Home Education Regulations Advocacy Pack

Or

What can I do to help resist the Draft Regulations?

www.home-ed.vic.edu.au
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EXTRAS:

☐ Write Letters to the Editor
☐ Share this pack with other home educators (they don’t have to be members)
☐ Read drafts and/or proofread letters and submissions for other home educators.
☐ Look after children while others visit MPs
☐ Encourage supporters of home education to make submissions
☐ Sign and share the petition (coming)
☐ Keep in touch with HEN for updates

MEMBERS: if you are not receiving emails from us, we may have an old email address. Email membership@home-ed.vic.edu.au with your current one.
NON-MEMBERS: Membership costs only $25 per year. You can join from our website.
1. Be Informed

To represent home education well, HEN strongly advises you read the following documents at www.home-ed.vic.edu.au.

   a. Draft Regulations (pp 30-33 are most relevant) and Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) (pp 21-44 and pp 6-20) Accessible from Draft Regulations Released under Articles/Legal
   b. Why home educators have cause for concern under Articles/Legal
   c. FAQ on the Draft under Articles/Legal
   d. The current law is summarised under information/Legal

2. Identify your concerns

After reading the above materials, write down your concerns about the proposed regulations:

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This list can be as short or long as you wish. Appendix 2 may help, but remember this is your list – identify what bothers you about the proposed changes. There is no need to include what doesn’t bother you.

3. Identify your solution

You don’t have to suggest a solution, but you can if you wish. Think about what needs to happen in order for these regulations NOT to be problematic. Examples include:

“I would like the home education section of 2006 regulations to be rolled over.”

“I would like these regulations to be reviewed subject to extensive consultation with the home education community.”

“I would like a guarantee in the Regulations that Reviews and Plans will be conducted by someone with a lot of home education experience.”

“I want an assurance that parents will be able to withdraw children from school immediately and register afterwards.”
4. Identify your MPs

- In Victoria, our Lower House is called the Legislative Assembly and the Upper House is called the Legislative Council.
- Members of the Lower House are called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). Members of the Upper House are called Members of the Legislative Council (MLC).
- You have one MLA and 5 MLCs. Collectively they are referred to as MPs.
- Find yours by entering your address at https://electoratelookup.vec.vic.gov.au/
- Note the address for each MP in the table below. If two addresses are listed, it is their electoral address you need.

If in doubt about your members, email Kirsty for help at findmyMP@home-ed.vic.edu.au

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5. Visit your MPs

A face to face meeting is the most effective way of communicating with MPs. If that’s not possible, an individual letter (not a form letter) is the next best option. If you can’t do either of these things, an email or phone call is still worth doing.

Which MPs to visit

We’d like you to visit your MLA and at least one MLC. Because Upper House seats cover a wide area, you won’t be able to visit all your MLCs. Try to visit the one whose electoral office is nearest you. If you have a couple within your travelling range, try to visit the one/s who are on your side of politics to persuade them home educators are their kind of people.

Group or individual visits?

Individual visits are more effective, if visiting in a group, include no more than five people.

Making an appointment

Phone their office and the conversation will go something like this:

**You:** Good afternoon, could I make an appointment to see Mr [name] please?

**Staffer:** May I ask what that is in regards to?

**You:** As a home educator, I have concerns about the Draft Education Regulations that I would like to make Mr [name] aware of.

**Staffer:** Can you tell me what it is about the regulations that concerns you?

**You:** [name your top concern], just to name one concern.

**Staffer:** hmmmm.... Can I confirm that you are a constituent of Mr [name]? What is your address? .... I’ll pass your request onto his diary manager and she’ll phone you.”

If your MP is in opposition, you will quickly have an appointment, if in government you’ll get a call back, perhaps a few days later. If you don’t hear from them, follow up in a week. If your MP is a Minister, you will need to be persistent but they should see you as a constituent.

Prepare for your Appointment

Take a look at your MP’s website and find out what they stand for – you may like to use this as a learning experience with the kids and/or to do it with other home educators in your area:

- Are they in government?
- Which party are they with?
- Do they have a portfolio or history particularly relevant to our issue? e.g.
  - James Merlino (MLA for Monbulk) is Education Minister
Advocacy Pack for Draft Regulations 2017

- Nick Wakeling (MLA for Ferntree Gully) is Shadow Minister for Education
- Bernie Finn (MLC for Western Metro) is Shadow Minister for ASD
- Rachel Carling Jenkins (MLC, Western Metro) supports home education.
- And so on.

