the effectiveness of a real-time discussions about a child’s progress and reduce the reporting burden on parents (Regulatory Model Practice 1⁷³). Direct conversations with educators are already used in other jurisdictions, as outlined earlier in this chapter, to assess progress of implementing an educational program. Market research also found that “Parents identified a range of alternative reporting formats that they would find more suited to demonstrating the way they deliver a quality education at home than the current written report”⁷⁴.

⁶⁹ Queensland Department of Education (2019) [Home education in Queensland procedure](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁷⁰ Queensland Department of Education (2019) [Home education in Queensland procedure](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁷¹ Queensland Department of Education (2019) [Home education in Queensland procedure](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁷² Queensland Treasury (2023) [Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework](#), Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

⁷³ Queensland Treasury (2023) [Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework](#), Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

⁷⁴ Nous Group (2024) *Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit*, market research report, p. 21.

Recommendations

These recommendations aim to strengthen existing regulatory support to be responsive to the diverse needs of home educating families, that are child-centred and streamline registration requirements for submission of education programs and annual reports of child progress.

3. Recommendation 3: Enhance and expand resources that support parents to meet regulatory requirements

- 3.1. **Enhance education program templates:** Improve and expand existing templates and exemplars for education programs, reflecting various approaches to home education, age ranges, and learning needs.
- 3.2. **Develop exemplars for annual reports:** Create a range of exemplar annual reports that show educational progress in different contexts, providing guidance for parents.
- 3.3. **Publish compliance information:** Provide clear and transparent information about how compliance with standard conditions of registration is determined for educational programs and written reports.

4. Recommendation 4: Consider trialling a new reporting option

- 4.1. **Consider a trial:** for a new reporting option where parents can submit a concise templated written report, supplemented by an online interview to demonstrate educational progress.

The need to recognise families as the regulatory audience

HEU current state

HEU website: A central support and resource for families

The HEU website is a key source of regulatory information for parents. It provides access to required forms, relevant external links, and resources (educational program templates and reporting samples) for key regulatory processes of registration, submitting a high-quality educational plan, and reporting educational progress, with online submission of documents available. A range of supports for home educating parents to develop a high-quality educational program and meet reporting obligations to demonstrate each child's educational progress are available (see Table 5). In the year 1 June 2023 to 1 June 2024, there were a total of 169,825 total website views, with 8,524 reporting forms and 6,647 applications for registration downloaded.

Table 5: Regulatory supports on the HEU website

| Support type | Description ⁷⁵ |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Information to parents | |
| Approved forms | - Approved forms are designed to step parents through the application, reporting and internal review process. |
| Home Education Unit website | - Provides a centralised place for parents to access and find resources, including approved forms, templates and guidance. Information is provided under the headings: Home Education (homepage), Registration, Reports, Senior secondary, and Performance. |

⁷⁵ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

| Educational resources | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Educational program templates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Templates providing an example of how parents can develop their own educational programs. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o ACARA/Australian Curriculum template o Thematic template o Goal-directed template |
| <i>Report Pack</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pack provided to parents to assist them in understanding the requirements for submitting a written report. - Provided 6 months before the reporting period to provide timely support to parents. - The <i>Report Pack</i> is available on the HEU website and includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o approved form o reporting information and work samples o year in review and work samples annotations template o summary of educational program – template & example |

The HEU homepage presents as a formal, legislatively-oriented information site. The site begins with a call-out box of information with links, currently detailing the Home Education Unit (HEU) review and Home Education Expert Group (HEEG); the release of the new phone system; the ease of registration using an online form; and recent home education research reports⁷⁶. Following this, the page foregrounds legislative information, beginning with “The Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 allows parents to choose to educate their children at home”⁷⁷.

Key information, such as the *Home Education Fact Sheet*⁷⁸, which details education-focused and practical information in a parent-friendly way, is second in a list of ‘Useful links’ on the homepage, but is not prominent on the site. The *Report Pack*, a key support for parents, is found under the Reports tab in the Resources section, labelled ‘Reporting information and work samples – set 1 (PDF, 711KB)’ with the reporting form and other components available as separate downloads. *Home Education in Queensland Procedure*⁷⁹, which includes flow charts that visually represent registration and review processes is not available on the HEU website.

Communications: Tone and language

As part of the Review, existing HEU communications to home educating families were compiled and reviewed, along with the website communications. Several of the communications and email templates make use of language appropriate to a parent audience. For example, the acknowledgement of the receipt of an education report concludes with, “Thank you for the report. We look forward to viewing your child’s work.” Other samples similarly use a friendly tone, polite language and express appreciation for parents’ regulatory efforts, such as their registration application. Additional communications that support regulatory processes provided by the HEU are outlined in Table 6.

⁷⁶ Enhance Research (2022) [Parent with Child/ren Registered for Home Education Research Insight Report and Social Media Analysis Insight Report](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August, 2024.

