

Why Is Home Schooling Growing in Australia?

By Stuart Chapman BEng; BA, Grad Dip Ed

May 2020

The numbers of students being educated at home in Australia has been steadily increasing with an [annual growth rate of 9.4%, over the last eight years.](#)

The reasons for this growth are:

1. Legal Acceptance:

In every state and territory, home education is now recognised as a [legal alternative](#) to attending school.

2. Australia has a history of Government Distance Education

Australia has a history of Distance Education with [Schools of the Air](#) since 1951 and [correspondence schools for over 100 years.](#) These government-approved schools have helped Australians accept that learning away from a classroom is possible and even a little romantic.

3. Greater Media And Community Acceptance

In general, home schooling has been getting an [increasing number](#) of [positive news stories](#) in the [media](#). Home education is now accepted as an alternative form of education in the community.

4. Numbers Bring Numbers

As more people commence home schooling, more hear about it and in a positive way. It is now likely that most people know at least one family that has home educated or are home schooling. Knowing others personally reduces the fear factor considerably.

5. The Socialisation Question Is Now A Non-Issue

With the increase in numbers and activities, especially in the major cities, there are now more social activities for home-schooled children than is possible to attend. While some families still feel isolated, due to finances and or a rural location, social opportunities are much better than they were 20 years ago.

6. Rise Of Homeschooling Support Organisations

Every state now has at least one home education support group. These support groups have been active in lobbying government for better laws and regulation for home educators. They are also a great point of first contact for families enquiring or starting out.

Some groups provide additional services such as teacher support, organised activities, and assistance with government registration.

7. The Internet

The Internet has made it much easier to find information about home education and support groups. It is also much easier to find books, resources and videos, which make the decision to commence home education easier.

8. Parents want a different philosophical method for their child's learning

This is one of the top three reasons parents give for choosing to home educate their child. Many parents want to choose a different method of learning such as [unschooling](#) or use an alternative curriculum such as [Classical Conversations](#) neither of which is used in the school system in Australia.

9. Schools are not able to provide adequate one on one instruction

Parents are concerned that on average a child will only receive four minutes of one on one instruction during a school day. Many students will not grasp complex concepts within this time frame. These students fall behind and lose confidence.

At home, a student can ask questions and check their understanding with a loving adult who is not distracted by 29 other students. In such an environment, learning and progress occur steadily.

10. Public Schools are perceived to ignore God

Public schools are not able to state that God is the designer and maker of all things. They ignore the existence of God, and their subtle message is that God is irrelevant. People of faith often choose home education, as they believe that public schools are teaching a differing worldview.

11. Parents are concerned about the recent cultural shift in schools

Some parents who were previously happy with the school system are concerned by the introduction programs which teach a different worldview such as the Safe Schools program.

12. Parents are concerned with peer pressure at school

Some parents are concerned what kind of danger peer pressure could have on their child, especially if their child is naïve and easily led. Parents see the home as a safe environment. Social activities with other home schooling families are safe, diverse and well supervised.

13. Expense of Private Day School Education

While many would like to send their child to a local private school, fees have increased significantly and for some have become prohibitive. Education at home is now an attractive option financially.

14. Easier access into Tertiary Institutions

Over time tertiary institutions are making entrance easier for home-educated students. It is much easier to enter university now as a home schooled student than it was 20 years ago.

15. Bullying

Bullying is now one of the most common reasons given to start education at home. A typical conversation that this author has heard hundreds of times is when a mother calls and says, "I have a daughter in Year 9 and I just can't get her to go to school. She says to me, 'Mum, they are horrible, I just can't go back.'" Other parents say, "It breaks my heart that my ten year old cries all the way to school each day."

Parents say, "I am up at the school every week and each time I am told, "We are dealing with it, but the bullying just goes on and on. I am over it. It is not something that we ever really thought about, but right now home school is the only option for us. "

16. Children with Special Needs

Home schooling because a child has special needs is one of the top four reasons parents choose to home educate. Many of these children do not qualify for a teacher's aide and start to fall behind emotionally and academically.

17. Advanced Children

Some parents indicate that their children are well above average academically and are frustrated and bored in the classroom. When home educated, these students are allowed to advance faster than their peers.

18. Not happy with culture of local schools

Some parents are concerned about noisy, disruptive classrooms or with the level of swearing in the playground.

Some children say that it is hard to find other students who try to follow the teacher's instructions and complete homework correctly.