Check the list of concerns you made in Section 2. These are the issues you wish to discuss.

What to say and what to expect

Remember you have real concerns and you have a right to be there. Be polite and confident – you probably know much more about home education than your MP. If you think you won’t remember what to say, write it down and practice it. You can take a list of dot points to jog your memory if you wish. You can take a letter detailing your concerns if you wish.

An appointment will last around 15-30 mins and go something like this:

- Welcome and introductions – address them as Mr X, Ms X or Minister if appropriate. Introduce yourself, say that you are a home educator, how long you have been home educating and that you’d like to discuss the Draft Education Regulations.
- Be clear and concise when asked for your view, raise your issues from Section 2. e.g. “The requirement to produce a plan is a problem because it doesn’t reflect the way I educate my children. I am concerned the VRQA will expect compliance with the school curriculum and I want to be able to choose my own materials and style.”
- Discussion with the Member, answering their questions e.g. They may ask why you home educate. You can ask questions too e.g. “Under these regulations, how would a bullied child be protected while awaiting approval?” Note they may not have the answers but can raise your questions with the Minister for you.
- State what it is that you want based on your solution (Section 3) e.g. “I would like to see proper consultation with the home education community to develop regulations that accurately reflect the way successful home education works.”
- When leaving, thank them for their time and ask if they can contact you with answers to your questions.

If your MP is with the ALP they will probably fully support the Regulations, but it is important to make your views known nonetheless. Opposition and other crossbencher members are likely to be much more receptive to our concerns (i.e. Coalition, Democratic and Greens parties as well as independents).

Do I really have to go?

If you can’t stand your MP or their party, there is a risk this will be apparent in an interview, a letter may be the best course of action.
6. Attend a HEN writing workshop

HEN is organising local writing workshops to assist home educators to write letters and submissions by working through the following process in group. There will also be some online sessions using Zoom (free and similar to Skype). Details will be sent out via the email list. Non-HEN members are very welcome to attend. If you don’t need such a workshop, consider coming along to help out.

7. Write to your MPs

You need to write to:

1. Any of the MPs listed in Section 4 that you couldn’t visit.
2. The Minister for Education:

   The Hon James Merlino MP
   Minister of Education and Training
   Level 3
   1 Treasury Place
   East Melbourne
   Victoria, 3002

   If you live in Mr Merlino’s electorate (Monbulk) write to his electoral address instead -
   The Hon James Merlino MP, Minister of Education and Training, 635 Burwood Hwy, Belgrave, VIC 3160. Mention that you are his constituent.

3. The Shadow Minister for Education:

   The Hon Nick Wakeling MP
   PO Box 551
   Ferntree Gully, VIC 3156

Considering what to say

**IT IS VERY IMPORTANT** to make your own points – it is far better to write about your own situation than to send a form letter. Don’t simply copy our suggestions, say what YOU want to say.

- Your list from Section 2 forms the points to raise in. Appendix 2 may also help.
- Use your own words. INDIVIDUAL letters have more impact that form letters. Use the examples as a guide.
• You may like to prepare an outline of your ideas first (see Appendix 1).

• Make an opening statement that lets them know who you are and why you are writing to them e.g. “As a home educator, I have concerns about the Draft Education Regulations and how they could affect my ability to educate my children.”

• You may wish to mention how long you have been home educating.

• If you withdrew your child from school because their needs were not being met or they were being bullied etc, it is important to include this. Be brief but specific and talk about how home education has turned the situation around. You are in a good position to advocate for the need for speed in removing children from school.

• If you have adult children who were home educated, mention their qualifications and what they are now doing. This will demonstrate that home education leads to good outcomes.

• State which aspects of the Draft concern you and why (from Section 2). If possible give examples from your home education to support your view. Here are two examples:
  - “John struggled in mainstream school due to his dyslexia. Working one-on-one at home, he has made a lot of progress, has grown in confidence and is actually enjoying books! I am concerned that having the VRQA perform reviews on his work would harm rather than assist his learning. The school system did not work for John and I don’t want to be pressured into adopting the same teaching methods and curriculum that have already failed him.”
  - “Having withdrawn Mary from school due to bullying, I am concerned that, under these regulations, children in a similar situation would be stuck in school while their parents wrote a plan and waited for the VRQA to approve it. They could be at significant risk during this period.”

• State what you would like to see happen (from Section 3)

• You can also ask for extra action e.g.
  - “I would like you to push for debate on this issue.”
  - “I would like you to vote against these regulations.”

