



# Home Schooling Regulations Roadshow

## Transcript

**Speakers:** Pavlina (P), Chris Ingham (C), Ellen (E)

**Audience:** (A)

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P: I'm Pavlina, I'm from the Victorian Home Ed Advisory Committee. We're here today to talk about the new regulations and some of you might know that I'm one of those people who fought really, really, really hard against these regulations and all year we've kind of been in this adversarial sort of fighting mode I suppose you would say and I just want you to know that from my perspective that was about fighting politics and fighting the letter of the law so to speak whereas where I see us now is in a relationship-building phase. So I'm part of Victorian Home Ed Advisory Committee and I have to say as a home educator I have been absolutely staggered at how responsive the people from DET and VQRA have been on that committee and their willingness to work with us and their willingness to <inaudible – recording cuts out> 1:05 and from my perspective I think it's really, really, really important that we focus on building relationships long-term around good working relationships so that we let them know about how home ed works so that they can better understand our community and better understand <inaudible> 1:26. So one of the people on that committee is Chris Ingham who's the Acting CEO of VRQA and he's been an absolute delight to work with and he's going to start us off talking about the regs.

C: Thanks, Pavlina, for that warm introduction. Tonight's a bit of an unusual session, not unusual as in bad but it's a different session because apart from the people here we've got up to 200 people signed up to – for our live stream and we're probably going to put the video on our website as well as a transcript so we're playing it a bit by ear. At certain stages we'll see if we can answer questions that have been submitted online otherwise we'll have a conversation here so just because Pavlina and I will both be giving presentations don't feel you have to sit there silently and wait for us to – so the other way is let me get going for a couple of minutes and then just interrupt with comments, questions, whatever you like.

Okay so yeah, I'm Chris from the VRQA, I'm new to home-schooling, I've been doing it for a few months. I used to look after apprenticeship and traineeship regulation and so although that's a very different area if I occasionally draw comparisons you'll understand why. So what I'm going to do in this presentation – and for those who are here, the presentation I'm giving is in the gift pack, the show bag. For those who are not the presentation I understand is being projected but it will also be – you'll also find all of the materials in the show bag on the VRQA website and you'll find the presentation that Pavlina is giving I think on the HEN website, the Home Education Network website.

Okay so let me cut to the chase. There's sort of three or four categories to talk about around the new home schooling regulations that come –

A: <inaudible> 3:59.

C: Yeah. There's three or four main categories to talk about in relation to the new home schooling regulations, things such as learning plans, exemptions and annual reviews and the extent that those different aspects of the new regulations apply to you and your child or children depends on the circumstances. So this slide is about if your child is already registered so if you've got a child who's already registered for home-schooling and you intend to continue with that registration for next year. There's – in that case there's a lot of features of the new regulations that will not apply in that circumstance. If you've got an existing child things such as the need to put in a learning plan or the need to apply for exemptions from the provision of one or more of the eight learning areas don't apply to you. And importantly, an important point to make is they will never apply to you or your child in those circumstances.

A learning plan incorporating an exemption request where relevant only applies to new applications at the point of application from 1 January 2018. And if you are a continuing home-schooler child if you understand what I mean, the fact that new regulations come in on 1<sup>st</sup> of January doesn't mean you have to put in a new application. Because you don't have to do a new application that means you also don't have to do a learning plan or apply for exemptions.

Where you might be affected by the new aspects of the new regulations is in the right-hand column there for 2018. There's a 10% chance that your child will be selected for review, annual review and we'll talk about annual reviews later, what they actually mean. When I say 10% chance I'm no mathematician but your chances increase the more children you have registered for home-schooling.

Okay. I'll stop there. Any questions?

A: Do they increase each year? Your chance of being selected or does it start again? Like if you're selected one year do they continue the next – like if you start again so if you're <inaudible> 6:47 2019 will you be again <inaudible> selected in 2020?

C: Yeah, okay so I'll repeat the question for those at home. The 10% chance, does it increase as years pass or does it start again? Technically it starts again each year. It's a double-barrelled answer to that question. If you have a child who is picked up in the 10% one year and the review happens and the review's fine, you get through, your family will be exempted from annual reviews for two years.

A: Thank you for that.

C: Counting inclusively so if a child was reviewed in 2018 your family would be excluded from the review sample in 2019 and 2020 and it might be picked up again in 2021.

A: Thank you for that.

C: No problem. Okay now there's another category which is my child is not yet registered so this applies for anyone here or anyone online who doesn't have a child in the home-schooling system yet but is thinking about it or other parents or guardians who do have a child or children in home-schooling but have got other children that are not yet and they're thinking about it, okay? The – there's a key point I want to make here and that is if you imagine 1 January 2018 separating these two lines. If you put in an application for your child who's not yet registered or registration for home-schooling at any point up until 31<sup>st</sup> of December this year that application is under the old or existing system and what that means is that you won't have to put in a learning plan or apply for any exemptions so for those of you who have children registered you might remember that the existing registration process is a two-page form with associated documentation, birth certificates and so on. That system stays intact until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December this year.

Now the other thing to mention is you can nominate a start date that is up to six months out from when you put in your application. So in other words you could theoretically put in an application for registration tomorrow – I was going to say today, you probably can't do it today – and tomorrow is the 16<sup>th</sup> of November. You could nominate a start date up until 16<sup>th</sup> of May and that application does not require a learning plan or exemption, right? It's under the existing system. Does that make sense? Okay.

From 1 January 2018, and it doesn't matter whether you've got other children who are already registered for home-schooling or not, any application after 1 January 2018 the great news is features from all the great features of the new regulatory regime. Right, no-one laughed. I got a few laughs at other sessions. So I'm going to talk about that now. From 1 January 2018 all applications will need to be submitted with a learning

plan, applications for exemptions where relevant, I'll get into that and also there's still the 10% chance of annual review. So I'm going to talk in detail about what these – what do we mean – what is VRQA looking for in terms of learning plan requirements? What are the grounds for exemption? And what's going to be happening during annual review? And Pavlina is going to particularly talk more about annual review.

Okay. Learning plans. Now for those that are here in your gift pack you've got two blank learning plan templates. These are templates that have been developed by the Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee which Pavlina and I are on. The important point to make is they're not compulsory. You can use them if you want to, you don't have to use them, you can use something that's your own creation, you can start with a blank piece of paper. They've been developed as suggestions and as guidance. And they've been developed to be fit for purpose for the regulations so what do the regulations say?

