



EDUCATION, ARTS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr NG Hutton MP—Chair

Ms W Bourne MP

Mr N Dametto MP (via teleconference)

Miss AS Doolan MP

Mr JM Krause MP

Ms CP McMillan MP

Staff present:

Ms L Pretty—Committee Secretary

Dr A Lilley—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 17 April 2025

Brisbane

THURSDAY, 17 APRIL 2025

The committee met at 1.00 pm.

CHAIR: Good afternoon. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025. My name is Nigel Hutton. I am the member for Keppel and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging. With me today are Corrine McMillan, the member for Mansfield and deputy chair of our committee; Wendy Bourne, the member for Ipswich West; Nick Dametto, the member for Hinchinbrook via video link; Ariana Doolan, the member for Pumicestone; and Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim.

This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I do remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

These proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings, and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please remember to press your microphone on before you start speaking and off when you are finished. Please turn your mobile phones to silent mode.

LEWIS, Ms Natalie, Commissioner, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission

TWYFORD, Mr Luke, Principal Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission

WALKER, Mrs Tammy, Government Relations Manager, Queensland Family and Child Commission

CHAIR: I now welcome representatives from the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Good afternoon. Mr Twyford, I invite you to make an opening address, after which the committee members may have some questions for you.

Mr Twyford: Thank you, Chair. I start by acknowledging we are on the lands of the Yagara and Turrbal people and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. My name is Luke Twyford. I am one of the commissioners from the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to present here. Broadly, I support this bill, particularly its focus on the removal of gendered language and improvements in home education regulations. Overall, I believe this bill acknowledges that we need to reduce the administrative burden on principals and teachers so that they can focus on not only the education of young people but also young people's safety and their wellbeing. School can be a wonderful, safe place for young Queenslanders, but at times that is not always the experience. Ensuring that children do not get lost between school transfers, that they do get lost when they are enrolled for home education, and that they do not disappear from our data sets when they turn 18 is incredibly important.

I have recently, through my role as Chair of the Child Death Review Board, led some research into home education in Queensland and the regulatory environment that oversees that system. More importantly, in the last two weeks, we have had Youth Week in Queensland and we held a Youth Summit where many young Queenslanders spoke about their joys and also their challenges in attending schools. It is very clear to me that we can do more to reform our education system to ensure that children, as I say, not only learn and thrive but also are actually safe—they are safe at school, they are safe at home and they are safe in our community. I now pass to Commissioner Lewis.

Ms Lewis: Good afternoon, committee. My name is Natalie Lewis. I am a Gamilaraay woman and I would like to acknowledge country. I pay my respects to the Yagara and Turrbal people. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to our submission. I acknowledge the core objectives of the bill to reduce administrative burdens and reduce unnecessary red tape in the administration of the Education (General Provisions) Act.

I support delegating suspension notifications from the principal to other senior school staff. I understand that this will make it easier to provide timely communication and detailed explanations to students and parents about suspension decisions. I support any red tape reduction where it allows teachers to spend more time supporting their students, especially those who are struggling to learn. I have immense respect and appreciation for the work of the many dedicated teachers and school administrators across this great state who make a positive contribution to shaping childhood experiences and the lifelong outcomes for our children.

Red-tape reduction must be a cross-portfolio matter. Achieving sustainable efficiency requires coordinated action from multiple portfolios to protect children's rights to good health, to disability support and to decent housing. If these are not present then children will continue to struggle to learn. I recognise that the departmental response to our submission noted my support but also noted that much of what I addressed in my submission was outside of the scope of this current bill. I would respectfully submit, however, that while not addressing each of the proposed amendments, my submission is very much centred on the core objectives of the Education (General Provisions) Act that the amendments seek to create efficiencies in the administration of, specifically to make available to each Queensland child or young person a high-quality education that will help maximise educational potential and enable him or her to become an effective and informed member of our community. That is an aspiration that we share and that I am deeply committed to.

The key issues raised in my submission arise from the oversight work that we have been undertaking in relation to student disciplinary absences. I understand that the use of suspensions and other forms of school disciplinary measures are a tool used to maintain good order, and that the use of such measures is intended to provide a consequence and a corrective function in terms of changing student behaviour. For particular cohorts of children, however, suspensions are not the proverbial crossroads but more often a dead end. For far too many children, this represents the end of their educational journey and extinguishes the types of opportunities and futures that we would all love to imagine are possible for all young Queenslanders, and that is counter to the objects of the act. We have just finalised our report on that issue, and I would be happy to provide the committee with a copy of that report.

However, for the purposes of this hearing, my key point is to reiterate my concern that the quest for expediency does not result in outcomes that are at odds with the object of the act. Whilst I am not opposed to the technical amendments, I am reminded that sometimes expediency can come at the cost of good process, procedural fairness and can distract from the relational aspects that afford the opportunity for children and their teachers to reflect, to learn, to repair harm and to restore the very relationships that allow children, not just those children whose behaviour is undesirable but all of those children affected, and their teachers to feel a sense of dignity, justice and belonging. These are things that are essential for all children to have a positive educational experience and reap all the benefits that we all know comes from a quality education.

Whilst suspensions are the first in a continuum of sanctions that can have adverse impacts on a child's educational and life trajectory, it is critical that the seriousness is not recognised simply as a point-in-time disciplinary response, so not only as a punishment but also as an opportunity to understand the circumstances and the needs of a student. The most effective response is one that views the incident as an opportunity to connect children and their families with the supports that they need—needs that might have previously been unknown or unnoticed. While this bill addresses the issue of who can advise a young person and their family about a suspension, how this is communicated can directly affect the relationship that a student has with their teacher, with their peers, with their school community into the future and, fundamentally, the role that education will play in their future life outcomes.

When we look at the circumstances of young people involved in the youth justice system, one of the most common characteristics shared amongst this cohort is their disengagement from school. One of the clearest and most reliable indicators of future involvement in the criminal justice system is an SDA early in their educational journey. This presents a remarkable opportunity for us to understand and to act effectively to change that well-known, widely acknowledged trajectory into the youth justice system. Changing how we respond at that point is what gold-standard prevention and early intervention actually is.

Finally, I welcome the recent statement from the Minister for Education who said that the amendments are the first of many that will ensure all children, from the youngest preppies up to year 12s, can have access to a world-class education. I very much look forward to the opportunity to contribute positively to that very important goal. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, both commissioners, for your oral presentations here today. We will take these separately just for ease of our purposes. We will go back to the overall submission on behalf of yourself, Mr Twyford, if that is okay. Once we have dealt with questions for you, we will take a series of questions for Ms Lewis. My first question to you is in regard to your submission, Mr Twyford. Your submission identifies that mandatory transfer notes are crucial. Can you elaborate on the benefits that you recognise in this proposed reform in terms of those transfer notes?

Mr Twyford: Certainly. I think there are so many good policy reasons that it will be hard for me to summarise, but essentially it boils down to awareness of a child's life and their circumstances. Teachers play such an integral role in shaping a young person's life, in being there to support them through their moments of darkness, in being alive to their home situation. Particularly I will speak on behalf of children in out-of-home care and residential care, but it applies to all children. Too many times placement changes and movements of schools are trauma-inducing and trauma-triggering. Making sure that a child arrives into a new environment with trusted adults that understand them and can respond to their needs proactively, not reactively, I see as the heart of this policy move. I would hazard a guess that any parent who left their kid with a new babysitter or a relative for the very first time would be ensuring that that other adult is armed with information about the child's likes, needs, wants and normal routines. When we look at the cohort of children that do move school, they are often the ones most in need and they are the ones we need to be focused on and ensuring that there is accurate information passed.