For letters to the Minister and ALP MPs add…

• Questions like:
  - “How will a child such as Mary be protected in school while awaiting approval from the VRQA? This worries me. Parents should be able to withdraw a child to safety without having to disobey the law.”
  - “When the system can’t cater for a child like John, what will happen to them if the VRQA rejects the parent’s Plan? And will the VRQA insist the parent replicates the school system that has already failed him?”
“Can you assure me that, under these regulations, I will be free to educate my children in the manner I choose, including the choice of curricula materials?”

Conclude by asking for what you want: your solution from Section3.

When writing to the Minister, as well as asking your questions, you may also wish to pick up points from his media release available here: http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/making-sure-home-school-students-get-the-best-education/

For the Shadow Minister and non-ALP MPs

Reframe your questions as statements:

“I am worried about what might happen to a child like Mary in school while waiting for approval. Parents should be able to withdraw a child to safety without having to disobey the law.”

Getting into a letter format

Set out your correspondence as a formal letter and include your full contact details at the top (see Appendices 2&3 for letter samples).

Be polite and respectful. Keep it brief, one or two pages is sufficient.

There are different conventions on how to address letters to MPs depending on their position. Most can be addressed as Mr or Ms but it pays to check. Help is available here: http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/people-in-parliament/addressing-members

Conclude with “Yours faithfully” or “Yours sincerely”, your signature and your full name.

Once you have typed your draft, print it and have someone proofread it for you. Check for spelling, grammar, complete sentences, that your ideas flow and make sense to someone else who may not be familiar with this issue, and for excessive repetition.
8. Preparing your Submission

In the initial stages of the Regulations Review, DET received 43 submissions on home education, which they stated in the RIS were “unlikely to represent the whole home schooling community”.

We need lots of home-educators and supportive non-home-educators to write a submission now. The more submissions received the greater the impact.

Please share this resource with your network and encourage submissions and letters. Encourage relatives and anyone who has seen the positive effects of home education to write too (see Appendix 4 for an example). A short, personal submission from non-home educators will be a powerful testimony.

It doesn’t matter if your submission is basically a repeat of your letter – it can be as simple as changing the address, adding a heading and rewording any questions raised into statements.

**Submissions are made by emailing:** det.regulation.review@edumail.vic.gov.au by the 28th of February 2017.

**Non-home educators can make submissions.**

**Guidelines and Practical Ideas**

- Your submission can be an email, or it can be a letter or report attached to an email.
- They can also be mailed to:

  Education and Training Reform Regulations Review  
  Attn: Strategic Policy Division  
  Department of Education and Training  
  GPO Box 4367  MELBOURNE  3001

- Individual submissions are best, but joint submission can also be made. You can do both e.g. individual submissions and one representing a group. A group submission should indicate who the group is and how many members it has.

- **Note that all submissions will be made public from DET’s website. If you wish to remain anonymous, include your name and address in the covering email but not in the actual submission, clearly state in your email that you do not want your name and address published.**
• You don’t have to have any particular expertise, just issues to raise.
• Whilst no particular style is required, try to make it as easy as possible to read it and understand your “train of thought”.
• If writing a lengthy submission, use headings to organise the points you are making.
• Poor spelling or grammar reflects badly on home education. Have someone proofread your submission. It is a good idea to get together with other home educators to share ideas and proofreading.
• Your submission doesn’t have to be long. Concentrate on the things that you know about and leave out those things that you don’t have much to comment on.
• There is room here to go into more detail than in your MP letters if you wish.

**What to include**

There are samples in Appendix 5 to get you started. *It is very important your submission is individual* and includes some of the things listed below:

• What home education looks like for you
• Why the proposals are a problem for you personally, be specific about which requirement and the problems it will create.
• As well as speaking personally, remember to look at the big picture and mention problems that won’t personally impact you (e.g. approval to remove).

• Use your list from Section 2.
• Make strong, clear statements about what is wrong with the proposed regulations.
• Give examples about why you have particular views.
• If quoting research, remember to cite it.
• Make recommendations if you can, but if you don’t feel confident doing this, outlining your concerns is just as important.
• You can cover any positives you see in the proposal.

*When you submit your submission, you should receive an email to acknowledge receipt. If not, contact DET to check it was received.*
9. Amplify media attention

HEN is undertaking a media campaign, so keep an eye out for articles on our issue.

**Printed Media**

Use social media to share articles. This amplifies the issue and is something easy everyone can do. You can also write letters to the editor of various newspapers. These are normally 200-300 words, but requirements vary from paper to paper, so please check the links.