The regulations say –

A: Excuse me, where's that one? Thank you.

C: The regulations say that the parent or guardian of a home-schooling child must be responsible for an education program that taken as a whole substantially covers eight learning areas. Okay? Now that wording taken as a whole substantially covers eight learning areas. Let me break that down a little. There's a lot of flexibility in those words. Is it the responsibility of a home-schooling parent to guarantee that they're covering all eight learning areas all the time? No, it is not. Does substantially covering the eight key learning areas mean a numerical majority? Is it five of the eight? Six of the eight or 4.25 of the eight? No, it is not. Under the regulations will the VRQA say that some learning areas are more important than others? So that it's okay to have all these exemptions but maths and English are more important. No, we won't. The regulations do not have a hierarchy of learning areas.

So therefore what does it mean? Substantially taken as a whole covering our key learning areas. We asked an eminent barrister whose answer was it depends and not terribly useful but behind that answer was it depends on the individual circumstances of the child as determined by the parent or guardian. People are different. To state the bleeding obvious, I guess. So some people are – and I'm going to use some terms that are sometimes considered pejorative but some children are very advanced, whatever that means. Some children have learning needs or have abilities that manifest in different ways. And so therefore the – we're going to take a horses for courses approach.

Let me give one example. In a couple of weeks we're going to have up on the VRQA website filled out examples of learning plan templates. As guidance and these learning plan templates have been developed by the home-schools on the VHEAC. And so we think it's - sometimes it's better to visualise than to try and explain 'cause sometimes it's hard to explain as you can see me struggling right now.

In one of those examples that will go up there's an example of a child who is in difficult circumstances who has gone through psychological trauma, had very bad experience at previous school or schools, who is going through a stage where they're shut in, fairly noncommunicative, staying in their bedroom, fairly non-social, angry and so in that example a learning plan comes in which says you know what? We would like an exemption from seven of the eight learning areas. What we want to focus on is socialisation interaction and gradual progression back to regular life if you like. Is that learning plan for that circumstance acceptable under the new regulations? Yes, it is. It's perfectly fine.

A: <inaudible> 16:15.

C: Yeah, okay, I'll repeat the question just for the benefit of those at home. So the question was in that case would there need to be some sort of letter or certification from say a school principal and also would there need to be medical documentation of some sort? The answer to both questions is no. It's the individual circumstances of the child as reported by the parent. In your gift pack there's a FAQs document which says what I'm about to say, that VRQA under their – now and under the new regulations will not be asking or requesting any type of medical or specialist documentation. At all, it's your word that matters.

The second thing is for registration for home-schooling you don't need a permission slip from a school principal or anybody else for that matter, it's the parent that decides. Okay? So that's a public <inaudible> 17:32. It's fine for me to say it here or even live stream it but it's in the gift pack, the VRQA policy, okay? Yeah.

Okay. In – let me just go back to the nuts and bolts of learning plans and I'll refer to this live. So learning plans – the regulations ask parents to talk about when and where learning takes place. You'll see in these examples that'll go up on the VRQA website, we're looking for general and indicative information, not comprehensive information. This isn't the core of the learning plan, to be honest so I'll explain.

So when it says when instruction will take place, when does not mean that you have to account for every minute, every week, every month of what you're doing. When refers to general routine if you have one. Is learning taking place on weekdays? Is it mainly a morning thing? Does it happen some nights? And Pavlina will provide an example, two sentences. Remember there's nothing in the regulations that requires home-schooling parents to mimic a timetable of a school or anything like that. So we're not asking for much there.

The same with where. A couple of sentences there, I mean home-schooling in most cases I imagine is homebased and – but there may be a learning activity taking place through collaboration with other home-schoolers, community groups, visits to libraries etc.

Subject matter that will be covered during the first year of registration. Now you'll see in the templates in your pack and templates on the website there's two different templates that are provided, one is sort of a more old-fashioned disciplinary approach, it asks what are you doing for English? What are you doing for maths? What are you doing for arts etc. And another is a more integrated design template which is particularly useful for child-directed learning approaches so instead of that old-fashioned it's talk about the type of activities that you do and then link it to the learning areas. Okay? So let me give an ex – I've been thinking about how I would fill it in if I was enrolling – seeking to register my six-year-old daughter who is not home-schooled, goes to a registered school but just to give you a flavour.

For English my daughter, Mariana, likes – I'd probably write that she'd do – we'd probably go to the library intermittently to browse and borrow books. She likes Peppa Pig, Billy B Brown, Charlie and Lola and 'cause she likes them she's more likely to read them so we'll focus on that. I'd probably sit down and help her sometimes, sometimes she'd do independent reading. She likes to write little stories, she has her own special notebook so I'd probably – well I do sit down with her and talk to her about what she's doing, what's going through her mind, help her out on sort of boring stuff like grammar and spelling and so on but then – actually I shouldn't be Education Department official calling grammar and spelling boring live to air. Anyway – but it is.

And – but I'd probably talk to her also around you know construction of narrative, what she's thinking about so I'd probably write a paragraph or two on that and that's it. And then I'd submit it to myself as regulator and sign myself off.

The point I want to make about that is I understand that under – in some other jurisdictions there's sort of a checklist of what English means or the different components of English. So it'd be possible that in that circumstance someone would say well there's reading and writing, there's grammar, there's construction of narrative but where's oral presentation? To Dad, not good enough. Go back to the parent. There's nothing like that in the Victorian system so probably what's a bit different about the Victorian system is that there is no mandated curriculum or teaching and learning approach, you don't have to follow the Victorian curriculum, you don't have to follow the Australian curriculum, you don't have to use the word curriculum or follow any particular curriculum. And because that answer – and this is again a public commitment – all approaches to home-schooling are valid ranging from un schooling through to various traditions, Montessori, Steiner or more structured approaches. Or a parent's individual approach that doesn't need to be labelled, right? It's all learning.

And so therefore because it doesn't have that sort of very sort of structured or mandatory approach, you must use these resources, you must follow this curriculum, it means that we also have an open approach to assessment so in that case what I indicated about my child for English would be fine. So does that make sense? Let me pause there and see if there are any questions?

