

Unhappy parents embrace home schooling in record numbers

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Sammy and Melanie Muratore home-school their five daughters, Angel, 13, Mia, 8, Sienna, 6, Kiara, 4, and Molley, 10. Picture: Stuart McEvoy.

Families are home-schooling their children in record numbers amid growing dissatisfaction with the standard of teaching and lack of discipline in mainstream schools.

The number of children being taught at home has soared more than 80 per cent over the past six years, propelled by strong growth in Victoria and NSW, which account for 54 per cent of home-school registrations nationwide.

Victorian registrations have increased 71 per cent to 5647 since 2011, with student numbers up 19 per cent last year alone, despite moves by the state government to introduce tougher regulations.

More than 19,000 students — almost one in 200 — are now educated at home and the number is forecast to tip 50,000 in 10 years.

Accelerate Christian Home Schooling, which provides an annual sector snapshot, has attributed the solid growth to a variety of reasons, such as improved access to information via the internet, better support networks and greater public acceptance.

SHUNNING SCHOOL

Growth in homeschooling registrations



	2011	2017	% Change
NSW	2763	4700	70.1
Vic	3300	5647	71.1
Qld	891	2580	189.6
WA	1806	3464	91.8
SA	891	1314	47.5
Tas	603	928	53.9
ACT	136	271	99.3
NT	51	100	96.1
AUS	10,441	19,004	82

Source: Accelerate Homeschool, state and territory education departments

However, Accelerate co-ordinator Stuart Chapman highlighted growing concerns about falling academic and behavioural standards in schools, including “noisy disruptive classrooms where the teacher may spend as much time on behaviour management as they do teaching”, which has coincided with Australian students’ declining performance internationally in various maths, science and literacy surveys.

Mr Chapman singled out the system-wide failure to embrace phonics as a proven method of teaching how to read.

“Some parents are very dissatisfied when their Year 3 or 4 child is still not reading after five years of formal schooling,” he said. “We have many enrolments of students whose literacy is up to three to five years below the average simply because they were not taught how to read using phonics.”

A report released by the NSW Education Standards Authority this month claimed the most commonly cited reasons for parents choosing to home-school were “philosophical”, “special needs” and “other”, which included responses such as “my child learns best in a one-on-one situation” and “local school not suitable”.

Home Education Network assistant co-ordinator Sue Wight said a recent survey of parents by the Victorian group suggested there were many reasons for home schooling.

She said 20 per cent said they’d had problems with their school, about 15 per cent believed they could do a better job and 11 per cent said their children had diverse learning needs.

“Anecdotally, special needs is the real growth area,” she said.

Melbourne mother of five Melanie Muratore began home schooling in February, having become increasingly disillusioned with her daughters’ school.

Her eldest, Angel, was behind in most subjects, had been bullied and was not ready to move into Year 7.

In contrast, younger sister Mia was performing well beyond the Year 2 level she was due to commence. Both girls were disengaged, struggling to make friends and increasingly anxious.

“Things just came to a head and we decided to take all of them out of mainstream school,” Ms Muratore said.

Having contacted an experienced local educator who had developed a home-schooling curriculum and workbooks, Ms Muratore, a yoga teacher, now teaches the five girls, aged four to 13, from home.

“They’ve all made progress but the biggest change I’ve noticed is their confidence and the sense of achievement,” she said.

“When they get something right they’re like, ‘Mum, look at this!’ They’re just so happy. We feel like we’ve got our kids back.”