- The Australian [letters@theaustralian.com.au](mailto:letters@theaustralian.com.au)
- This app may help with your editing: [http://www.hemingwayapp.com/](http://www.hemingwayapp.com/)

Please make sure you check for grammar and spelling mistakes and get someone else to proof read your letter before sending it.

**Radio**

If a HEN spokesperson is being interviewed on the radio, notice will be posted in the member group. You may wish to listen in and phone to give your view.

**Volunteer**

We need families willing to appear in media articles – i.e. tell their story and be photographed with the kids. If you are willing, email Sue at [coordinator@home-ed.vic.edu.au](mailto:coordinator@home-ed.vic.edu.au) indicating how many years you have home educated, your style of home education, children’s ages and where you live (the big newspapers usually won’t interview people from the country but we are looking for regional coverage also).
APPENDIX 1 – Outline for Your Letter / Submission

This an optional planning tool

**INTRODUCTION:** Your ideas/points for letter introduction and key points to raise:

-  
-  
-  
-  
-  

**BODY PARAGRAPH I**

- Key idea  
- Supporting examples / experiences / quotes / statistics / research
  -  
  -  
  -  
  -  
- Closing sentence – biggest “punch” (your strongest supporting idea)

**BODY PARAGRAPH II**

- Key idea  
- Supporting examples / experiences / quotes / statistics / research
  -  
  -  
  -  
  -  
• Closing sentence – biggest “punch” (your strongest supporting idea)

________________________________________________________________________

**BODY PARAGRAPH III**

• Key idea ________________________________________________________________

• Supporting examples / experiences / quotes / statistics / research
  o ________________________________________________________________
  o ________________________________________________________________
  o ________________________________________________________________
  o ________________________________________________________________
  o ________________________________________________________________

• Closing sentence – biggest “punch” (your strongest supporting idea)

________________________________________________________________________

**FINAL PARAGRAPH**

• Key ideas summarised

________________________________________________________________________

• Ask for action
  o ________________________________________________________________
  o ________________________________________________________________

• Ask for reply
Appendix 2 – Points to Raise in Letters and Submissions

Only mention what bothers you about the proposed Regulations, if you don’t understand a requirement, talk to another home educator, check the documents listed in Section 1, and if still confused email consultation@home-ed.vic.edu.au.

IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE IF RELEVANT TO YOUR SITUATION:

- **If you withdrew your child from school because they were bullied/abused or their learning needs were not being met:**
  - Be specific about what happened. (For your child’s privacy, you can include contact details in the cover sheet and request it not be published).
  - If the school failed its duty of care towards your child, say so.
  - Ask how a child in a similar situation would be protected in school while waiting over 28 days for approval.
  - If you could have sued the school or DET, mention that you have not done so yet. You might say that you have been happy to move on, but if DET are going to interfere with your home education, you will need to rethink this decision, along with whether the media would be interested in your case.

- **If you have adult children who were home educated** mention their achievements.

- **If the VRQA discouraged you from registering for home education**, state what happened and whether they tried to push you in a different direction. Raise concerns about the VRQA having increased power when this is their attitude.

POINTS TO CONSIDER INCLUDING:

**Regulation proposal as a whole**

- There is no evidence that greater scrutiny of home education is justified. Is there any research that greater regulation improves educational outcomes?
- How many people have been deregistered because of a review?
- Lack of data does not justify increased regulation. Research is more appropriate.
- The proposal hands unlimited power to VRQA staff unsupportive of home education.
- You may wish to challenge the weighting used to assess the regulatory proposal in the RIS. The weights appear arbitrary and meaningless.
- Why was Option 3 considered in the RIS when it would require a change to the Education Act? This was beyond the specified scope of the Regulation Review.
- Deferral of detail to policy will result in requirements being routinely changed without reference to parliament.
- Suggest/demand an advisory board of home educators to assess plans and reviews.
- The conflict of interest in having a body so closely aligned to the state school system judging home educators.
- Why have DECV materials been withdrawn from sale? FUSE has been offered as an alternative, however this is resource site (along with countless others available), and not a curriculum such as the DECV materials.

**Approval prior to removal**

- Difficulties of writing a plan while coping with school stress.
- Kids could be unsafe awaiting approval.
- Delay in approval while parents research, write, and submit a plan then await approval. The vagaries of Aust Post could add at least a week. The process may have to be repeated multiple times if Plans are rejected.
- The VRQA will have the power to keep children in school indefinitely.