A: What's un schooling?

C: What's un schooling? So I'll give my understanding in a sentence or two and then Pavlina will do it much more properly when she presents. So my understanding is that un schooling rejects the rigidity of the sort of 19<sup>th</sup> century bricks and mortar chalk and talk approach to education as ineffective and disengaging. How'm I doing so far? And instead a parent or guardian will be well attuned to what works best for their child. So therefore it rejects structures if you like as the basis for an education program. So if a child is particularly passionate

around particular activities, particular types of learning then the parent will follow so in other words it doesn't need a set curriculum or set texts and resources etc. Am I getting that alright? You can elaborate later on, yeah.

So under the regulations that approach is just as legitimate as sort of more structured approaches that you might see at a registered school. It's alright. Any questions, comments to date? Anything online that's interesting? That one?

E: Online? So I've got one that says for reviews it states you will be notified in writing. Does that mean that's snail mail or email?

C: Yeah, everyone heard that?

A: No, I didn't hear it.

C: Yeah, okay. So the question was for reviews will parents/guardians be notified by snail mail or email or phone calls? So the answer to that is we've got in our database about 90% of parents and guardians, I understand we've got the email address for so notification'd be via email. Where we don't it defaults to snail mail and if we don't hear anything from you we'll call you. Yeah, that's one. Maybe take one more?

E: And will you advise people each year that everyone for the current review year is now advised or notified and then we can all calm down and get back to <inaudible> 26:09?

C: Yes. Yes, we will. So we'll be doing the notification early in the calendar year, February or March and so yeah, I'm happy to make that commitment that we'll put up on our website you know at some point in March the 10% have been notified. What I won't put is so the rest of you can relax. Because the reviews will be awesome. For everyone.

Okay. So details of educational materials and resources proposed to be used, this is for the learning plan. Again it's indicative here, we're not looking for comprehensive information. The key word is plan, right? You're not going to have perfect knowledge of everything you're going to be doing. I'd probably draw a distinction here between when I went to a registered school in the '70s and '80s, it was so structured that I knew that in term 3 we'd be studying a particular text, a Shakespeare, a Great Expectations etc. We're not requiring that here so details of the educational materials and resources proposed to be used, it means we don't have to name individual texts or things, it's just sort of the indicative approach that you'll have and Pavlina will give example of that.

Okay. I'll pause there. Any more questions around learning plans? Yeah.

A: <inaudible> 27:57.

C: So the question was in what circumstances would learning plans be refused as part of an application? Basically in the circumstance where – so the regulations say – once again is there evidence of a learning plan or in this case a proposed learning plan that taken as a whole covers the eight learning areas? If for whatever reason a submitted learning plan was so devoid of any information that there was nothing at all proposed in relation to three or four of the learning areas and yet there was no request for an exemption then it's not going to be refused straight away. In that case it would be a call to the applicant to say thanks very much for that, thanks for the learning plan. We think it needs more in these areas for these reasons before it satisfies that regulatory requirement or do you want to apply for an exemption? And then there's a couple of weeks to think about that and work on that so you can have another go.

In worst case scenario even after that communication, another opportunity, nothing happens or we don't have in front of us – what does a regulator do? A regulator in some ways – put it this way, a regulator at the point that they feel they're comfortable, they've got information in front of them that meets the regulatory requirements, they sign off. Okay? And so if initially we aren't quite there there's another opportunity. If for whatever reason it just doesn't happen from the applicant's end then in those circumstances an application could be refused.

A: <inaudible> 30:06.

C: Yes, there will be so the question was where there is – where the VRQA contacts an application to ask for for example further information for a learning plan will there be verification of those processes in written form? And the answer to that is yes so what we're thinking of doing is where there's a phone conversation for example the VRQA officer will then email you with dot points to say do you agree we discussed this? And you are whatever it is, going to provide information on this and then we'll continue your application. And then you can respond and say yes, that's what's happening or ah-ah, I think you got that wrong and then it starts again, yeah. That's right.

Learning plans. Any questions about learning plans from online?

E: Yeah, I've got one. So if a child needs to be removed from school immediately due to trauma or an unsafe school environment due to bullying or something of that nature it would be problematic for the parent to have to take time to set a specific learning plan prior to the removal from the school. Please comment.

C: Yeah, okay. So I think the issue there is acknowledging that in particular circumstances parents and guardians are in stress and we hear that a lot at the VRQA. On our phone line for example when I've taken calls it's often from parents and guardians in difficult circumstances. What I'd say is a learning plan in terms of the amount of work it requires for a parent – so this is my claim – as you'll see when they're published they're not voluminous documents, they can be a couple of pages. The examples we're going to be publishing, a number of them are a couple of pages and so I would agree with the sentiment of the question if we were imposing more of a burden on an applicant so that would be my general claim, yeah.

A: <inaudible> 33:10.

C: Yeah so the question was around circumstances where there may be sort of a crisis where the parent feels that the school environment is a dangerous place for the child to be and around waiting periods for registration for home-schooling. Basically an application can be put in and a child needs to be still on the books, still enrolled from that school but being enrolled is different from being present is the way I'd –

A: <inaudible> 34:26.

C: No, you would not.

A: <inaudible> 34:29.

C: No, the VRQA – well in terms of VRQA won't ask you for any medical certificates or anything like that.

A: <inaudible> 34:40.

C: Correct, that's correct.

E: Also you can put in writing –

C: Turn your mic on.

E: Sorry. You can also put in writing to the principal. You can say it verbally but I'd also put it in writing just to say I am removing my child for this reason and then you are within your rights to remove your child immediately, yeah.

C: Yeah so in other words the VRQA's not going to ask you – is not going to ask anybody at the point of application show me correspondence from your school principal. No. Okay. One more, Ellen, and then we'll move on to exemptions.

E: I've got a few people asking the same question so the question is do existing registrations need to do learning plans? The initial slide said existing registrations do not need to do them but if a review happens what is being reviewed?

