

Hurstbridge Learning Co-op
Laceys Road. □
Hurstbridge,
VIC 3099

RE: Schools Assistance Bill 2008

The Hurstbridge Learning Co-operative is a parent run, alternative school for primary aged children.

The Co-operative is wholly responsible for the teaching and administration of the school. The Co-op is a community of families committed to providing the resources needed to create a more stimulating alternative to the classroom. We believe that every member of the community can contribute to the learning and raising of its children. Enrolments are kept to a ceiling of thirty children. The intimate size of the Co-op creates a community much like an extended family.

The parent choice to be a member of the Hurstbridge Learning Co-Operative involves a unique level of commitment. The parents work directly with the children each week to provide learning experiences that respond to each child's needs, interests and motivation. The families of the Co-Op make a significant decision to commit time, talent and finances to the education of their own children. The parents appoint a VIT accredited teacher as a co-coordinator.

The parents of the Hurstbridge Learning Co-Operative make significant life decisions to provide an education of their choice for their children. It is a model for any school that aims for parent participation. At Hurstbridge this goes well beyond participation. It is our school for our children.

The current **Schools Assistance Bill 2008** includes points that may potentially compromise the Hurstbridge Learning Co-Operative Philosophy and Mission.

Section 22 – National Curriculum

We understand that the National Curriculum will be operative from 2011. We are unclear as to the format this will take and the degree to which this will allow flexible learning experiences that are currently designed for the children at Hurstbridge Learning Co-Operative.

The learning programs at Hurstbridge are child centred not curriculum centred and this is a key factor in parent choice to become a member of the Hurstbridge Learning Co-Operative.

The Hurstbridge Learning Co-Operative has maintained a high level of educational provision approved and accredited through the processes of VRQA. The school has operated effectively for 35 years in providing an accredited learning experience for families in the local community as a choice for their children.

The impact of a prescriptive National Curriculum has the potential to remove choice for our school community who have clearly committed to a philosophy that responds to children's learning ahead of curriculum design. This together with the history of providing quality educational outcomes for children accredited through VRQA would be a great loss to the local area.

Sincerely,

Maitreyi Ray – Principal - on behalf of the parent group