Down with homework! *Source: Getty Images*

**CHILDREN in primary school should not be wasting their time on homework** – it is a provocative idea. But research into the impact of homework learning outcomes, and motivation, tells a relatively clear story.

This week the Victorian Parliament’s Education and Training Committee recommended a review of that state’s homework policy after its findings finally reflected what science has told us for decades: there are no academic benefits from homework for children in primary school.

Research tells us the following about the impact of homework on children in primary school:

**Homework offers no academic advantage.** Instead, it overwhelms struggling children and is boring for high achievers.

**Homework is stressful.** A 2002 study showed a direct relationship between time on homework and increased anxiety, depression, anger, and other mood disturbances among students.

As homework increases, national student achievement decreases. Data from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study showed the overall correlations between achievement and the percentage of teachers who used homework in grading are all negative.

**Homework increases family conflict.** And the more parents help with children’s homework, the more tension children experience. It also reduces time for other activities that provide balance and variety to a child’s life, such as sport, music, art, or other extra-curricular activities, or to relax and simply be children.
Homework places additional burdens on parents - who often don’t know how to help their children anyway - and on teachers, who have enough to do without having to collect, mark, and redistribute extra work for their students on top of that required by the curriculum in schools.

Research DOES indicate that ALL children should read each night. Reading is shown to increase academic achievement and aid in learning. But reading should not be for a set number of minutes or pages. Similarly, self-directed learning at home by completing projects of interest can aid in positive educational experience and motivation.

In spite of the decades of research finding homework has no academic benefit for primary school students, the idea that children should no longer receive homework remains controversial.

Common arguments for homework are that it promotes self-discipline, improves study skills and work habits, helps students be responsible and prepares them for the “real world”.

There’s no science to support or refute these ideas. However, saying our kids had “better get used to it” so they can manage when they’re older is like telling an 11 year-old that 10 hours of sleep each night is too much because in another decade he’ll have to manage on eight.

In spite of the research showing homework undermines learning and disrupts childhood, it possesses a symbolic value that demonstrates a commitment to higher standards and work ethic.

But the evidence is clear. Supporters of homework are actually driving kids away from learning, making them less successful in school, and interrupting their childhood