

TEACH Bulletin

Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home

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Home Educators Present Submissions

From one end of the country to the other, home educators presented both written and oral submissions to the Science and Education Select Committee on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. The Committee is now preparing its report. This report is due to be tabled in Parliament on the 18th of May. It must lie there for at least three sitting days, to give MPs the opportunity to read it. At some point after that they will go through the bill clause by clause and then vote it into law or reject it altogether. The report of 18 May will show how effective our lobbying efforts have been, for in it the Select Committee will recommend what to keep, what to toss out and what to modify. These reports should be available from Bennett's bookstores from the 18th or the Bills Office at Parliament ph. (04) 471-9999.

Home educators from Christchurch, Palmerston North, Hamilton and Auckland appeared before the select committee. Two of them filed the following reports:

Fourteen home educators appeared before the Education & Science Select Committee in Auckland on April 8 to present oral submissions on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill.

The committee present included Tony Steel, Jill White, Belinda Vernon, Liz Gordon, Neil Kirton, Gerry Brownlee and Nanaia Mahuta. They sat at a large table, and at another table nearby were a number of people from ERO and MOE, whose nametags said only 'adviser'.

The meeting began with my appearance in the seat at the foot of the table, giving a broad overview of the issues. I was allocated half an hour, but with the several questions from various MPs my portion ended up closer to an hour. I attempted to present the objections and suggestions from home educators in three categories: moral, legal & financial.

The moral reasons include parents' prior right to educate their children as they see fit, that parents are not assessed for their childrens' health or other aspect of their upbringing, that a family is not an institution or organisation, that an exemption is granted by the MOE and people sign statutory declarations that they are doing the job well - why should the

ERO doubt them?

The legal reasons might include: that there should be 'just cause' for concern before a review, that Section 21, subsection 7 does not allow for regular/universal reviews, that if you speak of a family as if it is an institution you may require accountability such as lesson plans and accounting procedures which are foreign to family procedures, that the use of the word 'require' in the legislation implies the potential for families to break the law if they do not respond to the requests from the ERO.

The financial reasons include the fact that parents sacrifice the potential for one income in order to have a parent at home full-time, that regular/universal reviews are not cost-effective, and that parents getting the supervisory allowance get about 15% of what a school

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MPs Being Fed Misinformation

A home educator on the North Shore visited her MP recently to discuss her submission on the Amendment Bill. She noted the following things he said to her:

1. He felt it was far more worthwhile to front up to a select committee as people were heard more and their arguments made far more strongly.
2. He would not be prepared to cross the floor to vote against any bill that was endorsed by the committee even if his constituents were against it.
3. He had "heard" that a lot of home schooled children were not

receiving a "proper" education and that was why there was need for the Bill to be strengthened. When I suggested the number would be less than 10% he found this rather hard to believe as his sources had led him to believe it was much higher.

Our MPs need us to set them straight. Of 600 reviews done, only two have been recommended for revocation. So who spreads the false rumours? One source is a certain home schooling agency! We possess printed material from this crowd which claims the ERO plans to recommend 5% of reviewed exemptions be revoked.

TEACH Bulletin

is a monthly publication of TEACH Publications and is concerned with those things which may impact on home educators. Articles will deal with political developments, statist and professional trends, correspondence with educationalists, and other items of general interest to home educators. There is also a regular opinion poll regarding educational issues of the day that may impact homeschoolers.

TEACH Bulletin is available for a subscription of \$16 per year for 11 issues (none in December), or by becoming a member of TEACH for a donation of \$30 or more. Some of the benefits of membership are:

- Discounts on Christian Home Schoolers of NZ National Family Conference fees.
- Discounts on TEACH National Leadership Forum fees.
- Coaching on how to participate in the Parliamentary process via letter writing, making submissions, lobbying MPs, etc.
- An annual free gift.
- Discounts on resources, books, T-Shirts, etc.
- Discounts on Sunshine Educational coach tours.
- An official TEACH tax-deductible receipt for your donation.

Your donation toward membership also helps to develop further services exclusively for homeschoolers such as scholarships, summer schools, national tours by overseas experts, curriculum and home school resource fairs, national and international field trips.

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Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching.
— Proverbs 1:8

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might receive per child.

After my appearance, the representatives from support groups in Auckland and the Waikato sat in a row facing the table and answered questions from the MPs. One of the MPs had rather impatiently said earlier that she hoped there were some firsthand accounts of reviews, because she was tired of all the secondhand reports of unpleasant reviews. Luckily two home educators were able to do this very clearly and eloquently.

The individuals had their turn and between them all, the issues I briefly mentioned were clarified.

I think they saw that we are sincere and committed - Liz Gordon even said, "It's not people like YOU the ERO has to worry about, but all those others!"