⁷⁷ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁷⁸ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education fact sheet](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁷⁹ Queensland Department of Education (2019) [Home education in Queensland procedure](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

Table 6: Regulatory communications by the HEU

| Support type | Description ⁸⁰ |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Information to parents | |
| Reporting invitation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reminders to submit reports within legislative timeframes are sent to parents. - Phone calls are made to check status if HEU is aware of exceptional circumstances affecting a family (e.g., significant health issue, natural disasters). |
| Call Centre, Inbox | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The HEU email in-box is used to send correspondence to parents such as registration certificates, continuing registration and notices. - The HEU inbox also allows parents and stakeholders to send correspondence including applications, reports, change of details, and surrenders. |
| SMS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An SMS is used to send a reminder to parents on the due date of any statutory notice, to support them in meeting these requirements. |
| Educational resources | |
| Educational program templates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A diverse learning needs program template and reporting template are provided upon request or where the HEU has been notified the child has a significant disability. This template is not typically suitable or applicable for other learners. |
| Pre-show cause phone call | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents receive a call to discuss how further information can be provided in assessing learning plans |

Conversely, in non-compliance communications sent directly to parents, letters tend to lead with legal jargon and policy, and are perfunctory and impersonal in tone. The HEU has initiated some changes to the language used in regulatory-compliance communications (e.g., updating a ‘Pre-show cause’ notice to a ‘Request for further information’⁸¹).

Jurisdictional examples

To gauge the approach to broad communications in other jurisdictions, a scan of jurisdictional websites was undertaken. Notably, the review team did not have access to correspondence with parents of children registered for home education in other jurisdictions in order to make explicit and direct comparisons of tone and language.

The use of education-focused and family-friendly online regulatory supports, including websites and online portals, are evident in other jurisdictions. The ACT makes effective use of a comprehensive online portal dedicated to home learning (*Resources for Students and Families*), which contains lessons, activities, podcasts, video links and family guides⁸². The family guides support parents to manage their child’s learning by providing resources in categories such as disability support, wellbeing, effective home learning, and careers and transitions. There is a clear family-centred and personal approach to the webpage with language such as “you know your child best” used to forefront information⁸³. A digital library provides resources, lessons and activity ideas categorised into both preschool, lower primary, upper primary and high school

⁸⁰ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

⁸¹ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

⁸² ACT Department of Education (n.d.) [Home Learning Resources for Students and Families](#), ACT government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁸³ ACT Department of Education (n.d.) [Home Learning Resources for Students and Families – Considerations for Effective Home Learning](#), ACT government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

sections as well as subject areas⁸⁴. The website graphics are family-friendly, attractive, and colourful.

In NSW, sample home schooling plans⁸⁵ developed by home schooling parents are available on the NSW Education Standards Authority website. The *Guidelines for Home Schooling Registration* in NSW and the Home-Schooling Online website (log in required for access) provide clear and easily accessible regulatory information and support. Extensive information is provided about the assessment process and requisite home visits by an authorised person, including what to do before, during and after the visit, supported by access to the *Authorised Persons Handbook*⁸⁶.

Social media is another important communication option in some jurisdictions. In Victoria, the Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Home Education Facebook group provides updates, resources and activities to support home education programs⁸⁷ while in Tasmania, the OER has a blog that provides a network for home educators with news updates and event announcements, such as the home education art class exhibition⁸⁸.

Strengths and challenges: Stakeholder voices

Communication style and approach

During consultation, Home Education Expert Group (HEEG) members communicated that there was appreciation for a range of assistance currently provided by the HEU. They noted follow-ups that were done by SMS in relation to a 'show cause' notice. Parents also acknowledged personalised communication from HEU as valued, referencing reminder emails that use relevant family members' names.

While strengths were noted, Review consultation found opportunity to improve the approach to communication in order to ensure clarity for home educating parents, thus improving trust and reducing misperceptions and resultant fears about non-compliance. Similarly, market research found that the 'overall approachability' of the HEU could be improved, through improved tone of communications to be more 'personal, positive and supportive'⁸⁹. HEU consultation also confirmed that parents can find the tone of certain communications to be punitive, including the use of "show cause" terminology and associated citations of legislative provisions⁹⁰.

... the Department could improve its approachability by ensuring communications are positive and speak well of home education.

- Parent Consultation (Nous Group, 2024)

Under the theme of 'communication and perception', parents felt communication could be eased by streamlining processes through the adoption of contemporary communication tools such as

⁸⁴ ACT Department of Education (n.d.) [Home Learning Resources for Students and Families – Digital Resource Library](#), ACT government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁸⁵ NSW Education Standards Authority (2024) [Sample plans and resources](#), NSW government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁸⁶ NSW Education Standards Authority (2019) [Authorised Persons Handbook](#), NSW government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁸⁷ Victorian Registrations and Qualifications Authority (2024) [Access support and resources for home education](#), Victorian government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁸⁸ Office of the Education Registrar (2024) [Home Education News and Information](#), Tasmanian government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

⁸⁹ Nous Group (2024) *Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit*, market research report, p. 19.

⁹⁰ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

multimedia and social media. In addition, it was recognised that social media plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of home education, including both positive and negative aspects. The HEU also confirmed that social media has become a preferred mechanism for information-sharing about regulatory requirements between parents, and a medium for parent-peer support.

A contemporary website

A key theme arising from consultation was a need for improvements to the website and additional online tools. Stakeholders perceived that the current HEU website could be redesigned to more effectively meet the regulatory support needs of the home education community. Community groups noted that a contemporary family-friendly website could promote home education success stories and show different pathways for children who are home educated. Expanding the information and resources available may include different types of home educating approaches, a home-education 'manual', different reporting options, and a list of supports and social groups – such as a Home Education social media group.

