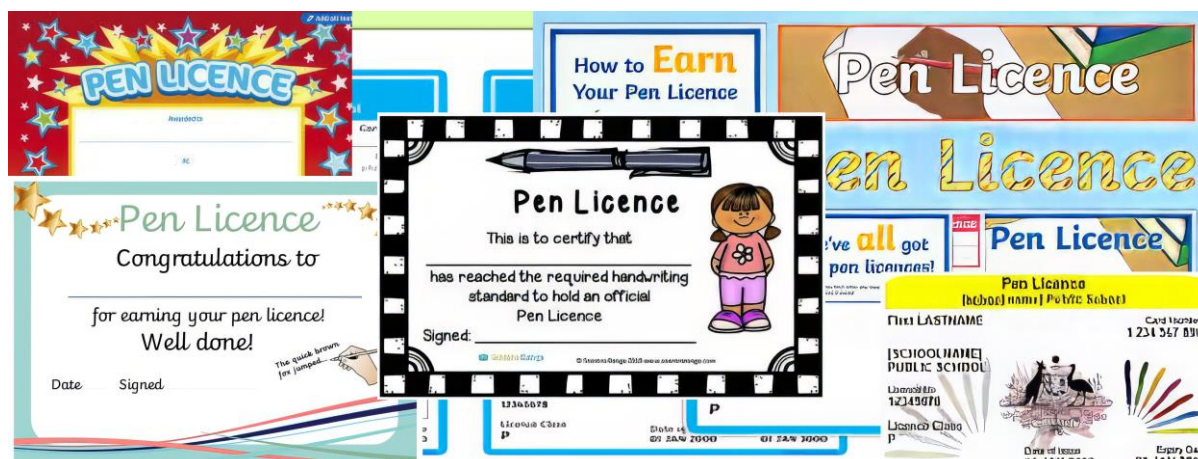


Pen Licences for School Kids in Australia? Seriously?

Shôn Ellerton, January 6, 2026

When someone talked to me about pen licences, I thought it was a joke. But it turns out that they actually exist!



When someone told me that there was such a thing as a 'pen licence' for school children in Australia, I thought someone was taking the piss, having a laugh or playing a joke.

I heard it a few times on various occasions and I thought nothing of it. Some bit of slang or jargon that someone made up, just for fun.

But apparently, such a thing really exists!

Some wishy-washy cretin came out with the idea that kids should be rewarded with a pen licence if they could demonstrate good handwriting skills.

In many schools in Australia, and probably Britain as well as its education system had become taken over by idiotic progressives, kids are not allowed to use a pen until they've earned a pen licence. Not saying it's true for *all* schools, but many of them do.

I have a ten-year-old son who said that he has not been able to get one of these coveted pen licences.

And why should he anyway?

Has it ever occurred to those teachers who have adopted this pen licence crap that some kids may have *better* handwriting using pens rather than pencils?

That's always been the case with me. I don't like the feel and texture of the pencil's graphite rubbing against the grain of the paper, especially with cursive writing.

Pen licences are just bullshit. A piece of paper, in the form of a certificate, or a little card which looks somewhat like a driving licence to prove that you have the authority to use a pen.

Being somewhat rebellious and eccentric during my own school days, if such a policy had existed, I would have purposely used a pen to show defiance but, should I have been granted a pen licence, would probably have refused it on grounds of not wanting to be ostentatious and be fair game to being bullied by the educationally unmotivated rednecks who seem to take pride by the number of kids they can bully.

I'm not quite sure when or why our son became so interested in fountain pens. Maybe, because I have a few of them myself, and my wife, being of Chinese descent, likes to use them for writing Chinese characters.

Fountain pens are more difficult to use than pencils and ballpoint pens. If handled incorrectly, they do not work at all. This is a good way to learn how to use a pen properly.

I had written a piece about fountain pens back in 2019 titled [*Of Handwriting, Cursive, Fountain Pens and Ink*](#) elaborating on the importance of handwriting technique with fountain pens.

I've always loved fountain pens and started using them when I was in fourth grade in the United States. Most of the others were content with their ubiquitous yellow standard Number 2 pencils with the attached eraser at the butt end. There were a few who used ballpoint pens and there were a couple of us with fountain pens.

There were occasions in which we *had* to use Number 2 pencils. For example, each year, we had to undergo the national [*Iowa Assessment*](#) tests which meant filling in little bubbles using a Number 2 pencil, specifically of HB hardness. But, apart from these, teachers didn't really care what we used.

I used a combination of medium-tipped black-ink fountain pens and H pencils, the HB pencils being a little too soft for my liking and also having to be sharpened more frequently. Remember getting up every so often to use the classroom pencil sharpener fixed on the teacher's desk? The ones with the rotating handles?

Now, this is what's interesting.

In Germany, fountain pens are *mandatory* for kids and it is only after they progressed after sixth grade could they choose a regular pen or a pencil. Those kids are, however, allowed to use pencils for drawings and sketches.

The German philosophy behind this is simple.

Using a fountain pen *improves* handwriting skills.

And it does, because you *cannot use a fountain pen* incorrectly!

Whereas the Australian philosophy of having to *earn the privilege* of using a fountain pen is totally asinine, founded on no proven research that obtaining a pen licence will incentivise a child to improve his or her handwriting.

I said to my son if he wants to bring his fountain pen to school, he is welcome to do so.

And, if my son is denied permission for using his fountain pen while another kid in his class, with a pen licence, is allowed to use one, they will have me to deal with!