I would also say that, through some of the work I have done, there is a scientific question that remains unanswered, and I know many experts in the education department ponder this and still do not have a clear answer, to the best of my knowledge. If you take the number of children that start prep in Queensland and minus the number of children that move interstate and the number of children that die, and then look at the number that complete year 10, 11 years later, there are thousands of children missing from our system. Where are they, who are they and who is looking after them are actually fundamentally concerning questions and ones that I am keen to explore further. I think there needs to be better paperwork on who is moving between public and private schools, who is moving from any school to homeschooling and who is moving from homeschooling to other alternative schooling. I do not believe we have a consistent lens on that, and student-based mandatory transfer notes are part of the solution to understand where the 1.7 million Queenslanders who are under 18 gaining their education.

Ms McMILLAN: The government has made very public commitments to early intervention and prevention to help address the youth crime issue. You have consistently called for this in other submissions. I have been the chair of committees where you have done that. Engagement with education is obviously a key early intervention and prevention strategy—we know that. Other stakeholders submitting to this hearing have made the point that the amendments around SDAs should go further to ensure a student can maintain engagement. What is your view on this and do you believe this would be an important step in keeping our young people out of the youth justice system?

CHAIR: Before you answer, Mr Twyford, I remind members to be conscious of the use of preambles. The question is a very good question and worthy of an answer, but please be conscious of preambles and their ability to distract from the question itself.

Ms McMILLAN: Thanks, Chair.

Mr Twyford: Absolutely. As Commissioner Lewis outlined in her opening statement, education is a protective factor not only for students in relation to their life circumstances but also for the community in relation to antisocial behaviour and children who find themselves in oppositional defiance to the rules of our society. School is critically important to building connections, building relationships and, more deeply, building a sense of value and a sense of purpose in individual students.

Many of the students who come before me on the Child Death Review Board not only are impacted by early SDAs in their life but also come from homes with high rates of domestic and family violence where there is, I would say, an over-representation of mental health issues and substance misuse. We need to see all of these things together as compounding factors in the lives of young

Queenslanders. I might ask you to repeat the specifics of your question. I certainly agree that maintaining engagement in education is a critical factor in terms of shaping a young person's prosocial self-worth and prosocial behaviour.

Ms McMILLAN: The essence is that the amendments around SDAs should go further to ensure a student can maintain engagement.

Mr Twyford: Certainly. I have been on the public record before saying that an expulsion or a suspension from schooling is not necessarily always seen as a punishment by many of the students who receive that purported punishment. I am minded to speak of a very excellent gentleman who operates the PCYC in Toowoomba. At the time I met him, he had a local agreement with two high schools that rather than suspending children from school with no other alternative they would attend the PCYC for those days and engage in learning and activities. That is the sort of community that I want to live in, one where children are supported to continue and maintain strong community connections and are supported to continue learning in a variety of different formats. Absolutely there may be times and circumstances when it might be unsafe for a child to be present in a school but that does not mean the school has no responsibility for where that child is the next day or the day after.

Miss DOOLAN: Mr Twyford, in your submission you mentioned the Child Death Review Board's 2023-24 annual report and the findings regarding the sharing of data between key agencies. Have other data-sharing processes between those key agencies been discussed?

Mr Twyford: In that report, the Child Death Review Board recommended that the QPS and the Department of Education establish an information-sharing regime that included Child Safety to specifically understand the rate of unsafe environments in our home education environment, following a pretty significant review that was conducted. The QFCC actually took that recommendation and did a pilot study that used confidential data linkage between QPS, Child Safety and Education to review 500 Queensland children enrolled in home education. From that cohort, 35 out of the 500 did have domestic and family violence call-outs and/or child protection substantiations. I want to be very clear that that is generally consistent with the wider population.

This study does not suggest that there are deficits in our home education environment. In fact, many good educational and safety outcomes are achieved through home education. The concern of the board was that people who seek to do harm, or people who seek to avoid scrutiny, will go to the system with the lowest level of regulation. I believe the study showed that home education in Queensland is safe, except in the limited circumstances for those 35 children. The government has data that shows that those 35 children were at some form of risk and I believe it is the role of home education regulators to understand that risk and put in place protective factors.

Ms BOURNE: We note your support for the amendments, including around the delegation of decision-making regarding SDAs. Some stakeholders have called for a broader approach to this, balancing the punitive with what many would term as an early intervention and prevention approach. What is your view on this?

Mr Twyford: At the heart of that question we need to understand that it is a continuum and it is a balancing act for the decision-maker. It is not as though the two things are a binary choice. As I believe Commissioner Lewis outlined, a tool like suspension or exclusion, if done by the right person in the right way for the right reasons and with sufficient communication, can actually be a learning opportunity not only for the child but also for the family and for the broader student cohort. If done in the wrong way, it can be incredibly damaging, isolating and counterproductive.

I do not think we have set up the availability of SDA as a legal option against early intervention. I think they can actually coexist and, if done in the right way, an SDA decision can lead to behavioural change that is positive. I share the concerns of many of the submitters, though, that the rates of the cohorts in Queensland who are receiving SDAs—particularly children in out-of-home care, children with disability and First Nations children—suggest that the decision-making is not following what I might consider a best practice model.

Whilst we come before the House and discuss legislative amendments, it is always important to understand what the practice is. The law will be the law but who are the people making these decisions, how are they trained, how are their decisions quality assured and how do we make sure that, over time, the integrity of what is intended by parliament is maintained by the people on the ground making these decisions?

CHAIR: Member for Hinchinbrook, do you have a question you would like to ask? You are on mute. We will pass to the member for Scenic Rim, Nick, while we try to get your technical issues sorted.

Mr KRAUSE: Mr Twyford, do you support the provisions relating to SDAs?

Mr Twyford: Yes, I do.

Mr KRAUSE: Thank you.

CHAIR: Member for Hinchinbrook, do you have a question for Mr Twyford?

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you, Commissioner, for coming along today and giving your detailed verbal submission to the committee and also answering our questions. My question is in regard to suspensions from school. There has to be a responsibility of the education system to know what happens to that child after they are suspended and where they are going during their suspension. At what point do the parents or guardians need to have a better understanding of and a better involvement in that?

Mr Twyford: That is a critical point I should have made earlier. I am actually the product of two public schoolteachers. My early childhood was spent listening to my mum and dad discuss their teaching journey. Obviously, in this role I am exposed to education policy in practice. Absolutely, parenting plays a critical role—and the lead role—in child safety, wellbeing and development. I would question how, in particular, the state education department can suspend and exclude children who do not have parents or who are in residential care where the residential care provider is not funded to have staff between the hours of 9 am and 3 pm.

From a schooling perspective, the decision to suspend has impacts on, and consequences for, parents and people in parenting roles as well as the broader community when there are no parents. That is why I say there needs to be a level of insight into the circumstances of the child as a part of the decision-making process. It is also why I say some children are more likely to seek to be suspended than to remain at school. If we are going to use words like ‘punishment’, we need to understand what that concept is in theory.