Sentiments expressed in various forums included suggestions that an enhanced website would function as a 'one-stop shop' for resources and 'point of truth' for information, as well as providing an online portal which could provide 'a location for everything'. The creation of a family-friendly, child-centred online portal for easier access to resources and the submission of contemporary evidence of educational progress, including videos, had strong support.

The rationale for change

Clear, consistent and positive communication whether it be through a website, correspondence or phone contact, is an important support for home educating families. Language that recognises the target regulatory audience – parents rather than entities – is a crucial part of ensuring meaningful and trusted engagement between the HEU and home educating families. Ultimately, stakeholders agreed that affirming, constructive and positive communication of essential information assists home educating families to meet their regulatory requirements.

Recommendations for change in this area would aim to:

- **enhance accessibility and efficiency:** Enhancing the homepage is a way to provide appropriate information and support to parents to assist compliance (Regulatory Model Practice 3⁹¹). Easing site navigation would reduce parents' need to contact the HEU for clarification. An enhanced online portal could improve efficiency and ease of regulatory processes.
- **deliver more timely communication:** The addition of a social media presence will give parents another channel for timely information updates. Social media presents an opportunity for the HEU to share resources with the home education community in a less formal way.
- **improve relationships:** Communication that is clear, consistent and personalised, supports effective regulatory relationships. Correspondence that is clear at the outset and re-affirms the importance of the individual child's learning journey will also decrease misunderstandings and thereby improve efficiency.

⁹¹ Queensland Treasury (2023) [Queensland Government Regulator Performance Framework](#), Queensland Treasury website, accessed 8 August 2024.

Recommendations

These recommendations aim to modernise regulation services and resources, making them more supportive and user-friendly for home educators in Queensland.

5. **Recommendation 5: Leverage technology for better support and streamlined processes**
 - 5.1. **Enhance website accessibility:** to improve accessibility of information, links to supports and resources for ease of navigation for parents.
 - 5.2. **Create a social media presence** to connect with the home education community and provide timely information.
 - 5.3. **Develop an online portal:** Upgrade online services to include a portal for regulatory tasks like registration and reporting, making processes more efficient for parents.
6. **Recommendation 6: Review and revise all formal communications from the HEU to ensure they are clear, supportive, and family-centred**
 - 6.1. **Tone and language:** Update the website letters, emails, and other communications to be more encouraging and constructive to support families to meet regulatory requirements, with clear guidance and resources.
 - 6.2. **Consistency:** Ensure that all communications are consistent in their messaging, reflect the updated role of the QHE, and reinforce the goal of fostering a positive and supportive relationship between the regulatory body and home education families.

Chapter Three: Support and Advisory Services for Families

Introduction

This chapter considers the wrap-around supports provided by HEU that assist parents in educating their children. Outlining practice within other jurisdictions and reflecting on stakeholder views, the recommendations focus on opportunities for increased supports that are more aligned with those available for children, young people and their families across the continuum of educational choices.

The need for expanded supports for families

HEU current state

Support and advice are enablers for families in providing a high-quality education for their children. While regulatory support is the focus of Chapter Two, this chapter focuses on supports for parents that relate to a child's development. The HEU delivers a range of existing wrap-around supports and information to families about opportunities that are available to home educated young people.

Onboarding and transitioning

To support parents when they are considering home education as an option for their child, the HEU homepage provides a central location for information on home education for parents. It includes a link to the *Home Education Fact Sheet*⁹², which gives an overview of home education as an option available to parents, along with individual considerations, associated costs, and financial assistance (the *Textbook and Resource Allowance* for home educated young people who are age equivalent to Years 7 – 12). The website provides access to required registration forms, supporting information, and a selection of planning resources that assist parents to make a decision about how they can meet their home education responsibilities if they decide it suits their child's learning needs. In addition, the call centre enables parents to talk with a HEU officer and gain personalised assistance and pertinent information regarding home education.

National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

All home educated children in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are entitled to participate in NAPLAN testing. The *Home Education Fact Sheet* offers information about NAPLAN, stating that "Participation in the NAPLAN tests is generally available through your local school"⁹³ (p. 4). Prior to the tests, the HEU provides all parents with eligible children written information about the tests. Upon request by a parent, a letter of introduction is supplied to assist parents in their discussions with a local school about their child's participation. In 2023-24, 48 home educated children participated in NAPLAN⁹⁴. The HEU distributes NAPLAN results on behalf of the QCAA to home educating parents.

Senior pathways

Information and support is provided by the HEU in relation to senior pathways for home educated young people in the equivalent of Years 10 – 12. The *Home Education Fact Sheet* includes

⁹² Queensland Department of Education. (2024). [Home Education fact sheet](#), Department of Education website, accessed 08 July 2024.

⁹³ Queensland Department of Education. (2024). [Home Education fact sheet](#), Department of Education website, accessed 08 July 2024.

