SUMMARY OF AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH ON HOME EDUCATION

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Research on home education in Australia has a small but growing presence. Parent reasons for home educating have been extensively explored while student academic success has not attracted much Australian research. Socialisation has been examined in different ways by a number of studies. Demographic material on home educating families has been collected. A few projects have specifically focused on student perceptions of their home education experience. Students with specific needs have been conducted by a couple of researchers. Home educator interactions with networks, their use of community resources and their needs for appropriate information have also been analysed. Throughout the research problems with home education were identified. The most contentious issue identified was parent resistance to legislation and regulation. The developing theory of home education has distinguished home education as quite distinct from the education provided in formal schools and institutions. A few researchers have included Distance Education in their definition of home schooling and a few academics have addressed the possibilities of home education in the Australian context. This resource was developed as a direct result of Victorian Legislative changes and was originally presented to the Minister of Education and Training of Victoria when comments from officials within the department to home education representatives were made indicating their understanding that there was little Australian research on home education.

Australian Home Education Research
There is a small but growing of body literature available in Australia on home education. Most of this is contained in unpublished theses but there is also some published work available. This literature includes professional journal articles, a book, and documents from Parliamentary Reviews and Departments of Education. The topics covered in this literature cover the reasons parents home educate, demographic information, studies of how parents manage the home educating process, student perceptions, special needs, academic success, the process of learning in home schooling, student competencies and social development, legislative and legal situations in all states of Australia, and home education as an alternative form of education in rural areas.

Reasons for Home Education in Australia
Australian parents choose to home educate for many reasons. These can be grouped into two major categories: negative features of formal institutions and the positive attractions of home education. Many researchers have addressed this question.


Maeder, G. (1995). *Parents' reasons in the Hunter area for choosing a Montessori school, Steiner school or home schooling for the early schooling of their children.* Unpublished MEarlyChildEd, University of Newcastle, Newcastle NSW.

Patrick, K. (1999). *Enhancing community awareness of home-schooling as a viable educational option.* Unpublished In partial fulfillment of the requirements of Bachelor of Education (Primary)(Honours), Avondale College, Cooranbong, NSW.


Academic Success
While there are no specific major studies on the academic success of home educated students, a couple of small studies and most other research indicate that Australian home educated children have achieved an equal or higher than average result to their formally educated peers.


Socialisation
Studies which have looked at the social experiences of home educated students indicate that the students have broad, healthy social interactions although a few students would have appreciated more interaction with peers, particularly in home education network groups. Studies have also shown that some students who have been hurt socially at school have been able to recover when home educated.


People Who Home Educate Their Children
Home educators come from all walks of life, from every corner of the country, from varying income brackets, and with various levels of education. None of these features appears to impact upon their success in educating their children.


Student Views of Home Education
Students have generally reported positively about home education. Comments about missing peers at school were generally tempered by the benefits of being able to flexibly learn at their own pace. Self-esteem appeared to be healthy among these students with a number of them crediting their own self-image directly to their home education experiences.


Special Needs
Special needs students (including school refusers) and their families especially appreciated the learning and social opportunities provided by home education. This
group in particular felt the need for interaction between formal institutions and home education.


**Home Education Networks**

Many home educators valued their home education networks as they catered for social and education needs of both students and parents.


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**Use of Community Resources**

Parents use a wide variety of community resources. These include the use of libraries, clubs, tutors and specialist classes as well as relevant excursions.


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**Parents Seeking Information and Public Understanding**

Many parents wanted access to information relevant to their home education programmes.


Greater Public Awareness
Home educating parents frequently expressed the wish that the general public had a better understanding of home education and its benefits.


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Problems with Home Education

Problems associated with home education were clearly identified in the following literature. These were mainly associated with home educator burnout, programme organisation, and regulatory obligations.


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Professional Experiences with Home Educated Students/Student Transitions between Home and Mainstream Institutions

Professional experiences with home educated students and student experiences through transitions into and out of mainstream educational institutions indicates that most home educated students move easily between the two systems. Movements are occurring in both directions to benefit student educational and social outcomes. When there are problems for students moving into mainstream institutions, these are usually the result of learning needs different to average student abilities, family dysfunction, prior negative experiences in mainstream institutions and mismatch with particular mainstream institutional structures and features rather than from the practice of home education.


Home Educators: Legislation and Regulation

The greatest cause of tension and ill-will for home educators was centered on legislative and regulatory bodies and their requirements. Resistance to regulations was significant. In the *Home Schooling Review* it was noted that most home educators did not comply with the provisions of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 Qld.*


**Developing Theory of Home Education**

The most serious studies on home education focused on the processes used by home educators to educate their children. Learning at home could not be equated with learning at school as it generally involved a holistic and ‘real’ world approach.


Futuristic Possibilities for Home Education and Academic Comments on Australian Home Education

There have been a few interested academics who have read home education literature and prepared literature on the Australian research possibilities.


Researchers who have included Distance Education as part of ‘Home Education’

It has mainly been Queensland researchers who have included Distance Education students as a category of home education in their research. Most other researchers make a distinction between the two types of education.


**Study of education provided in the home out of school hours**


**New Zealand Research**


**Distance Education called Home Schooling**


Newspaper Research quoted in AEI

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