C: Yeah, it's a good question so it's one of the quirks of the new system, is that there is no relationship between a learning plan and a review. So when a review happens, no, you don't have to show a learning plan. So part of that is practical so only 10% of the cohort is being reviewed each year so if you can imagine a scenario where

you register your child for home-schooling next year, 2018 and your child's six and then it's only five years later that your child has picked up a review, your child's 11. What would be the point of the review process having a methodology which was we don't care what's going on now but can you tell us about whether you did what you said you'd do five years ago? What's the point? The world's moved on. What the review will be doing is concentrating on the regulatory requirement and in that way it's the same as a learning plan assessment. A review will be asking is there evidence that there's a learning program going on that – I'm a broken record – that substantially taken as a whole covers the eight learning areas? And so it has no relationship to a learning plan and so I can guarantee – so this guarantee right now on camera that in a review no parent will be asked to get out their learning plan and tell us how they went with it. Okay?

A: <inaudible> 37:38.

C: Yes, we're going to discuss what's in a review and Pavlina will get into that.

A: <inaudible> 37:52.

C: Yes, correct so the question is – paraphrased it – a learning plan's only required at the point of registration for the first year and then things just roll over through annual notification. Yes, correct. The regulations do not require parents or guardians to maintain a learning plan over the years. If parents and guardians want to do that that's fine but that's their own business. The same with exemptions. Exemption request is only at the point of initial application so in other words let's say for example next year you put in a – application with a learning plan which doesn't request any exemptions. A year later or six months later or four months later you decide you know what? We're not going to be doing languages other than English for an example because the really good tutor we had for Mandarin moved town. Do you need to tell the VRQA that you're not longer doing LOTE? No, you don't. You don't. That's your business.

When it comes to review it's simply a matter of saying look, at the moment we're not doing LOTE but substantially taken as a whole we've got a learning program that covers the learning areas and Pavlina will get into more of that. But yeah, I can't stress enough that learning plan and exemption request is only a point in time process that happens once at the initial point of application, right? Okay.

Alright I want to talk a bit about exemptions. So when I say exemptions it's - in your learning plan templates you'll see a section, are you applying for exemption for one or more learning areas? Now again first point to make, current registrations, this doesn't apply, this doesn't apply here. It does apply at initial registration for new registrations from 2018. Okay?

Now what are the examples? And this is in your written documentation in your packs in the FAQs document, it's buried in there. I've talked about one example before when I talked about that example of a request for exemption from seven of the eight learning areas for a child that's in deep distress, is going through the troubles and the parent is busting a gut to try their best for their child too and that's fine. So sometimes example – a good grounds for exemption is those sorts of hopefully temporary circumstances.

Sometimes it relates to the child's interest. So remember there's no set curriculum or teaching or learning approach required. So a parent or guardian may know, and we hear a lot about this, that a particular set of activities or subject matter really engages a child but other approaches not so much. So in those circumstances it's fine to apply for exemptions for one or more learning areas so I got told a story by a colleague, I don't know if it's something she saw on TV or something she talked about about a child who had a fascination with carwashes and their operations and once got into studying the operations, just starred in terms of their learning. And studying the operation of a carwash connects to a hell of a lot of learning areas so it's science, I guess and maths, technology, arts? I don't know.

So anyway this child started and apparently ended up being invited and flown over to the States to some sort of international carwash convention or something so I mean that's one example but what I'm talking about here is the basic truism is not everyone learns in the same way, not everyone is inspired by a learning program that breaks everything up into 12.5% each of the eight learning areas of maths, science etc and so it's fine for a parent to say you know what? We're not proposing to do these two learning areas 'cause that will – that won't engage my child, good grounds for an exemption.

Could relate to disability and special needs or could relate to parent capacity to provide instruction. So I gave the LOTE example before so these days you can learn language in all sorts of ways, you don't really need an

instructor but it might be – a parent might not want to concentrate on LOTE at the moment because good language teachers don't grow on trees, registered schools find that too so a number of them are exempted from LOTE. And probably what's not up there, other general comments I'd say – someone in a forum said well what about electives? I said what do you mean? And the question was is as a child gets older in a registered school the education program narrows so in fact someone in a forum in east Melbourne said look, I'm just out from England, my child's 16, 17, is actually doing their A levels so they're not doing art and this, that and the other, it's narrowed down. Is that good ground for exemptions? Yes, it is.

So I hope this sort of paints the picture here, that it's not some sort of system that sort of artificially requires all home-schooling students to be doing the same things at the same time, it's more about the individual needs as reported by their parent. So any questions about exemptions?

A: <inaudible> 44:57.

C: Yeah, it does. So the question is is a child doing other activities such as doing a certificate course at TAFE mean that they can be exempted from the related learning areas? Yes, it does so examples there - and this relates to partial home-school enrolments so a number of kids in Victoria currently and in the future have an arrangement where they're home-schooled some of the time and they do classes or activities at a local registered school particularly things like physed and art and things like that. So in that case, in a school case, a learning plan could say – it could just note yeah, we're covering five or six but you won't find anything about arts and PE in this learning plan, it's because my child does it at school X.

The same with courses in other sectors such as the vocational, education and training sector. One of the published learning plans that will go up, as part of the program there's a child doing a Certificate III in active volunteering at Monash for example which is a way for covering a particular – I forget – bad example. But yeah, but that's fine and the learning plan template will prompt you to think about those things.

Exemptions? Any questions about exemptions?

E: There's a question sort of related to that so if your child wants to do a short course like TAFE do they have to withdraw from home-schooling registration for that period or can they just do the course and then pick up where they left off?

C: The complication of trying to answer that question off the cuff is that the vocational education training sector is very, very diverse and so what I'd encourage – if parents are in any doubt just give the VRQA a call. Certainly a short course if that is what it is, yeah, it's certainly the case that a child can remain registered for home-schooling for a short course. But if they go off to a fulltime apprenticeship or traineeship then they've effectively moved to another sector. It's not always clear-cut so if there's any doubts just give the VRQA a call, yeah. In that case if it's a short course the parent is still taking responsibility for the education of that child so I can't see the issue.

A: <inaudible> 48:09.

C: So the question was around where parents and children are trying to negotiate arrangements with other providers, can evidence be required to the parent and child about their status in home-schooling? Yes, it can. If you ring VRQA and request. It's not always going to guarantee – the paperwork by itself may not guarantee a solution on the other end. I don't know but yeah, we can certainly clarify that someone is registered and the status of their registration, yes.

