

Document to support homeschooling in the Netherlands

My wife and I are resident in South Africa and are both 76 years of age. Judging from our age, you can imagine that we come from a relatively conservative and traditional upbringing.

My son with his wife and family of four children reside in the Netherlands and have done so for about 25 years. His wife is Austrian. She and my son met whilst doing postgraduate studies at the Erasmus University.

We also have a daughter living in Australia. Both she and her husband are anesthesiologists and they have two children.

When the family in the Netherlands originally proposed to do homeschooling, I was rather sceptical. Given that I come from a traditional upbringing and schooling system, I was concerned. The whole concept of homeschooling was new to me.

My family in Australia follow very much the traditional approach and have both the children in a day school. They formally attend classes every day and function very much in a structured approach. This suits their family very well and the children are happy within the system.

I was very sceptical initially about the Netherlands family homeschooling. I have been proven wrong. The one aspect that I would rate the highest, is the ability of these children to function 'out of the box'. Their interests and their knowledge are very wide.

We visit the family regularly every year for at least 4 to 6 weeks and they also visit us in South Africa for about the same time every second year, if not more frequently. We therefore have a good insight into the functionality of home schooling.

During this time, I have been exposed to them in many different environments and also seen them respond to many different challenges.

The inquisitiveness of their environment, is astounding. It is not only that, but it is the ability to be creative and to explore many aspects of life around them. This does not preclude any of the more traditional aspects of schooling, i.e. structured learning and knowledge about many subjects.

I am a pathologist and consequently my primary interest is in biological matters. I am often astounded by their in-depth knowledge and their

creative thinking around biological subjects and also scientific subjects which are broadly in my field. I am relatively sure that this is the consequence of an 'unstructured' approach to learning which tends to explore the matters at hand of interest to the child at the time. The child being interested, is stimulated to learn more and to explore and to develop a broader knowledge of the subject.

We live by the sea, close to many rock pools and a relatively undeveloped coastal area. The exploration of this vast area has led to many interesting and in-depth discussions about life. One could say that this process is unstructured, but the results of this unstructured learning are astounding. In my experience individuals are 'created' who enjoy learning and acquiring knowledge. Surely one could not want anything more in a learning process and in developing towards adulthood.

I did note that their mother is Austrian and her home language is German. Our and my son's home language is Afrikaans. We have been very grateful that the children speak Afrikaans fluently to us. This, I believe, has happened because of their own exposure and home environment and a frequent exposure with family visits to South Africa. They are very capable in four languages, Dutch, German, English and Afrikaans. I believe this shows very well the commitment of this family to making their life within the Netherlands, but also being very much part of the larger world and their broader family structure.

Clearly the modern environment offers many opportunities for personal development. The use of the Internet as a school medium and the ability for self-schooling is astounding. All of these children are proficient in the use of the Internet and its many pathways.

I noted initially, that I was concerned when I was informed that the family wanted to commence homeschooling. I was very sceptical that this could yield an adequate 'result' in comparison to traditional schooling. Time has shown me to be very wrong. These children are paramount examples of the success of homeschooling.

I wholeheartedly support homeschooling as a concept and would plead for the maximum degree of flexibility in whatever structure is proposed to allow this format of schooling to continue.

I fully understand the need for evaluation of the process, but this should be done with flexibility and care not to destroy the wonderful aspects which this method of schooling offers.

I may be contacted to elucidate any of this aspect above.