⁹⁴ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

information about the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) and student learning accounts. While a home education program created by parents does not attract credits towards the QCE, young people in home education are able to seek entry to tertiary institutions through alternative pathways. The HEU also provides general information regarding TAFE programs and approves TAFE at School applications. In 2023-24, 122 home educated young people were approved for TAFE at School⁹⁵. In addition, the HEU provides information about School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SAT) and will support parents through the application process to ensure the SAT is compliant with legislative requirements, approve participation and endorse the agreed schedule of studies. In 2023-24, 29 home educated young people had SATs approved with a further 36 pending approval⁹⁶. Finally, the HEU approves arrangements for work experience prior to its commencement to ensure coverage by the Department's work cover and public liability insurance. In 2023-24, 12 home educated young people were approved for work experience⁹⁷.

State-wide services and educational representative opportunities

Home educated children and young people have access to some state-wide services and representative opportunities. The *Home Education Fact Sheet*⁹⁸ provides information about accessing state dental services, and district and regional sports. HEU can provide a regional sport representation letter, confirming home education registration and the entitlement of a child to participate in the sports competition.

Regional opportunities

The HEU homepage provides a link to contact details for regional office contacts for state schools. However, there are no roles allocated to providing home education support in those offices. Enquiries about registration and other assistance are therefore managed by the HEU call centre and inbox.

Jurisdictional examples

To assist home educating families in the onboarding process, several jurisdictions have comprehensive guides to home education. These provide ongoing support and consolidate a range of necessary information and resources in a clear and cohesive manner for ease of access by parents. These guides are readily available for download from the websites, enabling easy access for parents who are possible, beginning, and/or experienced home educators (see Table 7).

⁹⁵ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

⁹⁶ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

⁹⁷ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

⁹⁸ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education fact sheet](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024

Table 7: Examples of guides to home education by jurisdiction

| Jurisdiction | Guides |
|--------------------------|---|
| NSW | <p>The <i>Guidelines for Home Schooling Registration in NSW 2021</i>⁹⁹ provides information for parents about home schooling registration, the application process, requirements to be met, the NSW curriculum and where to access other relevant information.</p> <p>The <i>Using Syllabus Documents and Support Materials Guide</i> helps parents locate syllabus information, supporting documents and examples drawn from syllabuses and resource materials provided for teachers¹⁰⁰.</p> |
| Victoria | The <i>Guide to Home Education in Victoria</i> provides detailed information on home education requirements, registration and available resources for parents ¹⁰¹ . |
| Western Australia | The <i>Home Education Procedures 2020 (WA)</i> and <i>Home Education Policy 2020 (WA)</i> contain information on home education in WA including templates and resources ¹⁰² . |
| South Australia | The <i>Guide to Home Education in South Australia 2024</i> provides information on the conditions and criteria for home education, alternative education options and exemptions, the online application, exemption renewals, resources and services and the roles and responsibilities of all parties ¹⁰³ . |

All Australian states and territories support optional NAPLAN participation for home educated children, which is outlined in a Guide or Policy, or noted on a website. Similarly, senior pathways information and advice is consolidated in the guides of other jurisdictions. For instance, the *Guide to Home Schooling in Victoria 2024* provides advice regarding senior secondary qualifications, careers and transitions, Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and *Skills First*, Victoria's government-subsidised training and further education program in a unified document.

All jurisdictions similarly offer some state-wide services and educational representative opportunities for home educated young people. In the *Guide to Home Education in South Australia 2024*, there is a specific section for Social Interaction and another for Other Programs and Services. Information and links are provided for Open Access College programs and the School of Languages, as well as the Department's Instrumental Music Service, the Premier's Reading and Be Active Challenges, and government sports competitions.

From a regional support perspective, in Western Australia, the central office of the Department of Education manages the policy and legislative aspects of home education, while regional offices manage all operational aspects.

⁹⁹ NSW Education Standards Authority (2022) [Guidelines for home schooling registration](#), NSW government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹⁰⁰ NSW Education Standards Authority (2024) [NESA syllabus support material](#), NSW government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹⁰¹ VRQA. (2024) [Access support and resources for home education](#), Victorian government website, accessed 8 September, 2024.

¹⁰² Western Australia Department of Education (2020) [Home education procedures](#), Western Australia government website, accessed 30 August, 2024.

¹⁰³ Government of South Australia (2024) [Home Education](#), South Australia government website, accessed 30 August, 2024.

Strengths and challenges: Stakeholder voices

Onboarding and transition support

A recurring theme that arose from consultation related to the need for cohesive, comprehensive information to better support transitions into, through, and out of home education. Consultation with home education representative organisations suggested that onboarding and case management for parents transitioning in and out of home education could be improved with additional support structures for new home educators and possible regional support models. Community consultation with families in Townsville and Bribie Island echoed the perception that “Starting home schooling seems hard” and that “Initial registration is very hard”. HEEG consultations confirmed the need for improved onboarding and transitioning supports.