Okay. I'm going to come back for Q and A so don't go away, folks, but I am going to hand over to Pavlina to talk about reviews so I'll get your presentation up.

P: Okay, I thought very quickly we'll go through what the Victorian Home Ed Advisory Committee is there for 'cause not everybody knows about its existence and what we're there for. So as a result of our work this year the Victorian Home Ed Advisory Committee was established. It's composed of seven home educators including myself and we also have a disability advocate on there and we also have a home ed academic, an academic who specialises in home ed and of course Chris and we've also got some people from DET on there. And our role is basically to communicate the home education community's needs and perspectives on the paperwork and the implementation of the new regulations. So does anyone have any questions about – well some people call VHEAC, I call it VHEAC. Any questions on that?

A: <inaudible> 50:48.

P: The plan is, as far as we're concerned it is, we're going to be there forever. We would like to see it be and what we have heard from DET and VRQA is that they certainly find it valuable so yes is the short answer. I understand that we have a commitment for the next 12 months at least, is that right, Chris?

C: Correct.

A: And then after that?

P: Don't know. But you know? We fight hard so we'll see, yes. Oh sorry, the question was is VHEAC going to be there long-term, yeah. Sorry, remind me to repeat the questions if I don't. Any other questions? No, alright.

Okay so reviews under the regulations and that's not working. So reviews under the new regulations. Don't stress. Breathe. It's going to be okay, I promise. So you don't need to change how you home-educate and I think that's the biggest point that we all need to take away. Don't change what you're doing. Just figure out how you're going to communicate what you're doing to the VRQA when they ask you to and that's part of what this session's about, to give you some ideas.

So you don't have to submit a year's worth of work. So the VRQA are going to say to you we are reviewing you. You could just talk about what you've done in the last two weeks so if you've had a really, really busy two weeks, say you know you've gone to Eden to do some whale-watching and you know you've gone to filmmaking class and you know you've done all these things in the last two weeks and you know you've been to the tulip festival and you've talked about the plants there and you know all these things, if you've covered substantially all of your KLAs in the last two weeks you could just talk about in the last two weeks. The VRQA might come back to you and say we want a little bit more information but if you can show that you are substantially covering your eight key learning areas that's all you need to do.

So you could talk about the previous 12 months, you could talk about the last six months. You don't even have to give a specified time period, you can say you know these are work samples that we've done just this year. So there is nothing specific in the regulations that says you need to demonstrate you've been doing things in the last 12 months or six months. The VRQA don't want to <inaudible> 53:29 the work so don't submit every single – if you do worksheets don't submit every single worksheet you've done, just choose the best ones you know don't submit absolutely everything. It's not necessary, it's going to make their lives more difficult and it's just going to put more workload on you trying to collate all that information.

You don't have to report against the Victorian curriculum or of the Australian curriculum so we need to start talking about key learning areas so forget the word curriculum. You might buy a curriculum program if that's how you do things and that's a different thing altogether but what you need to focus on is key learning areas. We all know our key learning areas? English, maths, science, technology, art, language, phys ed, health and – I'm missing one?

A: <inaudible> 54:26.

P: No, that's technology. Thought we'd covered technology, anyway.

A: <inaudible> 54:31.

P: Oh no, what am I doing? You know HASS, you know history, social sciences. There you go, important one. So – but equally important is everything else. So we need to be talking key learning areas, not curriculum and we don't need to be reporting against – if my child is 10 or 11, I don't need to be talking about what other kids would be doing at school in grade 5 or 5. I don't need to be – worry about that, I just need to be demonstrating that taken as a whole our program covers the eight key learning areas. So some form of recordkeeping is advisable. However you do it, it's up to you and I'm going to show you some examples.

So what do you have to show in a review? According to the regulations you have to show that – you guys are going to know this out by heart – the education taken as a whole substantially addresses the eight key learning areas. Is that clear to everybody? That's all you need to do. And just like with your learning plans if you're not covering some of them just say why, just say my child is now 16, they spend 30 hours a week dancing with the Australian Ballet Company, we don't have time for languages other than English. This is what

they're you know career track – taking them. Or my child struggles so much with reading and writing because they're severely dyslexic, we're not doing languages other than English, we're just concentrating on English for now. Does that make sense?

When generally education takes place. And as Chris said this doesn't have to be on Mondays at 9am we do English, on Mondays at 10am we do LOTE, it doesn't have to be that and I'll show you an example. Where generally the education takes place. It doesn't have to be you know we sit at the kitchen table to do English or you know we travel to our tutor's address to do LOTE, it's just a general you know we learn in the community, we go to the museum, we got to the library, those sorts of things. So a couple of examples.

So where education takes place. John learns at home and also at the library and museum, shops, the swimming pool, home ed group and many other locations. It's as simple as that. This is not a huge focus. The reason why you need to do it is because it's written into the regulations but I get the feeling it's not a huge concern for the VRQA.

When education occurs. So weekdays include a high focus on educational activities but learning takes place all year without regard to school days or hours, even our holidays include educational activities. That's pretty general, isn't it? And it describes your philosophy on education too, doesn't it? But reading that sentence, you can sort of get a feel for how these people do home ed.

A: <inaudible> 57:45.

P: Yeah, I wouldn't copy it word for word. I'd come up with your own version. Yeah. So you choose how to demonstrate that you're covering the eight key learning areas. So you could just do conversation so when the VRQA contact you you could say I want to have a chat on the phone about how we do this thing, I don't want to give you any paperwork. I'm not saying that that's necessarily going to get you over the line, I suppose it will depend on the quality of the conversation and how convinced they are. They might come back to you and say at the end of that conversation could you just send us some examples of this trip to blah, di, blah that you talked about, that you know that featured so you know so majorly in your year.

You could just do it by conversation or you could do it by a document like a – just a PDF and I'll give you some examples.

A: <inaudible> 58:47.

P: Post?

A: In the mail.

P: Snail mail?

A: No, normal mail.

P: Can you –

A: Like normal mail.

P: So actually a hard copy document you're asking? So the question was can you do it by a hard copy document? I'm assuming you could, yes. Yeah so you could email it or you could print it out and you could mail it to them with a stamp. Yeah. I would ring though and make sure that they have it considering Australia Post.