It was a very interesting experience, especially after attending meetings in Palmerston North and Auckland and hearing home educators express their opinions on the issues. It made me realise that socialising as we do with mainly home educators, we don't hear the objections many people have to home education, so there is a good opportunity to educate the general public about it.

---Kate Jaunay, HENA editor

It is fascinating to me how accessible is our Parliamentary process here in NZ. Inside Parliament buildings we were conducted to the proper corridor and found the room in which the Science and Education Select Committee was to meet to hear oral submissions on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. We sat on plush new leather settees and saw that MPs were just wandering about amongst us....the most well-known one to come by was Mike Moore.

They said to take it that they had all read the submission and would like to hear what I wanted to emphasise. (I therefore tended to

not refer at all to my submission which was probably a mistake, since that is where I'd put my best-worded arguments!) The two points I wanted to highlight were the inequities that would result from equating homes with schooling institutions and the unjustified powers given to ERO officers.

They seemed unmoved when I related how Margaret Austin had said to my face that we home schoolers were de facto schooling organisations and as such should be subject to similar regulations. I mentioned that the intent of these two clauses 59 & 60 reflected the same line of thought as Margaret Austin.

But when I got onto this issue of power, that the bill gives too much to the ERO, they became somewhat animated. Tony Steele, the chairman, especially seemed to think that the clause not giving them the automatic power of entry was sufficient. Neil Kirton seemed to see the issue a little and asked how I would re-word the sentences outlining the powers. We spent a little time on each of the powers listed in Clause 60 as he wanted to know what the objection to each was.

I mentioned that home schoolers were not against reviews as such, but did have concerns about how they were conducted and about protections for families written into the laws, which didn't seem to be there. One was that there was no complaints procedure. Jill White asked the ERO rep if this was true. She reckoned they did have one. But when Jill asked her to elaborate, she couldn't.

They asked questions and made comments right through my presentation, which tended to put me off my train of thought. All listened intently and took notes. I had about 40 minutes all up. Again, I find this such a thrill, that any Joe or Jill Bloggs can sit down and talk at length with the lawmakers of the land. We really need to exploit the avenues available to us.

Trading Post



For Sale:

Bob Jones

K - 5 beginnings contains:

- Home Teachers manuals A, B & C
 - Worktext B & C
 - Reader set & B books
 - Phonics charts
 - Teaching visuls chart
 - Teachers helper chart
 - Student response cards
 - three cassettes
- \$180

Maths K - 5

- Teachers Manual
 - students material packet
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 - Home teachers packet
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 - Student worktext x 2
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Grade I

- Teachers Manual, Vols I & II
 - Teachers helper
 - Reading I, Student text
 - Reading I - II, Student text
 - Reading I - II, Worktext
- \$100

Maths Grade I

- Teachers Manual
 - Home teachers packet
 - Student materials packet
 - Teachers chart
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Simply Symmetry: workbook and manipulative to teach shape, symmetry

— \$50

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ph. 025-578-708

Self-evaluation Reports

The MOE has decided NOT to request that further annual reports be written by home educators as some of us did at the end of 1996. The letter from the Ministry is fun to

read for the subliminal messages it contains!

It is dated 1 April. That is fairly self-explanatory. The reports are referred to as self-evaluation reports. This is a reasonably accurate description, for this is what we were asked to do. In many ways, it is quite preferable to evaluate ourselves, rather than have someone else outside the MOE (the ERO), whose parametres may not even overlap our own parametres, evaluate us when the only legal parametres are that the MOE be "satisfied" that the child will be "taught" at least as "regularly" and "well" as in a registered school. But for those whose reports led to reviews that caused their exemptions to be revoked, one could say the self-evaluation was in fact a self-incrimination.

The letter from the MOE goes on to say that the current reviews are from the Coalition Government's policy to reintroduce monitoring of home schooling. The actual wording of the Coalition Agreement, point number 13 of 15 under the heading of "Education - compulsory sector", is: "To maintain quality, the Government will move to introduce Education Review Office reviews of homeschooling." Note the use of the word "introduce" rather than "reintroduce".

In addition, the Coalition Agreement acknowledged that there would be some legislative amendments necessary. It seems that the type of reviews desired are not strictly or clearly allowed in current legislation, and so we have the current Amendment Bill before Parliament, which will make sure these kinds of blanket reviews are definitely legal, and that the ERO can conduct them on whomever they want whenever they want, without waiting for the MOE to give the OK. Yet the reviews are taking place now anyway.

At one point the MOE letter says they and the ERO have decided

that to have both reviews and annual reports would be too confusing for us. Are we that easily confused? Perhaps the word should have been "intrusive" instead of "confusing". Many would agree that requiring both is definitely too intrusive. Yet this is what the Austin Panel recommended to the Government regarding home educators toward the end of 1997 (See *TEACH Bulletin* No 12, January 1998, pg 2). Thankfully, these recommendations have not been actioned.