In a traditional sense, a suspension best works because it requires a parent to address that child’s behaviour at school, to have a talk to that child and to put in place a care arrangement for that child when they are not welcome at the school. It is essentially a punishment for the parent. It requires a higher level of parenting when school is not available. That does not necessarily work in many of our modern family circumstances. If there is an absence of parental responsibility, I would suggest that suspensions are not the best solution.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you very much for your answer.

CHAIR: Members, I am very conscious that we have travelled a fair distance away from the context of the bill. I want to make sure that when we are asking our questions we are providing scope for what is in the submissions—and I acknowledge that eight of the submissions that we will talk about today reference SDAs and go beyond the scope of the bill itself. Please make sure that we do not lose sight of the amendments that we are dealing with today. That is really important.

Ms Lewis, I appreciate your patience. I want to ask you a question that goes beyond the scope of your submission but is within the realms of the amendments today. Do you have a view on the proposal to provide different campuses of schools the ability to create separate P&C associations? Can you provide any considerations? It is beyond the scope of your submission but I know that you will have a unique perspective on this.

Ms Lewis: I am certainly supportive of anything that allows for increasing the positive and empowered participation of families and the broader school community. It probably goes back to the previous question. We have to understand that there is not this clean handover point. You issue an SDA and then there is a handover of responsibility from the school to the parent. It is supposed to be a cooperative, engaged process where people are not just participating in the decision necessarily about an SDA but also participating positively in the school community.

There are many barriers to people engaging in that way. There are many families who feel that the only time they engage with the school is when they are being told their child is deficient in some way or has messed up. We need to shift that. We need to shift the environments and provide as many opportunities for positive engagement as we can.

Ms McMILLAN: Commissioner Lewis, the government has made much of the importance of prevention and early intervention to help address the issue of youth crime. Engagement with education is an example of this early intervention and is obviously a key indicator for young people who enter the youth justice system. Do you believe the amendments around SDAs sufficiently address the issue of engagement?

Ms Lewis: As I mentioned in the beginning, our submission did wander fairly significantly outside of the scope in terms of the particular amendments that are being put forward. I still think that it is important to have context around what is the ultimate goal. If we are trying to ensure that all children have equitable access to a quality education in this state, what might seem to be a simple set of technical amendments are still working towards that end. Had we had a role in providing advice around the contents of the bill, or the most significant things that needed to change, we would certainly be saying, yes, it probably should have gone further but, unfortunately, we are responding to the amendments that are in front of us.

We have been clear and consistent across a number of years about the types of critical amendments that are required, not just in the education space, the youth justice space or the child protection space but I think it is relevant across all of those portfolios. It is the inability for portfolios to see children beyond a system identity, or a singular responsibility of one department, that produces this conundrum about how we appropriately respond to the needs of children. I have probably again wandered outside of the scope but I think the context is really important. It is not as simple as making technical administrative changes.

Ms McMILLAN: To be clear, Commissioner, are you saying that you were not consulted on the bill?

Ms Lewis: No, and that is quite typical for the QFCC. It is a limitation, sadly, that we are more often than not responding to a bill. I think both of us would prefer to be empowered to have a more proactive stance and be able to provide direct input into the establishment of the priorities and legislative amendments that are required to improve the lives of children in Queensland.

Miss DOOLAN: Commissioner Lewis, your submission raises concerns about the disproportionate number of SDAs issued to children who are living out of home, children living with a disability and First Nations children over the past decade. Could you tell us more about what those concerns look like and if you have any data available?

Ms Lewis: Certainly. As I said, we are just about to publish a report on SDAs. The focus of that report is on a cohort of children who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, children with a disability and children in out-of-home care—sometimes all three. That intersectionality compounds their vulnerability and their representation in the data, so we see a gross over-representation in the issuing of SDAs for children who are in out-of-home care—25 per cent. Disproportionately, the number of SDAs issued for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is very high. It is certainly no secret that children with a disability are disproportionately represented in those numbers. I think if we understand the vulnerability of those cohorts it points us in the direction of how we can respond better and how we can see through the limitations of a purely consequence or punishment focused response to those children to better meet their needs, keep them engaged and allow them to be the Queenslanders we all aspire them to be.

Ms BOURNE: Thank you so much, Ms Lewis, for being here today. I can certainly see your passion in this area. Your submission makes some strong points about the need for a broader framework around SDAs that factor in what many would call early intervention and prevention. Can you talk us through that please?

Ms Lewis: Certainly in the context of youth justice, the earlier a child receives an SDA is the most reliable and predictable indicator of future involvement. That provides us with a very clear opportunity to engage truly earlier—not at the point of contact with the youth justice system but when they are first issued with an SDA. We are talking about early onset. Some of these kids are in prep, grade 1 and grade 2 at their first instance of being suspended or expelled from a Queensland state school. Many of them do not return. If we understand the opportunity to transform that outcome and change that at a point when a child is in prep, or grade 1 or grade 2, if we get them access to the support that they need and if we engage their families positively in their educational journey, there is a far greater likelihood that they will never come into contact with the youth justice system. That is truly what prevention is.

CHAIR: There being no further questions, we thank you for your time today. We really appreciate your participation in the process and for the feedback you have given both in your submissions and in your oral presentations today.

JANECEK, Mrs Kathleen, Principal (Secondary) and Member, Queensland Teachers' Union

RICHARDSON, Ms Cresta, President, Queensland Teachers' Union

WOOD, Dr Craig, Research Officer, Queensland Teachers' Union

CHAIR: This is a worthwhile opportunity to make a declaration. I am and have been for the past 14 years a member of the Queensland Teachers' Union. I make that declaration as part of our meeting here today.

Ms McMILLAN: I also declare that I am a member of the Queensland Teachers' Union and have been a member for 30 years.

CHAIR: Good afternoon. I welcome representatives of the Queensland Teachers Union and the Independent Education Union of Australia. I invite you to make an opening statement before we begin our questions.

Ms Richardson: Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. The Queensland Teachers' Union is pleased to appear at this hearing for the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025. As the Queensland Teachers' Union—we do not have our colleagues from the IEUA with us today—is a key stakeholder in education, we have engaged with the Department of Education throughout its process of reviewing the E(GP)A that commenced in 2021.

My name is Cresta Richardson and I am the President of the Queensland Teachers' Union. I am joined today by Kathleen Janecek. Among Kathleen's many professional and industrial contributions to education in this state, she is an elected member of our state council, an elected member to the QTU Education Leaders Committee and she is the Queensland Teachers' Union principal union representative. I am also joined today by QTU Research Officer, Dr Craig Wood. We acknowledge today that we are meeting on the lands of the Yagara and Turrbal peoples. We pay our respects to First Nations peoples and we recognise Queensland teachers and students who are First Nations peoples.

For more than 135 years, the QTU has been representing the professional, industrial and legal interests of Queensland state school teachers and school leaders and TAFE educators as well. In 2025, the QTU represents more than 48,000 members in over 120 branches throughout the state. Each branch is represented at our state council. Prior to my election as vice-president, I represented the Queensland Teachers' Union Central Highlands branch in Emerald and surrounding areas. Before becoming a research officer, Dr Wood was elected to represent our East Brisbane branch. As I said, Mrs Janecek is the current state council delegate for Woodridge.