Okay. Conversations so could be a phone call or interview and you could choose that as your primary way of reporting for a review. And it doesn't have to be at home so you could do it at like the local library or something and your child doesn't have to be present. And you can invite the VRQA into your home but you're not obligated to.

So your other option is things like for example work samples so these are actually work samples from our house so down here perfect example of a work sample so this is a mud ball flinger, I don't know if you can see it. So it covers a lot of KLAs so you've got English you know your handwriting, you're doing your spelling,

there's technology, science, you're covering a lot of KLAs and your work sample is demonstrating engagement and interaction, isn't it? So if you can choose work samples that are - rich work samples that are providing a lot of information in a single work sample you're better off doing that than providing you know a maths worksheet here, a sample of handwriting over there. If you can choose things that are combining all these things then I would be choosing those.

So in the middle there is a story about Minecraft so that's my six-year-old so she has sat down and she's just decided she's going to write about Minecraft which is one of her favourite topics and you can see she's done all the spelling herself, she's composed something, it's an instructional piece you know she's sat down, she's done some writing, she's practising her typing skills so she's doing a lot of KLAs there.

And finally – so this was something that my boy and I did together. You can see that that's my handwriting so that is okay, that is still a work sample. I would just have a little blurb that explains we were talking about the earth and he asked me what is the diameter of the earth? And don't ask me how I know but I knew the circumference and so I said to him I know the circumference is approximately 40,000km and there's this thing, this algorithm that you can use to work out the radius and therefore the diameter so I demonstrated that for him and we were talking about it and we were having a conversation about it. That is still a work sample. We have talked about it, he has helped me calculate something and it's still a valid work sample.

So another way of keeping records is photo records or scrapbooks so this is an example from our house again so this is a bridge and I've just written a blurb about what happened with it so engineering build that took three days, the aim was to be able to drive the remote-control Lego train at full speed around the track, over the suspension bridge and around the corner without derailing. We made a video interview recounting the process and describing function and emotions. So KLAs were covered there, we covered maths, technology, science, arts, English. And I should have also put we've covered health because we were talking about emotions and how he felt.

So this is a perfect example of the sort of thing that you could hand in if this is how you guys work. So we are natural learners so someone asked earlier about what is un schooling, we are natural learners, this is how we do it. So we go out, we explore, we do things that we're interested in and in the process we're covering a lot of really good [context] 3:04 and we're doing a lot of learning. Anybody got any questions so far?

A: <inaudible> 3:14.

P: So how you do that so – the question was you have to keep work samples.

A: Yeah, that's the question.

P: So basically the way I do it is I take a lot of photos and then I annotate them.

A: Do you have to do work samples –

P: You don't have to do so hang on, I'll keep going and you tell me if you still have questions. So here's another example. So if you don't want to keep work samples you could write a report so you could write something that says we have a daily shared reading routine and listen to audiobooks regularly. In this way I expose John to a wide range of books, I supplement our own books with a library selection each fortnight but often <inaudible> 3:52 are John's favourites. We take part in library activities and author talks that appeal. I have purchased alphabet and word posters for our walls. Further reading opportunities are provided in everyday activities of shopping, cooking, board games and computer use. John enjoys drawing and I add a sentence at his dictation to form a collection of picture stories we revisit regularly. In this way I aim to nurture his love of stories without pressuring him to read.

So that's a parent writing about how we go about our education. And remember the onus is on you to provide opportunities, it's up to the child to take them up. So you can say I have dragged them here and there and done this and done that, we've been to this workshop and that workshop, what that child has decided to engage in is up to that child. Your responsibility is to provide the opportunities. Does that make sense? And that is clearly demonstrating that you are thinking about what sort of opportunities are suited to that child. That child is clearly struggling to read and we don't want to be applying pressure on him and this is how I'm nurturing his love of literature and reading.

So you've got other options for recording, there's recording apps which can capture learning and can be set to match KLAs so – and some of them will also run a report so one app that has been talked about a fair bit is KeptMe. It's up to you whether you use it or not. It references back to the Victorian curriculum as far as I understand it 'cause I don't use it but as far as I understand it you can kind of tie it in with KLAs rather than the Victorian curriculum. This is an example of a page. I would encourage you to have a look on your - I'm not going to read the whole thing out but have a look, on your handout you've got that page in your handout. That's one option of a recording app.

You can use other things, though, there's things like Google Keep which is like little Post-It notes effectively so you could take a photo and then annotate it and then hashtag it so you know you've got tags you know so you could maybe tag it with – so if I was to say put my video or photo of my Lego train bridge and then add that annotation as text underneath it and then hashtag it with my science, technology, art, blah, di, blah at the end and then if you want to run – if you want to write your review based on individual KLAs then you could just search for the hashtag. Does that make sense?

And so you can also do that with things like Evernote. Seesaw is one that's designed specifically for classrooms but kids can be given their own account so you can actually give them the responsibility for recording their learning and they can post on their pictures, they can write things, they can add whatever work they want on there. So there's – the possibilities are endless and how you do it is entirely up to you and how it suits you.

Other options are things like journals so keep it simple and just write down what you've done and have a column for KLAs so for example here are the activities and then we need to change that colour, kids involved and then they're your KLAs. So for example we went to gymnastics, they all did it. Which KLAs were involved? Phys ed and health. Art class, graphic design using ICT. Only the child whose name begins with J was involved in that. The KLAs there were arts and technology. Does that make sense to everybody? So that's another way of doing it. And I wouldn't be doing this every day. If you're going to do it maybe do it weekly like a retrospective. You don't want this to be onerous, you don't want it to be interfering with the way you do things.

Another option would be to do a spreadsheet so you went to supermarket, J read ingredients, panels and checked weight, comparisons of items on special and then you're highlighting you know the boxes or you can put a number one so you can sort them later on or whatever, however you do it. Any questions? So another way of gathering evidence is to record any competitions or assessments that your child undertakes. You don't have to do these so say you know your child enters the Australian maths comp, they'll get a little certificate. You could include that as a piece of evidence that you know they're doing things.

And finally portfolio. You can take little bits and pieces from lots of different types of evidence so you can take – you can have some work samples in there, you can have you know your certificate from the Australian maths competition, you can put in bits of your scrapbook so it doesn't have to be all one way, there are no guidelines because it is recognised that we all do things so differently and if you start to put rigid structures in place about this is how you must do it then you're starting to change the way people home-educate. That make sense? We don't want you feeling like this so if you have any questions this slide is in your pack, feel free to contact any of us, we're more than happy to communicate and that's me down the bottom. Any questions?