Senior pathways assistance

Consultation highlighted the particular supports that are crucial for transitions after the senior phase of learning. Market research indicated that parents identified a range of supports that would enable them to deliver high quality education at home including career guidance and higher education pathway support.¹⁰⁴ This was consistent with sentiments expressed throughout consultation, which highlighted the need for support for young people in the equivalent of Years 10 – 12 and the need for access to pathways information to support informed decision making. Participants listed career advisors, university liaisons and improved communication between the HEU, TAFEs and registered training organisations (RTOs) as highly desirable, along with additional support regarding apprenticeships and work experience. Some parents were unsure of whether participation in a TAFE course could be included as part of annual reporting. Suggestions were made in Townsville and in other community consultation to adopt a guidance officer approach throughout primary and secondary to support parents to navigate entry pathways to universities and TAFE. Case study examples of successful continuing education stories are seen as particularly valuable in the community. Of the 1,161 respondents who contributed to the Review’s market research, 56% reported that they would like to go to the HEU for support in understanding pathways to further study (e.g., vocational or higher education), although only 13% currently went to the HEU for that information¹⁰⁵.

State-wide services and educational representative opportunities

Feedback from community consultation was that families are often uncertain about the range of supports and resources that are available and how to access them. Aligned with supports available to children enrolled in schools, they would like improved pathways to therapy services, educational resources, and community support, stressing the personal costs and limited access to relevant resources. Specifically, parents would appreciate more information on interschool sport participation and improved access to government services, especially disability supports.

The rationale for change

Traditionally, state education services for young people have been delivered through schools, with an underpinning assumption of near-universal access for this approach. With the number of registrations in Queensland growing every year, there is an opportunity to broaden the delivery of government supports to children and young people registered for home education. While a

¹⁰⁴ Nous Group (2024) *Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit*, market research report, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Nous Group (2024) *Market research and engagement to inform the Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit*, market research report, p. 27.

growing number of wrap-around supports and opportunities are currently coordinated by the HEU, consultation indicates that enhanced assistance could support families to deliver high-quality education with improved ease of access to supplementary information, extra-curricular/co-curricular activities and other services. Specific supports would be of particular value to the home educating community including:

- **a home education guide:** publication of a cohesive guide to home education would assist parents during the onboarding process and provide a single reference for families as young people transition through different phases of education. An extensive range of home education information is currently located in disparate locations (on the website, in downloadable documents, and in video links in correspondence). Developing a comprehensive guide that details relevant information in relation to both regulatory responsibilities and supports and additional assistance and opportunities in one easily accessible location will align Queensland with most jurisdictions.
- **clear and explicit information for senior-phase learners:** from 2019 to 2023, home education registrations in secondary year levels grew by 3,470 (261.7%). Even in the year from 2022 to 2023, secondary registrations grew from 3,602 to 4,796 young people. Such an increase warrants additional support for home educating families in the secondary phase so that informed decisions can be made in relation to senior pathways. Supporting home educated young people to develop skills and pursue post-compulsory education aligns with national priorities for tertiary education attainment.
- **equitable access to state-wide opportunities and services:** leveraging connections for home educated young people to participate in opportunities and receive services that are available to similarly aged children delivers equitable access across the education continuum. This may include access to guidance officer advice about the transition in and out of home education.

Recommendations

These recommendations aim to bolster the support network for home education families, ensuring they have the resources and guidance needed at every stage of their child's educational journey.

7. Recommendation 7: Establish a home education support and advisory response for families

7.1 Offer information at key junctures:

- 7.1.1 **Onboarding support** – provide a comprehensive guide, webinars and registration assistance for families new to home education.
- 7.1.2 **Senior pathways advisory support** – connect families with information about QCAA, TAFE, registered training organisations, universities regarding senior pathways.
- 7.1.3 **NAPLAN** – communicate with schools, the QCAA, and families around how registered home educated children can choose and access state-wide testing.
- 7.1.4 **State-wide services** – link families to state-wide services, such as the Autism Hub, via websites offering information, webinars and support.
- 7.1.5 **Student representative opportunities** – promote and expand access to opportunities such as regional sport, Premier's Reading Challenge, applying for The Premier's Anzac Prize, student leadership forums or advisory councils.

7.2 Explore opportunities for regional connections: including possible use of community liaison roles.

The Need for Improved Access to Education Resources and Services

HEU current state

The HEU *Fact Sheet*¹⁰⁶ outlines some of the costs associated with home education. While there is no fee to register a child for home education, applicants are guided to “consider the hidden costs associated with this form of education” (p. 2). These may include costs related to accessing specialist services or funding available for children enrolled in schools but not available to home educators; accessing a variety of educational resources, and any possible impacts on employment when becoming a home educator. Access to some resources and services is coordinated by the HEU.

Student identification cards

The HEU issues identification cards upon parent request for young people who are fully registered for home education. There is no cost charged to parents. Currently, there is no explicit reference to the availability of identification cards for home educated children on the HEU website. Information is outlined in the HEU Fact Sheet¹⁰⁷, which specifies that young people aged 15 years or older are eligible for a secondary student concession fare and will need to show their HEU ID card when they are buying tickets. Data shows that 303 home education identification cards were issued in 2023 – 24¹⁰⁸.

Access to additional curriculum resources

Parents have access to departmental curriculum resources such as *learning@home*¹⁰⁹ materials from the Home Education Unit homepage on the Department’s website. Some of these materials require a school student log in, making them inaccessible to home educating parents. There is also a link to the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority on the homepage where a range of publicly-available Australian Curriculum-aligned curriculum and assessment resources can be downloaded.