Craig and I appeared last year at the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee that preceded this committee during its inquiry into the proposed amendments of the E(GP)A last year. Following the committee's inquiry into Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024, Kathleen and I also appeared with QTU delegates at Minister Farmer's series of round table stakeholder consultations. With respect to the E(GP)A review, we have consistently called for any proposed amendments to be accompanied by a workload impact statement and a separate budget impact statement and for them to both be made publicly available.

The former state government, current state government and the Department of Education have consistently failed to provide an adequate workload impact statement or a budgetary impact statement. We have also consistently called for amendments in the E(GP)A to allow principals to delegate the function of telling students about a suspension. The QTU welcomes the commonsense approach in clause 14 of the bill. The QTU has also supported proposed amendments related to special school enrolments and transfer notes and welcomes clauses 32 and 38 of the bill.

The QTU has a proud history of working in partnership with the IEUA, the Independent Education Union of Australia. As the two registered employee representatives in this state, the QTU and the IEUA have supported proposals for transfer notes and sharing information. For the reasons set out in the QTU's submission to this committee's inquiry into the bill, the QTU does not support clauses 16 to 24. I ask Dr Wood, as part of our introduction, to explain.

Dr Wood: As Cresta noted, since 2021 the QTU has been a key stakeholder in the Department of Education's review for the Education (General Provisions) Act. There are documents that were produced by the department throughout that process but they are the department's document, not the QTU's, to provide to this committee. However, the QTU does not support clauses 17 to 24 of the bill that deal with school councils for the following reasons: first, the E(GP)A consultation paper on

parents and citizens associations circulated to key stakeholders in 2021 identified eight issues that were in scope and three matters that were out of scope. Of the 11 issues and matters, school councils appear only once on page 1 of their paper and that lists the role and functions of school councils as out of scope. It is reasonable that membership of school councils was accounted for with the only mention of school councils. On that basis, membership ought to have been deemed out of scope. As Cresta alluded to, neither the Queensland government nor the Department of Education have provided a workload impact statement that deals with the potential increases for the workload of school leaders. On that basis, the QTU recommends that clauses 17 to 24 of the bill be withdrawn.

Ms Lewis: Mrs Janecek will now highlight the omissions of the bill and the urgent need for this committee and the 58th Parliament to address violence in schools.

Mrs Janecek: Chair, I am one of 48,000 members. I am blessed to have been both a high school teacher for about 25 years and a primary school principal and a high school principal for the last nine. The depth of QTU coverage and the engagement of our members mean that the QTU has a comprehensive understanding of 21st century risks to the safety and wellbeing of students, teachers and school leaders. The QTU supports the right of every Queensland child to access high-quality education. However, the QTU also believes that all young people and every teacher, school leader, teacher aide and other school employee has the right to be safe. Every student has the right to an education. That means not being disrupted or harmed by classmates or others while they access this right. By extension, it means that every teacher has the right to teach and every school leader has the right to lead. The QTU does not accept that the collective safety and wellbeing of school communities should be placed at risk by any individual student.

There are no simple solutions to address occupational violence in schools. It is disproportionately experienced by my peers who are deputy principals and principals. QTU members working in schools and TAFE colleges experience occupational violence that includes, but is not limited to, adult cyber abuse, assault occasioning bodily harm, common assault, emotional abuse, gendered violence, grievous bodily harm, online abuse, psychological abuse, serious assault, sexual assault, stalking and unlawful wounding. In one recent example, a student exposed their genitals in front of the class and began urinating as they moved towards the classroom teacher. In another example, a teacher on playground duty had an object thrown at their face which smashed both lenses of their glasses and requires ongoing laser surgery.

The QTU contends the current bill to amend the E(GP)A is a missed opportunity that fails to address occupational violence. The QTU has been calling for the Queensland government to (1) amend section 7 of the E(GP)A to recognise the social purpose of schooling—that is, to support young people to become socially responsible—and strengthen local and national cohesiveness, democracy, cultural richness and diversity; and (2) to amend the definition of ‘public officer’ under section 340 of the Criminal Code Act 1899 to specifically include principals, teachers and other frontline staff.

Beyond its legislative agenda, the Queensland government should fund and deliver more flexible learning and diversionary spaces to mitigate violent behaviours; establish a dedicated capital fund for school security fencing to ensure the safety of staff and students; provide adequate training and resources to regional directors, school supervisors and safety advisers to eliminate or mitigate the risk of occupational violence; and launch a public awareness campaign about criminal offences and the consequences related to violence against school staff.

Ms Richardson: Chair, I also draw the committee’s attention to the matter of protecting school communities from online abuse. During the review process, the QTU strongly supported measures to regulate electronic or online behaviours. The QTU expresses significant disappointment that the proposed amendments are not included in the current bill, the former state government’s bill to amend the E(GP)A and other legislation or other justice work that the Crisafulli government is undertaking under its Adult Crime, Adult Time scope of works.

Chair, in drawing your attention to this opening statement and drawing it to a close, and with your indulgence, the QTU recognises that both the chair and deputy chair of this Education, Arts and Communities Committee are registered teachers with the Queensland College of Teachers. That means this committee is led by people who have lived experience of teacher and school leader work that is undertaken inside the school gate. The QTU looks forward to engaging with you and this committee. You have recency of practice and experience of increasing levels of complexity of teaching work—the phenomenon known as ‘time poverty’. You will have seen the impact of the teacher shortage crisis and you will have an understanding of occupational violence in our schools.

Chair, the QTU also recognises the continuation of the member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Dametto, having previously served on the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee. Nick, we look forward to catching up with you very soon. I know that it is in my calendar imminently. We thank you for your continued interest in regional state schooling.

Finally, we also acknowledge the committee's portfolio responsibilities. We know that the committee and the committee secretariat will have access to information that is not necessarily publicly available. We urge the committee and the secretariat to take care of themselves and each other. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your very thorough introductory statement. The first question I would like to ask today is: from a QTU perspective, what are the benefits in providing the SDA notification delegation to the head of school, to the head of department, to the HoC or to the DP in terms of managing the relationship between the school, the students and the family?

Mrs Janecek: It is about timely communication of the decision so that the next processes can begin. SDAs are a process of educating in themselves. A lot of restorative justice occurs during that period. The faster it is communicated, and with the most appropriate person for that family, the more beneficial it is to the family and child.

CHAIR: Can you elaborate on why it is of such benefit to have the most appropriate person—the HoD or the DP or the year level person—engaged in that way?

Mrs Janecek: It is because our job is about relationships. My school has just under 1,100 students. It would be naive to think that I would be capable of doing that work or the most appropriate person at that time to be talking to the family.

Ms McMILLAN: My question is to the President of the Queensland Teachers' Union, Ms Richardson. Your submission raises a concern that every amendment in this bill be accompanied by a workload impact statement. I note that this was mentioned in the minister's own words when he introduced the bill, in the press release and during his speech in parliament and that this bill is a significant step forward in red-tape reduction. Which amendments do you believe have not been described through this filter and what more would you like to know about workload impact from these amendments including any baseline data around workload?

Ms Richardson: The QTU's submission refers specifically to state delivered kindy amendments as well as the amendments to the membership of school councils. I want to be absolutely clear about the QTU position. If these amendments add one more call to a principal's call sheet or one more email to their inbox or one more knock on the office door then the 58th Parliament will have added to incremental workload creep in our system, because it is not just one more phone call and it is not just one more email. It is just another example of decisions that are made in Mary Street or George Street that add to our members' work and the complexity of that work. As I mentioned in the introduction, this is a phenomenon that we call 'time poverty'. The QTU wants the minister and director-general to sign off and guarantee that these amendments will not add to incremental workload creep and increase time poverty.