**Plans**

- The fact of the Plans – what will they achieve?
- The vagueness of the Plans. There is no detail. Exactly what would be required?
- It appears the VRQA could demand anything they wish. This moves the emphasis to compliance rather than education.
- There is capacity for requirements to be increased without reference to Parliament.
- How will Plans improve children’s education?
- It is not possible to plan an education that changes as a child’s needs evolve.
- Will Plans be assessed with appropriate experience/knowledge of home education?
- Must plans conform to the Victorian curriculum to be approved? It is a principle of the Act that “Parents have the right to choose an appropriate education for their child.” How would this principle be upheld if only Plans conforming to the Victorian curriculum were approved?
- School teachers do not have an individual learning plan for each child. Why do we?
- Home educated children in the same family often cover the same topic at the same time at their suitable level. Complying with Vic Curriculum’s age levels won't work.
- If a Plan is rejected, who can be appealed to? VCAT would only consider whether the VRQA had followed their own procedure, not whether the Plan indicated a good education. How would natural justice be served?
- Home educators are already very involved in researching, sourcing, planning, reviewing and continually adapting their children’s education. It is a fluid approach, for which a “fixed” educational plan does not work.

**Reviews**

- The fact of the Reviews – what will they achieve?
- Vagueness of the reviews. Exactly what would be involved? There is no detail.
- There is too much room for requirements to be routinely increased.
- Will we be reviewed against the Victorian Curriculum? Or the 8 KLAs as currently?
- Who is going to undertake reviews? Assessors would need a good understanding and experience with home education. VRQA staff do not have the necessary knowledge, experience or empathy.

**Other points**

- Mention the positives:
  - The way your child has flourished in this environment.
  - What they’ve achieved.
  - The social opportunities.
- Schools are failing. There is no evidence that Home Education is failing. Why should they judge us?
- You can enrol on 31 Jan, yet home educators must register by 30 Nov - purely for the convenience of the VRQA.
- Training and professional development for schools is constant. We are being asked to produce plans with no training and no support.
- If, as the RIS alleges, some parents lack the capacity to home educate, why not make Distance Ed openly available? Why do people need to attempt to register for home education before it will be offered?
Appendix 3 – Sample Letter to an ALP MP

[Your address]

Sample only – Your letter will include your own views to be more effective.

[Date]

Hon Jacinta Marie Allan MLA
PO Box 399
Bendigo, VIC 3552

Dear Ms Allan,

RE: DRAFT EDUCATION REGULATIONS (HOME EDUCATION)

I am writing in regards to the Draft Education Regulations. I object to the proposal that the VRQA approve plans and conduct reviews on home educators. As a home educator of ten years, I have never produced a plan and yet my oldest children have gone on to university and employment. I prefer to respond to my children’s changing educational needs as they arise, I have found this very effective and it requires no planning. Indeed, planning would constrict it.

I am committed to providing a good education and object to the VRQA being granted the power to dictate the method or details of that education. There is no indication that the assessment of plans or the associated reviews will be performed by someone with home education experience. My dealings with the VRQA indicate they do not have the necessary knowledge or experience and are, instead, quite biased against home education.

I am particularly concerned that bullied children would be trapped in school and at risk during the application process which is likely to take over two months. A parent will have to research, write and mail the plan, and then wait 28 days for approval after receipt. If a plan is rejected, they would have to go through this process again. How will the government protect children from harm when their failure to do so has been the motivation behind the home education decision?

There is no evidence that these changes are required or will have a beneficial outcome. They appear to be aimed at limiting a legal educational alternative. The Regulations allow for any level of requirements, including draconian ones, to be introduced.

If the government is serious about ‘light touch’ regulation, then the draft should be revised with proper consultation with home educators to build a workable regulatory regime which limits the power of the VRQA over home educators.

Yours sincerely

[your signature]

[Your name]
APPENDIX 4 – Sample MP letter by a supporter of home education

Sample only – Your letter will include your own views to be more effective.

 Your address

Your name

The Hon Bruce Atkinson MLC
President of the Legislative Council
PO Box 280, Nunawading, VIC 3131

Dear President,

RE; DRAFT EDUCATION REGULATIONS (HOME EDUCATION)

I am writing regarding the regulation of home education. I am not myself a home educator, but my grandchildren are being educated at home. I must admit that I was somewhat sceptical when told this was to be the case. However, after several years of watching the family’s development, I am more than convinced that home education is not only a valid alternative, but that it produces well-educated and responsible young people. One granddaughter was removed from school due to bullying which was not handled well by the school. A cowed, frightened child has since blossomed into a confident young lady and her academic education has expanded.