Parents of registered home education children may also request access to Scootle for their child/ren¹¹⁰, a learning repository with over 20,000 digital learning resources. Although not communicated on the website, the Home Education Fact Sheet¹¹¹ details that “Access to Scootle is a web-based resource bank which provides digital teaching and learning content linked to the Australian Curriculum is available for home educated children. The resource bank is published by Education Services Australia” (p. 2). In 2023–2024, 515 children registered for home children had arranged access to Scootle.

Jurisdictional examples

Student identification cards

¹⁰⁶ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education fact sheet](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹⁰⁷ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education fact sheet](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹⁰⁸ Administrative data provided by the Queensland Home Education Unit to the Review.

¹⁰⁹ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [learning@home](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹¹⁰ Education Services Australia (2024) [Scootle](#), website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹¹¹ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education fact sheet](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

Pathways exist nationally for registered home education children and young people to be issued with a government student identification card for transport concessions. Some variations exist in the processes for issuing identification cards (see Table 8).

Table 8: Provision of identification cards by jurisdiction

| Jurisdiction | Student identification card |
|---------------------------|---|
| ACT | Home Education Student Identification Card and a MyWay concession pass for public transport ¹¹² . |
| NSW | Students over 16 can apply for a NSW Photo Card ¹¹³ ; students under 16 can apply for a Transport Concession Entitlement Card ¹¹⁴ . |
| Victoria | MYKI travel card and Public Transport Victoria Student ID ¹¹⁵ . |
| Western Australia | Smartrider photo ID for public transport available ¹¹⁶ . |
| South Australia | ID cards are available from the student's enrolled school ¹¹⁷ . |
| Tasmania | Home education registration card available (not photo ID) ¹¹⁸ . |
| Northern Territory | ID cards available upon registration ¹¹⁹ . |

Access to curriculum resources

Access to the national curriculum learning repository, Scootle is provided on parent request to all registered home education children and young people across jurisdictions. In jurisdictions where home educated children are able to be partially enrolled in home education and a school, there is also access to school-based resources and facilities.

NSW has an extensive range of curriculum resources accessible for parents, noting that there is a requirement to align home education programs with state-based syllabuses. NSW Curriculum resources, Syllabus Overviews, Outcome Summaries and sample case studies are provided to parents to assist in the design and implementation of a home education program, and are organised in education phases: K-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12 and 7-10 Life Skills. Home education families can also register with Tes Australia¹²⁰ for free access to resources that relate to the NSW syllabuses.

Liaison with commercial companies

Most jurisdictions provide information on their websites for home educating families about support services by government agencies (e.g., transport and public transport services) and not-for-profit organisations (e.g., the Victorian Association of Gifted and Talented Children). Partnerships with commercial companies are not identified.

¹¹² ACT Department of Education (n.d.) [Support and Services](#), ACT government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹¹³ Service NSW (2022) [Apply for a NSW Photo Card](#), Service NSW website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹¹⁴ Service NSW (2024) [Transport concession entitlement card](#), Service NSW website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹¹⁵ VRQA (2024) [Guide to Home Education in Victoria](#), s6(k), Victorian government website, accessed 8 September 2024.

¹¹⁶ Transperth (n.d.) [Student SmartRider](#), Transperth website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹¹⁷ South Australian Government (2024) [Guide to Home Education in South Australia 2024](#), SA government website, accessed 30 August 2024.

¹¹⁸ Information provided by OER Home Education (2024, July).

¹¹⁹ Information provided by Northern Territory Home Education (2024, August).

¹²⁰ Tes (2024) [Lesson resources](#), Tes Global website, accessed 15 August 2024.

Strengths and challenges: Stakeholder voices

The following themes related to access to support for home educating families arose in stakeholder consultation during the Review.

Resources and financial concerns

Home educating parents expressed appreciation for the identification card issued by the Home Education Unit. Although home education identification cards are intended to support transport concessions, parents report that the card is not always recognised by transport providers. Parents consulted were not always aware that they could access an identification card for their registered children.

Equity and inclusion

Parents expressed that a high-quality education was enabled by suitable options for supports and services. Some parents felt they were 'neglected by the system'. HEEG members identified limited access to educational resources available for registered teachers as a challenge. The cost of home educating children was reported as considerable as parents seek opportunities to enrich their children's learning experiences. Parents in consultation forums noted their view that providing a home education that met their child's individual learning needs, including those with gifts and talents, different abilities (including children with neurodiversity), and/or those experiencing mental health challenges, represented a substantial economic 'saving' to governments and school systems.

The rationale for change

Ultimately, stakeholder perspectives suggested that leveraging wrap-around support services for home educated children and young people in Queensland could better enable families to deliver high-quality education. The Review found that parents and stakeholders would appreciate change in key areas:

- **enable equitable access to common student discounts:** Noting the costs of home education, the department could support access to discounts and services for children and young people by communicating with government agencies, transport companies, commercial businesses and community organisations to clarify home educated children should be recognised as eligible for appropriate discounts. Improving access to the resources and supports available for those in school settings improves equity for young people no matter the educational option chosen by their parents.
- **leverage existing supports for home educating families:** Navigating the range of education resources can be complex and varied. Parents who home educate their children want to know what is available and how to access it. Families with children who have specific needs, such as those with autism, could benefit significantly from access to specialised resources, such as those on the Autism Hub. Clear information about targeted supports would support responsive home education programs tailored to a range of ages, abilities, aptitudes and levels of development¹²¹.