Miss DOOLAN: Ms Richardson, the QTU has raised concerns around the 90-day window for the principal of a new school to request a transfer note. What is your suggested timeframe and your reasons around that?

Ms Richardson: If you do not mind, I will pass to my colleague.

Dr Wood: To Kathleen's point earlier, it goes to timeliness. This was a submission that was co-written by our colleagues at the Independent Education Union. We both share the view that students can fall through the cracks in 90 days—so the sooner the better, notwithstanding with workload implications that may create. Our concern is that 90 days is more than a school term. That is a lot of learning that is potentially lost and a lot of wellbeing that might not be addressed.

Ms BOURNE: Ms Richardson, could you please talk us through your concerns around the amendments relating to online services? The PeakCare submission I believe also raises those concerns.

Ms Richardson: Our submission, jointly written with the IEUA, as was said before, offers in-principle support for those amendments. The concern of the unions is the sharing of students' and teachers' personal data and the guarding of that data.

Mr DAMETTO: My question is in regard to teacher safety and student safety and the use of the SDA as a valuable tool to make sure that we continue to have a safe classroom and a safe workplace for teachers. Can you speak to that and also speak a little bit more to what is needed maybe in the future to increase safety for both children at school and teachers?

CHAIR: Member for Hinchinbrook, I know that the presentation as well as the submission are quite substantive in this space and do go well and truly beyond the realm of the reference to SDAs in the amendments themselves. The SDA amendment is towards the delegation. I am conscious that we are straying far beyond the scope of what we are actually dealing with today. Would you like to reconsider your question for a moment? I can go to the member for Scenic Rim if you want to come back later—or if you can reconsider on the fly, you are a much faster man than me.

Mr DAMETTO: No. That is fine.

Mr KRAUSE: I have heard in your opening statements quite clearly that you are seeking a workload impact statement to be given for any changes to the E(GP)A. That is well submitted in that regard. I have received the message. I think you have been making that submission for a number of years. I want to query a couple of the other submissions in that context, starting with the amendments in clauses 17 to 24, I think it was, in relation to P&Cs and school councils. Is the opposition of the QTU to those provisions borne out only by the fact that there is no workload impact assessment or are there other factors?

Dr Wood: The QTU's position has been consistent. Firstly, a workload impact statement and a separate budget impact statement ought to have been provided. I know that the committee will have heard those words and read them many times in our submissions. The point that I would make here goes to P&Cs specifically, though. Throughout our submissions and throughout this process we have consistently been of the view that we would defer issues around P&Cs to the Parents and Citizens Council of Queensland, P&Cs Qld, who are a key stakeholder who we recognise and we have done a lot of work with over a number of years.

However, upon reading the amendments, particularly the amendments referred to in clauses 17 to 24 where there was a change to the membership of school councils, we recognise that upon receipt of all the submissions the Department of Education provided advice to this committee and they have addressed that matter. I do not think they have addressed it satisfactorily. What they have not recognised is that the change to membership of a school council has the potential for an adverse workload impact on our school leaders. That remains a great concern to the QTU. As Cresta alluded to yesterday, one additional email, one more phone call, one more knock on the door—it is easy to think that is just one more and just one more and just one more. Our schools are overwhelmed with 'just one more' thing to do.

Mr KRAUSE: I understand. Apart from that, because we have heard that submission a few times today—and you have been making that submission for a few years—are there any other issues identified?

Dr Wood: The notion of having association P&Cs in multiple school campuses is not something we are necessarily opposed to. We recognise that a school with multiple campuses might have—I will make up the numbers for a hypothetical school—three campuses with three tuckshops and it makes sense to have three separate associations to support the running of those tuckshops or the outside-school-hours care facility or what have you.

Mr KRAUSE: Chair, I am happy to defer for the moment.

CHAIR: Member for Hinchinbrook, did you have a further question?

Mr DAMETTO: No.

Ms McMILLAN: Just to follow on from my earlier question to the president, given your estimate of minutes or hours, will any amendments in this bill contribute to red-tape reduction?

Ms Richardson: I will defer to Dr Wood on this matter because I know he has been actively involved in this.

Dr Wood: Respectfully, it is not about the number of minutes. That is made clear to us by some of the research work that has been undertaken by Professor Greg Thompson and Associate Professor Anna Hogan at QUT. That is work that has been supported by the Department of Education as well as the Queensland Teachers' Union and it is where the phrase 'time poverty' that Cresta used before emerges in the field of literature. What Thompson, Hogan and their team talk about with regard to time poverty is—and I am quoting directly—

Too often proposals to solve the problem with teacher workload fail to consider the complex, cognitive, emotional or psychosocial labour required to perform tasks. Teachers and school leaders are often expected to juggle multiple tasks and layer activities like lesson planning, administrative tasks and extracurricular responsibilities. Time poverty is the relationship between the amount of work a teacher or school leader does combined with the intensity or complexity of that work.

Of interest to this committee and the 58th Parliament, they specifically write—

Addressing time poverty must be a focus of government and school systems to make teaching a more attractive and sustainable career.

Ms McMILLAN: Just to clarify, do any of the amendments improve the issue of time poverty for teachers? Do any of the amendments in this bill contribute to red-tape reduction? Do they increase—

CHAIR: Deputy Chair, I am going to ask that we cease that question at the moment. The opportunity has been there for them to provide an answer. They have offered an opinion as to the nature of this. We will take our next question. Our next question is in regard to your submission. Your submission refers to state delivered kindergarten where the bill references eKindy. I want to get some confirmation for the benefit of the committee in regard to the QTU's opinion and support of eKindy as a program in Queensland.

Dr Wood: The QTU recognises consultation with the department over a long period of time on this matter. In our submission at paragraph 43, the QTU recognises that aligning state and federal legislation and regulation might achieve workload efficiencies for school leaders and teachers. However, we are yet to see a workload impact statement that would support that.

Miss DOOLAN: Your submission at point 29 raises concerns about the handling of student data and how it is stored. Could you elaborate on this a little bit?

Dr Wood: It is a concern that we know governments at state and federal levels across the country and in many other jurisdictions internationally are putting their mind to—what we do with personal data and how we secure personal data. For clarity, you will have seen that the QTU submission is in principle not opposing these amendments. We want to make sure there are very strong safeguards around the management and the storage of data in terms of who has access to retrieve data, how long that data would be stored for and those sorts of matters. It goes to protecting people's identity. It also goes to protecting the department's IT network.

Ms BOURNE: Can you please comment on the views expressed in the submission of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner that the bill does not include broad reform of the SDA process to include a range of non-punitive alternatives for students struggling in the classroom and an emphasis on building safe and supported learning communities? PeakCare has also commented on that.

Ms Richardson: For clarity, the QTU supports the right of every child to access high-quality education wherever they are, whatever their situation might be. We also believe that every child, teacher, school leader, teacher aide and other school employee has a right to be safe, that every student has the right to an education and that every teacher has the right to teach. To move towards excellence and equity, we need to ensure full funding for our state schools. The QTU welcomes the commitment to full funding made by the Albanese federal government and the Crisafulli state government. On 3 May that commitment is at risk.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time today. We appreciate your participation.