The letter from the Attorney General printed in last month's *TEACH Bulletin* is a lot more serious. At one point he says, "I suggest to you, in fact, that it may well be in the best interests of any person offering home schooling to allow an ERO Review Officer access to the dwelling where that schooling occurs." This reads like a classic example of a veiled threat one would find in an old spy novel. But it is the rest of the language used: "any person offering home schooling". It is not something we offer our children, as an option...it is what we do as a family. Since when are normal family activities subject to state regulation and control? Ever since the state assumed a monopoly over schooling — every child must by law be enrolled at a state-licensed school or be under instruction as regular and well (Section 21). The state, the MOE, is very clear about this. They insist that we parents do not have the right to home school, but have the right to ask their permission to home school. This is an outdated (and outrageous) hangover from the days of the patronising attitude that the state knows best and has the best interests of us all at heart, that state-sponsored social control and social engineering are an acceptable part of modern society.

Home schoolers are beginning to prefer the term home educators since what we do is not a function of the state but a function of the family, and therefore should not be regulated by the state.

Letter to Editor



My name is Keziah Grace. I am 7 1/2 years old. I would like to have penfriends to write letters to in N.Z. and overseas. I enjoy roller blading, bike riding, swimming, ballet, reading, playing with my brothers and sisters, and most of all knowing God. I love Jesus. His name in Hebrew is Yeshua.

Love from,

Miss K.G. Deverell
18 D'Oyly Drive
Whangaparaoa 1463, NZ

Don't Let Yourself Be Manipulated

Recently 15-year-old Nathan Zohner presented an interesting project at his high school science fair in Idaho Falls, Idaho. In his project, he described the dangers of a chemical compound known as "dihydrogen monoxide". His report showed that dihydrogen monoxide can cause nausea, hallucinations, and even death when used in large doses, and that thousands of deaths are caused in the U.S. as a result of exposure to this

chemical.

He also reported that billions of dollars of ecological damage is caused in this country annually due to the uncontrolled release of dihydrogen monoxide into the atmosphere, yet many states continue to import and sell the chemical without any regulation at all.

So, after learning all of this, if you said, "This stuff is dangerous. The Government should ban it," you are in agreement with 86% of the people who reviewed Zohner's presentation. Twelve percent of the reviewers said they would have to learn more before supporting federal regulations, and only 2% of the people said, "Wait a minute, "dihydrogen monoxide" is H₂O. That's right. Just plain water.

The goal of his science project was not to educate people about the dangers of dihydrogen monoxide, but rather to demonstrate how easily people can be lured into a particular mind-set by simple manipulation of a few statistics.

(From *The Gazette Telegraph*, 27 December 1997.)

How the ERO Chooses Whom to Review

The Editor of *TEACH Bulletin* wrote to the MOE on 12 February 1998 expressing concern that the current round of reviews were being conducted outside the law. The reply from Kathy Phillips, Senior Manager, National Operations, Wellington, on 16 March said in part:

You seem to have gained the impression that the new cycle of ERO reviews of homeschooling programmes was "ordered by the MOE as if the Secretary intended to revoke all the exemptions." This is not the case. What actually happened is that the Ministry asked ERO, when drawing up a schedule of homeschooling reviews, to prioritise the following two categories:

a) Reviews of children newly exempted since 1 August 1997 and any other children exempted within the same family at the time the review takes place;

b) Any reviews of individual families or children that are formally requested by Ministry staff with delegated authority from the Secretary. Such occasions will occur when Ministry staff feel there is a cause for concern about the adequacy of a homeschooling programme.

We also suggested that if ERO had the capacity to conduct additional reviews within the current financial year it should concentrate on the following two groups which were not covered by the self-evaluation report organised by the Ministry in 1996:

a) families new to homeschooling between 1 August 1996 and 1 August 1997

b) families who did not respond to the Ministry's request for a self-evaluation report in 1996.

Support Home Education While Making Toll Calls

If your local support group is not registered with either Telecom or Clear in the following way, then make sure they get registered, and make sure you are supporting them! Otherwise, you can have Telecom and/or Clear donate 5% of your toll bill to CHomes (Christian Home Schoolers of NZ), of which TEACH Publications and *TEACH Bulletin* are a part, costing you not a penny extra.

To direct **Telecom** to send 5% of your toll bill to CHomes, ring their toll-free number

0800-500-456

and say you want to support CHomes under their School Connection Programme. CHomes's phone number is (06) 357-4399, the account reference number is 1089 8651, and our Telecom code number is 4483.

To direct **Clear** to send 5% of your bill to CHomes, ring their toll-free number

0800-888-800

and say you want to support CHomes under their Friends of the School Programme. CHomes's phone number is (06) 357-4399.