¹²¹ Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education: Registration](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

- **recognise and broker supports for ‘rich and varied’¹²² learning experiences:** Access to discounts to museums, galleries, performing arts centres, education facilities and sporting venues supports children to participate in a rich variety of high-quality learning experiences. The department could liaise with commercial companies to broker additional discounts for resources which may help ease some of the financial burden experienced by some home educating families. These wrap-around services, while not strictly related to regulatory requirements, support equity and affordability for parents who choose home education.

Recommendations

These recommendations aim to support home educating families to access a broader range of resources.

8. Recommendation 8: Broker and expand access to educational resources

- 8.1. **Review student identification cards:** to ensure they contain the information required to be recognised for discounts and services by government agencies, transport companies and community organisations, and communicate their availability to families.
- 8.2. **Access to curriculum resources:** Provide access for families to educational curriculum support materials as they are developed and updated.
- 8.3. **Liaise with commercial companies:** Provide information to education companies offering educational or teacher discounts to promote consideration of including home educators and children registered for home education in these offers.

¹²² Queensland Department of Education (2024) [Home education: Registration](#), Department of Education website, accessed 30 August 2024.

Conclusion

Queensland has a vibrant and growing home education community. The regulation of home education, which aims to ensure home educated children experience a high-quality education, is currently overseen by the Home Education Unit (HEU). The *Review of the Home Education Unit* and the associated recommendations presented in this report aim to assist the HEU to continue to enhance the supports available for home educating parents and improve the effectiveness of regulation under the current regulatory framework.

In a time of rapid growth, HEU resources have been prioritised to meet the demands of registration and reporting associated with the increasing number of children registered for home education. This is vital work. The recommendations aim to expand and enhance supports intended to reduce the regulatory burden for both families and HEU staff, enabling success for home educated children and young people.

The current stakeholder-informed Review resulted in three overarching findings:

1. *Finding 1:* A new scope is needed for the Home Education Unit to meet the needs of a contemporary high-quality home education service for Queensland families.
2. *Finding 2:* There is an urgent need for additional regulatory supports that provide clarity while retaining flexibility in relation to meeting the regulatory requirements.
3. *Finding 3:* There is benefit in providing additional appropriate educational and wrap-around supports and connections for young people and families.

These findings inform the eight recommendations.

Integral to realising the remainder of the recommended changes, recommendations 1 and 2 aim to *reposition the Home Education Unit for support and regulation and enhance communication and collaboration* respectively. Central to achievement of these outcomes, is the renaming of the Unit as Queensland Home Education (QHE) to reflect its expanded support role for Queensland's contemporary home education community. Engaging an educational leader to lead the transformation, communication, consultation and resource development of the new QHE is critical to the proposed reforms.

Importantly, this report is not inclusive of all issues, nor all solutions. The recommended ongoing communication and consultative mechanisms will strengthen relations between Queensland Home Education and the home educating community. This reciprocal communication will support the development of enhanced supports to meet the needs and choices of families.

The report emphasises the shared commitment by the HEU and home educating families to ensure children experience a high-quality education, as heard during Review consultations. This shared vision provides a strong foundation for the success of the proposed changes.

Most importantly this review continues to ensure a bright, connected future for home educated children in Queensland.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Review of the Queensland Home Education Unit – Terms of Reference

The review will be informed by stakeholder perspectives, and explore how existing regulatory services can be improved and parents supported so that children and young people can access a high-quality education.

The review will:

- consider the diverse experience and needs of home educating parents;
- identify any gaps and areas for improvement in the approach to regulation, education and support of home educators; and
- provide recommendations, where appropriate, to enhance the effectiveness of regulation, including supports for home education parents, options to engage more broadly with home educators in the absence of a peak body, and other supportive activities within the existing legislative framework of the Act.

The review will include:

- Desk-Top Research:*
A comprehensive analysis of existing documentation, policies, and procedures related to current regulatory practices, including supports for parents, for home education in Queensland;
- Comparative Analysis:*
Examination of the regulatory and support approaches adopted by other jurisdictions, both nationally and (where relevant) internationally, to identify best practices and potential strategies for improvement;
- Engagement with Stakeholders:*
Establishment of a Home Education Expert Group comprising of parent home educators, plus interviews or focus groups with representative home education bodies, relevant government agencies, HEU management and officers, educational professionals, and other interested advocacy groups; and
- Market Research:*
Surveys, interviews, or focus groups with an invited representative sample of home educators to gather a range of insights into their experiences, challenges, and perspectives on regulation, including supports (to be outsourced to a separate provider with relevant expertise).

The review will not extend to:

- policy proposals for a different model of delivery, for example part time schooling;
- making recommendations about legislative provisions relating to home education;
- recommendations related to student-specific supports; or
- consider, investigate or make findings or recommendations about: state or non-state schooling; government funding of schools; or regulatory or standards frameworks in other fields.

Appendix 2: Home Education Expert Group – Terms of Reference

About the group

A Home Education Expert Group is being established to contribute to a stakeholder-informed review of Queensland's approach to regulating home education through the Department's HEU (the Review).