Ms Richardson: Thank you for the opportunity.

BARKER, Ms Sharon, Principal Board Member, Queensland Secondary Principals' Association

BRECKENRIDGE, Mr Mark, President, Queensland Secondary Principals' Association

CHAIR: Good afternoon. Would you like to please make your opening statement before we begin asking any questions we may have for you?

Mr Breckenridge: I would like to thank the committee for their interest in the submission provided by QSPA and the invitation to provide further information this afternoon. The role of principal is a significant one, one that is complex and ever changing. As time has progressed, the responsibilities attached to the role of principal have increased significantly. Proportionally, so too have the regulation, the accountability and the workload attached to these responsibilities.

As employees of the Queensland Department of Education, principals accept and appreciate the legislative framework provided by the Education (General Provisions) Act and other acts relevant to their role. While recognising the importance of guiding legislation, principals welcome any legislative change that creates efficiencies, better supports them to undertake their responsibilities and, of equal importance, recognises that legislation has a critical role in reducing the workload required of principals.

This amendment bill provides a basis for sensible and contemporary changes to practice. Its amendments recognise and support the complex role of principals. The QSPA submission speaks specifically to those amendments in the bill that intersect most directly with the role of the principal. I and my colleague Sharon Barker, QSPA board member and principal of Fortitude Valley State Secondary College, would be happy to now provide further information for the committee.

CHAIR: My first question is with regard to the delegations for the SDA notifications. Are the delegations to heads of school, heads of curriculum, heads of department or DP best practice and what benefits do you perceive are drawn from having the student family engaged in this way?

Mr Breckenridge: I will start by following on from previous comments by the QTU that secondary schools, which obviously we represent, are very large and very complex environments, and the relationships that build up are often strongest between a deputy principal and the family or a head of department, a head of student wellbeing or whatever it might be. Because of the ability for that person to be engaged in lots of conversations—forget the SDA part—about the wellbeing and the engagement of that student, it is then a very natural fit for that conversation to be had. It not only builds on the relationship; it says, 'Hey, we actually trust each other and we're going to have a difficult conversation here. We're going to move through this,' and then the next step is, 'How do we move forward to re-engaging with the student and the school once things have passed?'

Ms Barker: The only thing I would add is that I am at a relatively new school—we only opened in 2020—and our school was set up deliberately to build relationships. We operate around six houses. Every house has a head of house and every house has a deputy principal. Parents know the person they can contact—head of house or deputy principal—and for a range of reasons are in regular contact with them so they build that positive relationship. Often the first phone call they get is not about an SDA; it is about something else and that builds the relationship so that when they do have to make that phone call, that relationship has already been built. As Kathleen indicated earlier, I do not have that opportunity to build a relationship with every one of those families. It is just not practical.

Ms McMILLAN: I put on the public record that in the past, over many years, I have been a member of the Queensland Secondary Principals' Association, so I acknowledge that and declare that conflict of interest. Can I ask you, Mr Breckenridge, as president: in the press release made by the minister and in his introductory speech to the bill the minister made strong statements about the bill being a significant step forward in red-tape reduction. In your view, will any of the amendments in this bill contribute to red-tape reduction?

CHAIR: Prior to you providing an answer to the question which relates to the amendments in the bill, which is exemplary and a great question to be asked by the committee, I point out the preamble is not provided in the bill and you should be aware that that is not required for the asking of that question.

Mr Breckenridge: The amendments that QSPA have spoken to will have an impact on workload reduction, particularly the one with regard to the online service consent, and I will ask Sharon to speak to that more directly. In relation to the notion of advising of the SDA decision, it is not a simple case of picking up the phone and making a phone call, as the member would appreciate. If I, as principal, was making that cold call, if you like, not knowing those parents, I would be doing a

lot of digging. I would be having a look at OneSchool, finding out background and bits and pieces like that. The deputy principal or the head of department to whom that has been delegated already has that because of that pre-existing relationship, so there is a natural reduction, certainly in my workload as principal, because of that. Particularly with the online services, that is the one where we could see some real benefit.

Ms Barker: In terms of the online services, we already gain consent, but it happens for every individual service we want to offer to students in every individual school. We have to collect an opt-in from parents that they agree to allow their student to access that service. Streamlining that and having those services already approved, having gone through a risk assessment process previously, means that that work is already done and parents can then opt out if they do not want to participate.

In my school we have approximately 50 that we get approval for every year. That means we need to get approval from 850 students' parents for all of those services that are offered to students. If we can then put it out and say, 'These are the services we offer'—and it is my understanding that it will be publicly available which services are approved for use in Queensland schools—then parents can look at that information, make an informed judgement and opt out if it does not work for them.

I do not have the actual data because I do not manage this at the level in the school, but I do not believe we have very many, if any, parents who opt out of those services. We have to provide all of that information every time we want to introduce a new service. That would certainly create a workload reduction in schools.

Miss DOOLAN: This might seem like an obvious question but it is important we get it on the record. As you have said, you support the streamlining of student access to online services along with enabling principals to delegate the notification of suspension decisions, both of which will save time and cut red tape. Can you give some further insight into why it is necessary to reduce red tape for principals?

Mr Breckenridge: As a real, live, practising principal, Sharon, do you want to address that?

Ms Barker: Certainly. It is a complex job. I have been doing this job for a long time and I can remember a day—many days—before email. I have recently been having this conversation around the fact that prior to email, if anyone wanted to contact us it was a phone call or a letter. Now our inboxes are inundated constantly and instant responses are required, expected or demanded. Whilst that does not relate directly to the two examples that you have spoken of, it adds to the complexity of the role and the absolute demands on our time from early in the morning to late in the evening, which is when we work. Anything that can streamline that—for example, when we talk about SDAs, my deputy principals will work with the families, they will work with the students, they will gather all of the information, they will gather statements. They will come to me to make the decision because it is still my decision, but the follow-up with the family rests with the deputy principal. That is a practice that is already in place. It is simply the delegation of that deputy principal being able to make that phone call. The online services will absolutely reduce the red tape or the demands on principals' time or any teacher's time because it will be streamlined; it will be easier for us to get that information.

Ms BOURNE: Mr Breckenridge, can you please comment on the views expressed in the submission of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner that the bill does not include broad reform of the SDA process to include a range of non-punitive alternatives for students struggling in the classroom and an emphasis on building safe and supported learning environments? I understand PeakCare have made similar comments.

Mr Breckenridge: As a principal myself prior to this full-time role, I think any decision to apply a disciplinary absence to a student was one that was well thought out. The more significant the SDA, the more thinking and reflecting that underwent. No principal jumps out of bed in the morning thinking, 'How many notches will I get on my belt today?' We are about keeping students at school.

Prior to the provision of an SDA there would have been, in most cases, quite a number of steps in place ranging from the least punitive—a conversation perhaps between a student and a teacher, a conversation between a teacher and a parent—progressing right through to the need for an SDA. Also coming into that staged process is bringing in other services—other support mechanisms to, as much as possible, work with the student and their families or their carer so that an SDA could be averted if at all possible. They are complex decisions and the data says that there are cohorts within our schools that are over-represented. I think some of the submissions refer to that, as you have. We can never for a moment stop trying to improve what we do to support those students.

Mr DAMETTO: This opt-out system for data and then data services seems to be a great way of streamlining the way we approach this. Are there any other services that the Department of Education is providing at the moment that could work better with an opt-out style system?