19. School Waiting List

Some parents desire to place a child in a particular school but are on a waiting list. Rather than swap schools halfway through a year, some parents choose to home educate for 6 to 12 months.

20. Parents are concerned that their child is underperforming in school

Some parents realise their child has a lazy streak and are concerned that their child is just drifting through school and underperforming.

At school, students can often get away at working at 50% of their capacity. Many students are not performing anywhere near their best. Their motivation is low, and their friends may be distracting them.

At home, a parent can see exactly what a child has done each day and whether he is underperforming. There is no hiding in a class of 1 or 2 students. Parents can sit with a child and encourage him or her for a whole hour if they are struggling.

Parents believe the ultra-small class sizes at home can make a huge difference to their child's academic performance.

21. Students are Immature

Some children will ask to be home schooled because they find that their peers immature.

22. Unhelpful Relationship

Sometimes a parent will remove a child from school to remove the temptation to continue a relationship with another student that has become too intimate or destructive.

23. Some children just don't like school

Some children just don't like the school environment. When asked why, they often can't verbalise what is the problem. They have not been bullied, yet they will get stomach cramps in the morning and complain about not feeling well.

When a parent notices a child is missing school one or two days a week, home school becomes a real option.

These reluctant students often (but not always) make a complete transformation when they commence home education and become enthusiastic about their learning again.

24. Not Happy with a Teacher

Some parents state they had been very happy with their local school until *this year* when their child has a teacher, in whom they have little confidence. Whether it be a first-year graduate who is still learning the ropes or an older cynical teacher who has lost their passion, one year of a struggling or jaded teacher is just not acceptable. Home education becomes a viable alternative in these situations.

25. Failure to teach Phonics.

Some parents are dissatisfied when their child is still not reading after five years of formal education.

The effective teaching of phonics will result in a rapid growth in reading ability. It is common for a child's reading level to jump 2-3 years in a semester when a good phonics program is used.

The one-to-one interaction time with parents that is possible with home education using a phonics based program will greatly assist a child to improve their reading ability.

26. Travelling

A number of families home educate while traveling around Australia by car or caravan;

27. Elite Sports

This author has worked with students who were training at an elite level including golfers, surfers, swimmers, Olympic squad members and ballet dancers. Home education can help these children achieve both their academic and sporting goals.

28. Parents on Student Visas

Another group of recent additions to the home schooling movement are parents who are studying in Australia on student visas and who would have to pay \$14,000 a year to send their children to their local school and therefore find home schooling a very attractive option financially.

29. Health Reasons

Some parents choose to home school because their child suffers health issues such as depression, chronic fatigue, a suppressed immune system, or cancer. There are also teenagers who are pregnant or have a young baby.

There are also children who are extremely anxious and have panic attacks and become physically ill if you force them to go to school or are self-harming and who have attempted suicide.

For all these children, education at home provides a safe environment while they are unwell.

Sadly there are also parents who have a terminal illness who want to spend as much time as possible with their children while they can.

30. Parents who want to be more involved

There are parents who have no problems with their local school but just want to be more involved in their children's education, and not outsource it to strangers. They see the benefits of home schooling and do it for family bonding and overall flexibility.

31. Too Young

Now that the compulsory age of schooling has been lowered, some parents are concerned that their child is simply not ready for school. Some children are not entirely out of nappies. Some still require their midday sleep.

In schools, teachers are encouraged not to touch a child or let them sit in their lap, so 4 and 5-year-olds are now starved of physical contact for six hours a day.

32. Vaccinations

Some parents do not want to their child to receive vaccinations and believe that educating at home will reduce the pressure to do so.

33. Not for everyone

It is recognised that home schooling is not for everyone and many parents have said it is one of the hardest things they have ever done. When it is clear that it is not working, parents sometimes try a different methodology to see if that may work better with their child. Others feel they need a break and choose to put their child back in school for a time leaving the option to try home education again if necessary.

Covid-19 Update

As a result of the Corona virus lockdown many millions of parents have now experienced distance learning. All home education registration authorities are reporting a significant increase in enquiries and registrations in 2020. It is yet to be seen whether this will lead to a long-term increase in home education numbers.

Stuart Chapman is an international speaker who has spoken at home schooling conferences on five different continents. He has been a board member of the Global Home Education Conference and the International Certificate of Christian Education and is a current member of the International Home Educators Leaders Group. He was the founder and director of the largest home school academic support group in Western Australia. He was elected as a committee member of the Home Education Association in 2019. He and his wife Dianne home educated their five children for 18 years

Email: stuartchapman105@gmail.com