The group will:

- provide a forum to share and learn from the home educating parent community and better understand their experiences of home education in Queensland;
- consider topical issues highlighted through consultation on the Bill such as delivery of a high-quality education and provision in the best interests of the child;
- broadly consider home education regulation;
- provide perspectives about supports for home education parents; and
- consider possible approaches for consultation with the home education sector following the Review.

The independent reviewer will Chair the group and draw views to inform Review findings and recommendations.

Composition and Representation

Home educators in Queensland choose this educational pathway for their children for many different reasons. It is intended the membership of the group will reflect this, and will be comprised as widely, and equitably as possible.

A majority of the group members (12) will be parents who currently have a child or young person registered for home education in Queensland. Parent members will be selected via an Expression of Interest process.

Up to three members will be nominees from established home education sector representative organisations with experience in engaging with the sector and government.

The group will also comprise up to three relevant departmental or government stakeholders, as observers, to assist promoting broad understanding and greater collective clarity about high-quality home education.

The group will be chaired by an independent reviewer of the Review, and will meet at regular intervals throughout the Review.

The group will be established on a time-limited basis for six months, including for the duration of the Review, and convene generally monthly until December 2024, noting the Review may consider ongoing stakeholder engagement mechanisms to liaise with government on home education matters.

The Department will provide secretariat services.

Parent members (12 members)

The group will be widely representative and where possible should include members of diverse experience and reasons for choosing home education, and parents of children and young people of different ages, undertaking different levels of education, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, other cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and who provide home education in rural and remote areas. For example:

- parents living in different areas of the state;
- a parent whose registered child is undertaking the equivalent of primary studies;
- a parent whose registered child or young person is undertaking the equivalent of senior studies and/or extension programs;
- a parent of a registered child or young person with a disability;
- a parent of registered child or young person who is neuro-divergent; and
- a parent who is home educating a child or young person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

Expression of Interest process

Parent members will be identified through an online Expression of Interest, conducted by the Department.

Criteria will include broad knowledge of the sector, ability to represent a range of views of home educators in Queensland. Interested persons will be asked to demonstrate:

- commitment to the advancement of home education;
- knowledge of the interests, concerns, views and lived experience of home educators in the Queensland community;
- representing a range of views of home educators in Queensland; and
- commitment to participate fully and contribute to the engagement on the group.

Nominee members: Home Education Sector Representatives (up to three nominees)

Up to three nominee members will be invited from established home education sector representative organisations with experience in engaging with the sector and government, noting there is no home education peak body.

Representative associations or groups known to the Department will be asked to nominate a participant for consultative group input.

Observer members: Curriculum and disability and flexible learning expertise (three observers)

Up to three observer members who have expertise in curriculum, in disability and inclusion and flexible learning/student engagement, will be nominated by the Department, or invited from a relevant government agency (for example, the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA)).

Other attendees

The independent reviewer Chair and the secretariat from the Department will attend.

The Chair may invite a person to attend where they have particular relevant expertise.

Appendix 3: List of consulted stakeholders

The review team thank and acknowledge the significant stakeholders that engaged in this review. Your contributions are invaluable and your support for home educating families appreciated.

| | |
|---|---|
| HOME EDUCATION EXPERT GROUP (HEEG) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chair – Independent Reviewer• Parent representatives (12)• Stakeholder organisations representing:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Home Education Association○ Australian Christian Home Schooling○ Free2homeschool• Department representatives (observers)• Review Team: Secretariat | HOME EDUCATION LOCAL NETWORKS <p>Parent and children community conversations with the Reviewer were hosted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cairns• Townsville• Yeppoon• Rockhampton• Toowoomba• Springfield• Browns Plains• Bribie Island• Berrinba Wetlands |
| HOME EDUCATION UNIT (HEU) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Director• Director• Managers• Senior Education Officers• Administrative team | HOME EDUCATION ORGANISATIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gimuy First Nations Homeschool Co-op• My Homeschool• Euka Future Learning• Simply Homeschooling |
| QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION <p><i>State Schooling & Early Childhood Division:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior Executives• Regional Directors <p><i>Policy, Performance, International & Intergovernmental:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior Executives <p><i>First Nations Strategy and Partnerships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior Executives | QUEENSLAND NON-STATE SCHOOLS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Queensland Catholic Education Commission• Independent Schools Queensland• Chair of Non-State Schools Accreditation Board (NSSAB)• NSSAB Independent Reviewer/Former CEO and Chief Commissioner QFCC |
| QUEENSLAND PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Queensland Secondary Principals' Association (QSPA)• Queensland Association of State School Principals (QASSP)• Queensland Association of Special Education Leaders (QASEL) | EDUCATION JURISDICTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New South Wales Dept of Education• Northern Territory Dept of Education• Victoria Dept of Education and Training• New South Wales Education Standards (NESA)• South Australia Dept for Education• Western Australia Dept of Education• Tasmania Dept for Education, Children and Young People• Australian Capital Territory Dept of Education |
| GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority• TAFE Queensland• Queensland College of Teachers• Queensland Family and Child Commission• Queensland Human Rights Commission | COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BushKids• Play Matters• Isolated Children's Parents' Association - Queensland (ICPA)• Queensland University of Technology - Senior Lecturer |