

30th October 2013
The Hon. Adrian Piccoli, MP
Level 34 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister Piccoli,

We are writing to you on behalf of a vast network of Muslim background home schoolers. As home schoolers we strongly object to the 2013 Information Package. We believe its content, and objectives are not productive to what has otherwise been a relatively smooth procedure in the past that allows families to register their children for home schooling.

The content and goals of the package are described superficially as a revision but fall short of living up to their claims with preposterous demands on home schoolers. Demands that are otherwise not forced on any other legal method of educating or schooling namely the public and private schooling systems.

The sole reason we choose to home school is to provide a well spring and platform of experiences that schools cannot offer. For this style of education to flourish and produce the outstanding results it has always produced, the previous and current OBoS guidelines were sufficient in providing guidelines for a home schooler to carry out their work and not only meet but exceed OBoS standards.

I know from myself that when the official from the Board of Studies came to my home to assess our environment and planning to home school, she was amazed at the standards we had placed on ourselves to educate our children. Home schooling is not a lax and lazy approach to educating. The very fact someone would consider home schooling over other forms of schooling is a sign that they take education very seriously, that they have drive and commitment far above their peers and at most times even school teachers. To place the burden on one's self is far more demanding than to palm off the responsibility to someone else. Granted, the very freedom to move becomes an obstruction when one is then pressured with limitations and confines.

As such we see the 2013 Information Pack as an unproductive and poorly thought out measure to place oppressive restrictions on one of the country's most thriving education methods. There is a reason for so many people in this country turning to home schooling. It is because the OBoS education system is failing us on an intellectual, social, moral and humanities level.

Let me remind you of the 2011 PIRLS report which measured year four reading standards in 45 countries. Australia measured 27th and was beaten by several non-English speaking countries. We are fairly confident that those results were not statistics taken from home schoolers and are sure they were taken from public and private schools.

Geoff Masters, chief executive of the Australian Council for Education Research went on record and said "To say the results are disappointing is an understatement".

Peter Garrett said it was a "Wake-up call for education community".

http://www.afr.com/p/national/australian_students_get_on_global_3ZvsUhpHrQLqzpGb1Ew4aP

Home schoolers are aware of the constantly deteriorating education system in the public and private schools and as such are doing their best to keep their own standards much higher.

We see the 2013 Information Package as a very poorly thought out measure to band aid the failures of the OBoS and to try and point the finger at home schoolers, a punishment towards home schoolers for not being a part of the deteriorating system. We see it as nothing more than a scapegoat measure to try and remove the guilt of the OBoS for failing the Australian public to provide effective education to our children and then somehow correlate their failures with trying to impose restrictions on an education method which is thriving.

A work colleague of my husband was the father of the 14 year old boy Alex Wildman who took his own life due to the incessant bullying he faced at school. The school in question was later found by forensic experts to have been completely aware of the bullying but they did nothing about it. The NSW Department of school education wanted nothing to do with the situation and eventually just paid out the family after a court battle and moved on, as if to say a monetary amount will allow the parents to forget their son, the siblings to forget their brother, his peers to forget a friend.

This has become the well-known attitude of schools in general and some families are quite happy to put up with it. As home schoolers we choose not to. We are consciously practicing Muslims who share networks of services with fellow likeminded Christians, Jews and Atheists and you will find the respect, care, enthusiasm and sharing admirable and an example for schools to and departments and offices like yours to learn from. As consciously practicing and devout people of various faiths and beliefs, it troubles us to have people who have largely devised a failed system try and impose restrictions on us in an attempt to disguise it as a guideline when in essence it is anything but that.

Take some example from the package that only a single parent can be responsible for the education of their children or that education must only be delivered in the home or that 'time to time' visits may be performed by OboS authorities. These are obvious and deliberate measures to try and pressure parents or home educators. Pressures that border on bullying to comply by some arbitrary standards being placed on home schoolers which have not been proven, have no research or evidence to suggest their effectiveness and are largely a plan to undermine the work of home schoolers who have been fulfilling their rights as parents to educate their children in the manner they best see fit. A right afforded to them by the NSW Education ACT of 1990 which the OBoS is now contradicting.

We are starting to see similarities between the mannerisms of the OBoS and current school system produce. That is the bullying methods! Bullying methods to try and force an otherwise thriving network of home educators to comply by their arbitrary and random wishes, wishes which are largely disproven through common sense, an undeniable history of successes of great men and women who were not part of an engineered school system.

The 2013 information package contains no valid substance and reasoning. It comes across clearly to us as an isolated review without any remote attachment to the vast array of home schooling networks. Whoever its devisors were, it appears they made no attempt to connect with home schoolers, with HEA or other networks like HEA who have always been readily available for consultation. The home schooling community is one of the most open and transparent communities in this country.

As Muslims, mingling with a larger community of Christian and Jewish, Atheist and many other faith families, we have never felt anything but welcome. I implore you to please engage with the representatives of HEA and other networks. As Muslims we are proud to have HEA represent us and our families.

In conclusion, we don't feel the 2013 OBoS Information Package has done anything but to draw attention to just how little work and effort the OBoS has effected to create the package. We don't see any evidence of engaging with the very community that it is trying to impose the package on, nor do we see any conclusive evidence anywhere of the effectiveness or success of the methods, guidelines, impositions that it aims to place on home schoolers.

For such a package to be welcomed and accepted, conclusive and relevant evidence should be present, but you will find a vast history of education practises completely rebutting the ideas you present in the package and your will also find a large crop of current home schoolers succeeding with far higher standards and methods than the OBoS propose in their package.

Collectively the Muslim community does not accept and agree with this package and demands it be withdrawn.

On Behalf of Muslim Home schoolers

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Eman Rababe', written in a cursive style.

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