Mr Breckenridge: For virtually every permission type that occurs, every parent has to reply. I have been around long enough to experience when that was not the case, when you could undertake a class activity—for instance, just a simple, 'We will walk out the school gate and go to the shopping centre over the road.' I can vividly remember taking classes out and not needing anyone's permission, except the principal at the time, but there was an understanding and an acceptance. Society has moved a significant way to say that there needs to be permission for every single student. That is certainly an added workload for teachers and principals.

Mr KRAUSE: I hear your submission in relation to saving time and reducing workload in relation to the SDA provisions. My question is how that streamlining may actually improve the safety of other children at a school and also their enjoyment of the education experience. I do not work in a school so I do not know how it works, but is the presentation of this type of notice something that can sometimes be held up for a couple of days or even longer, in which case, if there is negative behaviour involved, the person who is getting that SDA remains in the school environment during that time?

Mr Breckenridge: There is a twofold process. There is the notifying of the student and the parent/carer of the SDA, which is a verbal notification, but it always is accompanied by a written notification, which is system generated once you put the data in. If the principal is the sole person who can notify the parent, the issue is where that job fits in amongst the whole list of other things the principal may be dealing with on a particular day. If that decision-making is able to be delegated and schools have structures in place to delegate that to a deputy principal or a head of a department or whatever it might be, that means that can occur straightaway; there is no time lag. It is better for everybody that that conversation occurs then. We will get over that conversation, we will work through the SDA and we will get them back to school as quickly as possible. That timeliness would come into play.

Mr KRAUSE: If there is a student who is alleged to be assaulting other students, it makes it easier, potentially, for that person to be removed from the environment in a faster way, enhancing the safety of other students?

Ms Barker: The process to get to the point where a student is suspended can be quite lengthy. We have to get statements and we have to make sure we have done our due diligence around what actually happened and make that final decision. Once the decision is made, the time it then takes to make the contact home is probably something that is expedited when the load is shared. Some of our schools have over 3,000 students. There could be a number of students who are being suspended in a day. If all of that rests with one person, that is a lot of contact to be made home, as opposed to spreading that load over the deputy principal who has that relationship with those students and families.

CHAIR: The notification to families of the suspension requires physical notification, so if the principal calls and they do not answer then that notification has not occurred?

Ms Barker: That is a tricky one, because we do give physical notification in a letter. There is a structure for the letter that sets out exactly the reasons and what the student has done, but the contact home can be tricky. We will try to phone, but quite often parents do not answer their phone during the school day so sometimes those phone calls are made after hours. If there are a number of phone calls to be made, that is six o'clock or seven o'clock at night when deputy principals or principals are making those phone calls. Yes, it can be tricky to get that contact.

The other thing is that when you build a relationship with a family—I know that some of my deputy principals have an arrangement with them that they will email because parents will not answer their phone during the school day. That first contact can be via email to then set up a phone call afterwards to have the conversation, but those sorts of things happen when the relationship is built with the parents.

CHAIR: There being no further questions, I thank you very much for your presentation here today.

Proceedings suspended from 2.26 pm till 2.49 pm.

CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome back to this hearing of the Education, Arts and Communities Committee. This afternoon we will hear from further stakeholders with regard to the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025. Attendance is as outlined earlier. I remind the gallery that members may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee and these proceedings are being recorded and broadcast live on the parliament's website. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please remember to press your microphone on before you start speaking and off when you are finished. Please, everyone, ensure your mobile phones are switched off or to silent mode.

BJUR, Ms Kate, Acting Chief Executive Officer, PeakCare

CHAIR: Our first guest this afternoon is representing PeakCare. I invite Ms Bjur to provide an opening statement, after which the committee may have some questions for you.

Ms Bjur: Thank you very much for having me today. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Yagara and Turrbal people, and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I thank the committee for inviting PeakCare to speak on the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025.

PeakCare is Queensland's pre-eminent child and family sector peak body. At the heart of everything we do is the voice of the child. We know that many children in Queensland are not as safe and secure as we would hope them to be. A pathway for these children to thrive is through education.

PeakCare supports the bill and offers some considerations to the committee that will enhance and strengthen the changes, support educational outcomes and keep children safe. PeakCare supports efforts to enable schools to manage and streamline the use of technology more effectively. We strongly urge that appropriate and strong safeguards be embedded within the bill to ensure the continued protection of students' private and personal data. Children's personal data found on the dark web sells for as little as \$10 per record.

To strengthen and safeguard P&Cs, PeakCare recommends that the bill be amended to require P&Cs to conduct a national criminal history check at a cost of \$25.50 per check for all individuals elected to executive committee positions. This would ensure that the integrity of the screening process does not rely solely on self-disclosure by the candidates.

PeakCare supports ensuring access to eKindy programs and highlights the importance of early education and care as a critical piece of early interventions. Investing in an early childhood education program delivers a return on investment of \$13 for every \$1 spent. The evidence is clear: early intervention is not only a good policy but also a smart investment.

At PeakCare we know that of the children who face suspension and exclusion in Queensland schools there is a significant over-representation of students with a disability, First Nations students and students in out-of-home care. Even though children in out-of-home care represent fewer than one per cent of the school community, one-quarter of students given student disciplinary absences are in out-of-home care—children who have experienced abuse, neglect, multiple placements, multiple carers and multiple schools through no fault of their own and often without any input into these decisions. We must prioritise these children's relationships with trusted adults including those in the school community. Suspension and exclusion reinforce the message that they do not belong and they are not welcome. Student disciplinary absences also lead to poor educational outcomes.

PeakCare calls on the committee to recommend that suspension as a last resort be included in the bill as per recommendations from the disability royal commission. Keeping children in school, engaged in learning and opening up pathways to their future prosperity is how this government will break the school-to-prison pipeline and keep Queensland safer. PeakCare supports many of the amendments proposed in this bill but calls on the government to not miss the opportunity to provide the best possible legislative framework to support improved educational outcomes and access for all Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your submission and for the detailed feedback you provided across a broad range of the amendments. My question to you is in regard to the online services and your submission, which raised concerns around student data. Do you have any specific recommendations that you believe would help address the concerns that you raised?

Ms Bjur: As I said, we do support generally the amendments in the bill. We think that it is important that schools are not only modelling data, privacy and data security but also explicitly teaching students to maintain the privacy of their information online. Other protections might include multifactor authentication across devices when students are registering for new platforms, and we encourage the department to have all schools working with the eSafety Commissioner to keep digital safety curriculum in schools up to date with emerging risks and online safety strategies.

Ms McMILLAN: Could you talk us through the concerns you raise about SDAs and what additional amendments you believe the government should have included to address your concerns? We know that these were also expressed by the Family and Child Commissioner.

Ms Bjur: We believe all teachers, school staff and students in the community should be safe at school and have the right to feel safe at school. That is why we are advocating for evidence-based strategies that support children to understand and use positive behaviour and keep them engaged in school as alternatives to suspension. These strategies need appropriate resourcing including suitable spaces, technology, teacher aides and mentors. By intervening early, children can be supported to stay engaged in their school communities and that breaks the school-to-prison pipeline.