I am concerned that the proposed changes hand unrestricted powers to a statutory body attached to the mainstream education system. In what way are they qualified to oversee home educators when their system was incapable of keeping my granddaughter safe enough to concentrate on her studies in school?

If the government is serious about ‘light touch’ regulation, then the draft should be revised in consultation with home educators to build a workable regulatory regime.

I have had the privilege of accompanying the children in a variety of home education activities, camps and excursions over the years. From everything I have seen, home educators are doing a brilliant job at no expense to the public purse!

I hope that the Liberal Party will do all it can to have these regulations properly debated, and to vote against them. Rejecting these regulations would allow families to get on with educating their children without undue interference.

Yours sincerely

[your signature]

[date]
APPENDIX 5 – SAMPLE SUBMISSION

Sample only – Your submission will include your views and thereby be more effective.

[name and address] [date]

Education and Training Reform Regulations Review
Attn: Strategic Policy Division
Department of Education and Training
GPO Box 4367 MELBOURNE 3001

SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM REGULATIONS 2017

I make this submission based on ten years’ home education experience. This has been both successful and enjoyable, with my children doing well academically, socially and emotionally. I have significant concerns around the proposed changes, do not agree they represent a ‘light touch’ approach, and believe they will create a burden for home educators without improving outcomes which are already excellent. I was insulted by the suggestion in the RIS that the new requirements are to “drive behaviour change”. There is no need to change home education behaviour. I see a lot of evidence of the failure of the school system (anxiety, bullying, low academic results etc). I have not seen this replicated in home education and believe the government should focus on improving their own schooling system, not trying to limit home education which the proposed Regulations appear to be aimed at.

INCREASED POWER FOR THE VRQA

By not limiting Plans and Reviews, the Draft Regulations hand complete power over home education to the VRQA. This is inappropriate because they are closely aligned with DET, have no experience or understanding of home education and have a conflict of interest by supporting mainstream schooling. Not only will they have the power to reject applications for home education but also to set requirements that dictate how people home educate. This contravenes the principle set down by principle “Parents have the right to choose an appropriate education for their child” stated in The Education and Training Reform Act (1.2.1d).

The VRQA’s unlimited power to set requirements for Plans and Reviews moves the emphasis from education to compliance which is a failure of natural justice. Parents providing an excellent education could be failed for not complying with an obscure requirement that has no effect on educational outcomes.

APPROVAL PRIOR TO REMOVAL FROM SCHOOL

This requirement has the capacity to confine children to an unsafe situation purely for bureaucratic purposes. Quite apart from the risk to the child’s health and wellbeing, there is no academic benefit in keeping them in school, as they will be too stressed to learn. The Education and Training Reform Act...
upholds the principle “Parents have the right to choose an appropriate education for their child” (1.2.1d). Parents should not have to await approval before they can exercise this right.

PLANS

There is no evidence that Plans will improve home education, and my experience suggests otherwise. I have never produced a plan myself or required government oversight to compel me to educate the children. I am highly motivated and find that the learning lifestyle we lead does not require planning, rather that spontaneity is a benefit. A requirement to submit a Plan in order to home educate is also an unfair burden on a home educator just starting out. They will need to find their feet in home education and most find that home education works quite differently from what they expected, so the required Plan would be quickly obsolete but they may be measured against it when called to Review.

REVIEWS

My main concerns with the proposed Reviews are that they are not defined or limited and there is no requirement for the VRQA to employ people with experience in home education to conduct them. My dealings with the VRQA have not inspired confidence in this regard, I have known new home educators to be actively discouraged by VRQA staff and their Guide to Home Schooling contains information clearly designed to steer people to alternatives. This does not display the respect hardworking home educators deserve.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Plans are required to cater for individuals and yet there is not guarantee of allowance for special needs unless an exemption from the requirement to cover the 8 KLAs. This will mean that a special needs child would be required to learn a LOTE despite the fact they have a limited grasp of English, unless an exemption is approved. This could mean parents are required to provide evidence involving expensive specialist appointments, when the very reason for home education is that mainstream schooling was unable to cater for their child. This is unjust.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Regulations allow for any level of requirements, including draconian ones, to be introduced and certainly do not represent ‘light touch’ regulation. If the government is serious about ‘light touch’ regulation then the draft should be revised with proper consultation with home educators to build a workable regulatory regime which limits the power of the VRQA over home educators.