A: <inaudible> 9:51.

P: Yes.

A: <inaudible> 9:57.

P: Okay so the question is what do you actually have to do for a review?

A: Yes.

P: Is that the summary? Yeah.

A: <inaudible> 10:15.

P: Can I use my family as an example? Okay so I've just got an email, it's February, we're going to be reviewed in July. So I'm going to look back through my photos and my notes that I've taken and I'm going to think about what are the really interesting things that we've done that have been really rich experiences?

A: So you're doing this in July?

P: Or whenever so I'm going to get the notice in February, March and reviews are happening June to October, was that right?

C: Yes, the reviews are happening from April to October.

P: April to October. So I'm going to have a look through and see what we've done in the last six months, 12 months, whatever or even the last couple of months and think about what have we done that can demonstrate a lot of really interesting educational experiences and that we are covering our eight key learning areas. So I might take the filmmaking course that my child does so that covers a lot of learning area you know we're covering English, we're covering technology, we're covering arts you know we're covering a lot of things there and I might – when they've finally produced if they've produced their film by then I might even include their film. And then I'm going to think about okay well what else do I need to demonstrate that we're covering? So maths, say. So he really loves writing code and he loves binary numbers so I might write a little bit about that, I might just say you know this is what he loves doing.

A: And so it's one or two things on each key learning area?

P: I would say it's more than one or two sentences but I would try and find things that are going to demonstrate that stuff's happening in your house that are good learning and I mean let's face it, we all know that if our kids are breathing they are learning, you can't stop them learning and so it's just about thinking about what can I choose that's going to show someone else how we're going about that. It doesn't have to be detailed, it doesn't have to be onerous, it doesn't have to be – from my perspective I would like to think that I'd be able to get together my material for a review in a week. I wouldn't think that it would take me more than a week to look through the stuff I have and I don't keep meticulous records, I do a lot of photos, I do a bit of journalling or annotating or whatever but I'm not there every week you know this is what I'm doing every single day.

A: So it's more than one or two sentences <inaudible> 13:12?

P: I think whatever you think you need to do to demonstrate what you're doing. Does that make sense? I don't know.

C: It does so the question here is if it's more than one or two sentences what exactly is required, right? But the issue about – the reason why one or two sentences wouldn't be enough is that you can make a claim, you can say yes, we're doing lots of English. She's read lots of books and then the question would come back that's very interesting, can you be a little bit more specific? 'Cause anyone can make a general claim but it's – what's a regulator looking for? Evidence. And the evidence could be examples of all of those things that were presented or other things so in terms of process the letter comes out in February or March and it says congratulations, aren't you lucky? Your child's up for review. It'll probably nominate a month, they'll probably say how about July? If July's not good for you, you're going to be overseas, you're going to be busy or what have you, it's fine to ring back or contact us back and say July's not good, how about June or August or September? That's fine.

I think in terms of review processes it can happen in sort of three different ways. If a parent would prefer not - and I can understand this – would prefer not necessarily to have a face-to-face meeting or even a phone call, they might be able to pull together sort of the materials that Pavlina's talking about and say here's a 10-page pack here that with – that word again, indicative rather than comprehensive that shows a lot of learning activity that's happened over the last period of time. And together it shows clearly that there's been a learning program going on that substantially taken as a whole covers the eight key learning areas. Send it in via snail mail or email or what have you, that will be assessed and if it's fine it's notification back, thank you, review's over. So that's a desktop review without ever having the pleasure of meeting us face-to-face or speaking to us on the phone. But other times a parent – it'd be interesting to see how this plays out. At a couple of forums some – a number of people have said oh no, we wouldn't do that, we'd prefer to speak to you.

So I don't – I'm not used to people actually wanting to speak to regulators so anyway we'll see how it goes so you know it's what the parent wants so the letter will sort of invite this, do you want to do it that way, desktop? Or would you prefer to have a telephone conversation about it? And in the telephone conversation it's going to be about – questions are going to be so, parent, guardian, tell us, how are you providing an education program that taken as a whole you know what are you doing for this? What are you doing for that? And that process is a little more messy because consistent with the question before wouldn't just be a phone call, it would be the VRQA officer annotating and then sending an email saying is that my understanding etc so there's – it's not quite as simple as just a phone call or it might be thanks for telling us about that, can you put in a couple of work samples or something like that to show it? Or it might be – a few people have said we want to meet you. You're welcome to our home or let's meet at a local library or what have you. We've no right to enter your home. There's nothing in the regulations about the home environment but if you invite us you know we'd say yes. So it's sort of – it's that sort of three different ways if you like if that makes sense? The question.

A: I guess the slightly inexact part of that statement is the substantially, the word substantially which is a bit open to interpretation so I just wanted to come back to something I think I heard you say earlier, that the assessment of the learning plan or the review and so forth wouldn't be comparing our children to what a child in a registered school would be covering at that point or covering that subject area?

C: Yes and there's information about this in the documentation, the FAQs. There's a sentence – it's expressed negatively, it can probably be – would have been better to express it positively but it says something like what the VRQA will not do in learning plan assessment or review process is have a sort of – a pre-determined benchmark for - a nine-year-old's learning plan should look like this and when we go to review a nine-year-old's work samples or whatever should look like that 'cause that would be unfair and inconsistent with the ethos of the regulations which is it depends on the individual circumstances of the child as determined by the parent. That would be discriminatory, such approach.

So there is nothing in the regulations that at review time – that requires a parent to submit materials that somehow shows they've gone from A to B in achievement, there's nothing that requires that assessment materials are provided so for example if someone put together a bit of a pack to demonstrate that it's been covered and there was nothing in there, there weren't online tests in there or what have you, it was all work samples or learning journals etc, that would be fine. Yes. So does that make sense?

A: Yes. And just to clarify, so it would be the parent's belief that their child was learning in these areas that was enough for you so long as we could provide –

C: Yes.

A: <inaudible> 20:09.

C: Yes, that's right. The regulations are really about activity, is there an education program going on? It's not about some sort of assessment of - well I get myself tongue-tied here. It's not about our judgement about second-guessing the parents' judgement about whether that learning program is fit for purpose for that child, that's up to the parent.

A: So that comes back to why it's not good to just have one or two sentences. The requirements require substance so we need to show depth of learning in each of the eight areas so perhaps like a page or you know as well as work samples?

C: I think so. The only thing I'd say around depth is that it's still indicative rather than comprehensive so it's not a need – with reviews as Pavlina said, there's nothing in the regulations around a backward period, it's not 12 months, it's not six months. You may have stuff from the past two weeks that clearly demonstrates that there's a learning program going on. But I don't know, we haven't done it yet so it's hard to answer but I don't think it'll be the case that you know we would say you've submitted five work samples for maths but we need seven. Why? So yeah, I'd still say indicative rather than comprehensive and I think VHEAC at a session will be providing more information around to review samples examples, a bit like you've seen up here as well as just learning plan guidance which is coming up, yeah.

A: The way I think about reviews is a bit like learning plans so like – just like you guys have two learning plan templates in front of you you've got the one that's divided up by KLAs and then you've got the one that's

integrated. That's kind of how I think about reviews like I think you could do a review, this is what we've done for English, this is what we've done for maths, this is what we've done for technology or you could do a more kind of integrated approach such as you know your photo record thing where you're then listing what KLAs you've covered. This is the activity we did, these are the KLAs we covered.

C: Yeah so in Pavlina's example, the globe and all that which is kind of – gave me pause to think 'cause a six-year-old knows more about circumference and diameter and all that than I do is – but that's an example of activities, sets of activities that can be linked to so many different – and I've heard a lot about that at the forums, how you know everything's a learning activity, shopping is a learning activity, doing the groceries is a learning activity so yeah, I think that – it's been really beneficial having the home-schoolers help us design that second template, integrated template because the bureaucrats left alone came up with the – a whole fashion sort of template which is a bit sort of old hat, the world doesn't work by herme – yeah, hermetically sealing English learning, from maths learning, from – yeah. Just to clarify to education, I'm not saying you personally are old hat or anything like that, I think you're great.

A: <inaudible> 23:47 opt in to do it to get it out of the way?

C: Right so the question was can the 10% be – is that 10% completely random or can you be quote crazy, which is not a term I would choose to use, and opt to get it out of the way? Actually we had this question at Werribee last night. You can volunteer, yes, you can. But I'm not sure how it's going to work entirely so we're going to do up to 10%. I think if you – there's natural attrition so in February or March we might select the 10% and then some of them like 10 people will drop out of home-schooling or will submit their kids to school, hopefully not just because they've been selected for review. So in that cases we might be looking for top-ups. In that case, yeah, there could be volunteers.

A: <inaudible> 25:01.

C: The question is can I email tomorrow and say ah – no, you can't because the new regulations aren't in force yet and so we don't have the power to lodge a review so it sounds like you're still worried about the process?

A: <inaudible> 25:19.

C: So you can volunteer but you'll just need a little bit of patience probably until March at the earliest next year. Yeah. I wasn't expecting people to volunteer.

A: <inaudible> 25:42.

C: Yeah. Yeah, okay so we'll do it 'cause it did come up last night at Werribee. Yeah. We'll – so what we'll do in – we'll keep communicating and when we need to call for top-ups, which I'm presuming will happen, we'll ask for volunteers. It's strange. It's kind of cool, I'm a sort of regulator, I've never had people – certainly not in apprenticeship regulations say please regulate me. But yeah, I understand the – to get out of the way element.

A: <inaudible> 26:30.

C: Yeah. The only thing I'd say – I won't repeat the question – if 600 people volunteer then we've got a problem at the VRQA, we won't be able to do it like – because VRQA team is expanding from two to five so we can't do – we'll be struggling to do 300 which is the 10% reviews. Anyway enough about the VRQA's problems but yeah, there's a limit to it. Any questions online about reviews?

E: So some people have asked if instead of meeting face-to-face they could have a review or speak face-to-face over Skype. Is that an option?

C: Yes. Facetime, Skype is yeah perfectly fine.

E: And for some of the key learning areas someone's asking if students can work together in groups of five or six. Would that still be okay?

C: Yes, it is and that's the case under the existing and new regime so tutors, group activities with Pavlina to – sort of very – we know they're very popular, very strong feature of home education.

- P: So let's say for example – the example that I gave earlier about our filmmaking, I mean that's in home ed kids working together to produce something and you know to engage in the learning activity so yeah, sure. And you know group work's really important. And you know you could even argue that that comes under health because it's life skills so yeah. Does that answer the question?
- C: Yeah. Maybe we might take a couple of more questions if there are any. For those who are at home what we're going to try to do – have we been bombarded with questions online, Ellen?
- E: There has been quite a few questions. I think a number of them have been answered as you've gone along, though, yeah.
- C: So what we'll do is for the ones that haven't been answered this video is going to be put on the VRQA website along with a transcript and I think we'll also include any questions that we haven't answered, we'll get together and try and answer them so they'll be on the website. Is that okay? Yeah. So do it that way. Is there any final question or two? Either here or there?
- E: A few general ones.
- C: Yeah, just pick one.
- E: So if you don't – since you're not following a curriculum if the VRQA think you're not covering an area how will they let you know?
- C: Yeah so it's <inaudible> 29:41 question so again if you're not covering one area that's not a showstopper 'cause it's – remember it's substantially taken as a whole covers the learning areas so not covering one isn't a hanging offence. But if it – the main point is if the VRQA, whether it's a – initial registration or review, have something to say to you like we'd like more information, obligation is to specify why you know we can't just say you're nearly there but not quite, good luck. It's you're nearly there but we're actually – there's nothing in your learning plan in relation to three learning areas yet you're not asking for an exemption so that – can you think about either applying for exemption or some more information on the other learn – do you know what I mean? It's around that sort of approach, of specifying what we're looking for, not just saying that generally it's not quite there. We'll probably – what do you think? Shall we – who wants to go home?

So look, thanks very much for coming and I've said this before, a special thanks to Pavlina. I'm on Victorian Government payroll, I get paid for doing this sort of stuff, thanks to your taxes, thank you. Pavlina and her colleagues volunteer their time to do this so thank you very much.

End of recording.