We are advocating for suspension as a last resort to be legislated. We do believe that schools are currently using a range of strategies as well as suspension and exclusion to manage behaviour. There are universal strategies that are appropriate for all students to understand what the expected behaviours are. There are tailored strategies that were mentioned previously today and restorative justice processes. There are other strategies like mentors, counselling and whole family supports that are available. We are not suggesting that suspension is taken off the table completely. We do understand that principals need to be able to manage their own schools.

By recommending that suspension is a last resort we are just asking that all students in all schools have access to other strategies that keep them engaged in their school communities before suspension and exclusion are used. We want those other strategies that have been shown by evidence to contribute to success for educational outcomes as well as further life outcomes. We know that by keeping students engaged in school in the early years—the data does show that there is a link between early suspensions and youth justice involvement. We know that young people who can complete grade 12 and then transition into further learning, into trades, into employment can then get housing and reduce risk factors in other outcomes as well later in life.

I will tell a story of a young man that I was talking to in a youth detention centre last year. I had a conversation with a group of young men. Most of them were First Nations, some of them did tell me they had disabilities and all of them were in a youth detention centre. I asked them about their early schooling. One young man told me about his story which I think goes alongside the data to demonstrate what we are talking about. He had multiple siblings—I think he had seven. He and his mother were running away from a violent partner who was not his father. They moved schools again and again to try to keep him safe. Finally, he was removed from his mother and also distanced from his siblings and went into the care of the department of child safety. Again, he had multiple carers, went to multiple schools and moved on again and again. This young man had a lot of shame around not understanding what was going on in the classroom and was acting out. That is when he started to feel a sense of belonging with a group of young men who were getting into crime around the age of nine or 10. I think the school-to-prison pathway is really demonstrated through that story but it is also in all the data.

Miss DOOLAN: The submission states—

Timely and effective information sharing is essential to ensuring student safety and to enabling schools to provide appropriate support for new students.

Do you believe the 90-day timeframe for requesting transfer notes is sufficient?

Ms Bjur: I can understand why, for the purpose of gathering fulsome information and providing it, that timeframe might have been suggested. I can also understand previous speakers' position that that is a long time to be educating a young person without having that information about them.

We support that amendment because a student is not just a student; they are a child who has a complete life outside of school. When we speak to our members about the children they work with who are involved in the out-of-home care system a lot of things could have happened to that child that morning, the night before, in the past six months, in the past year and throughout their life that are really relevant for the educators to understand about that child in order to give them the best education.

In terms of the timeframe, I am pleased that that is not information that is provided before a transfer because of the risk that some of the information about these children's lives could stigmatise them and come into play when making a decision about accepting a child into the school, but I do support that. In terms of the timeframe, I do not have a position on the 90 days.

CHAIR: Ordinarily we would go to the member for Ipswich West, but the member for Hinchinbrook has flashed on and off a couple of times, so I am assuming he is very eager.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate your indulgence. My question is in regard to your submission which requests an amendment to require national criminal history checks for all individuals elected to executive committee positions in P&C associations. Why do you suggest this is a good idea? Why are we not just relying on the Queensland blue card?

Ms Bjur: Blue cards really are about working with children. What we are talking about here is that this is the kind of role where a person is managing significant financial resources and sensitive information across the school community. They are also a significant influence on children's lives as well as the lives of others in the school community based on the level of decision-making appropriate to the job. We think that the relatively small fee and simple online form to fill in is a small price to pay for the assurance that the people managing this significant piece of work are the appropriate people for the job. It is really about the governance. Many P&Cs have a financial turnover of a small business and others are even equal to a medium- to large-size business. We would expect those businesses to do due diligence and so we would expect the same thing for P&Cs.

Ms BOURNE: Thanks so much for coming today and all the work you do with PeakCare. We have talked a lot today about prevention and early intervention to help address youth crime. Engagement with education is an example of early intervention and is obviously a key indicator for young people who enter the youth justice system, as you were talking about earlier. Do you believe the amendments around SDAs sufficiently address the issue of engagement?

Ms Bjur: I do support the amendments in the bill regarding the delegation of information sharing from principals to other senior members of staff. We do believe that is a smart way to reduce red tape and we have supported the other amendments because we absolutely believe that red-tape reduction is important. However, we do strongly suggest that the committee considers recommending the inclusion of suspension as a last resort for all the reasons I mentioned earlier but primarily I think because those strategies work for most students in Queensland.

When we look at the students who are not part of those priority groups—and we are calling them priority groups because they are so strongly over-represented in these SDA statistics: First Nations children, children with a disability and children in out-of-home care, and the crossover between those groups is significant in that a lot of children in out-of-home care also have disabilities and are also First Nations children—those universal strategies work for most primary schoolchildren. Only seven per cent of children in primary schools ever get an SDA. Most of the other strategies that schools use are working for most children.

We need to reduce the number of SDAs for children in those priority groups. I think recommending to have suspension as a last resort legislated ensures that every student is given access to the alternatives, which have been shown by evidence to keep children in schools. For all of the life outcomes and for the prosperity of Queensland, we need to keep children in education because it is such a strong early intervention and it prevents entry into other systems like the youth justice system, homelessness and mental health later on.

CHAIR: There being no further questions, I would like to sincerely thank you for your time today as well as the submission that PeakCare put in. I know it was well received, so thank you very much.

BARTLE, Miss Amanda, Director, Free2Homeschool

BRYAN, Mrs Samantha, Queensland Chapter Team Leader, Home Education Association (Queensland Chapter)

FITZGERALD, Mrs Patricia, Manager, Free2Homeschool

CHAIR: Good afternoon. I now welcome our representatives from the Queensland Chapter of the Home Education Association and Free2Homeschool. We might start with an opening statement from Mrs Bryan before we move on to the Free2Homeschool spokesperson for their opening statement.

Mrs Bryan: With regard to the upper age limit for home education registration, it is unanimous that an age increase is necessary. What is under question is what that age should be. The home education community is deeply thankful to the government for listening to our concerns regarding the upper age of registration. The proposed change would benefit approximately 50 per cent of students—those who happen to have the misfortune of being born in the wrong half of the year. In asking for something different to the proposed age of 18 we dread coming across as ungrateful. We are absolutely not. However, last year's parliamentary committee into the education amendment bill helped homeschooling families realise that they could speak up about their needs and concerns without threatening their own registration or threatening homeschooling as a legal option.

As a result, we have become aware of cases where the ability to register past the age of 18 would be advantageous. This could be everything from a child with a disability and associated learning difficulties who has needed to slow down the pace of their learning or a student with chronic illness and frequent hospitalisations that have interfered with their school time, both of whom would benefit from an extra year to complete their schooling, through to situations like a high-level athlete who needs to spread their senior schooling over three years to allow them time to concentrate on their sport. In mainstream schooling and distance education these options are available. Students are granted extra semesters to complete their schooling. Home-educating families would like the same for their students, if needed.

There is a variety of options available to consider. In the Home Education Association's submission we propose two: following the New South Wales approach or simply increasing the maximum age to 19. I believe my friends at Free2Homeschool have offered a third option. The homeschooling community is not particularly concerned about the wording of the legislation or the mechanism utilised. What matters is that there is no injustice compared to those accessing mainstream schooling or distance education. In the relatively small percentage of cases where a student could benefit from some additional time registered for home education before moving on to work or study, this option should be available.

Mrs Fitzgerald: Thank you to the chair, the secretariat and the committee members. I am a long-term home educator and community advocate at the helm of Free2Homeschool. I am here to express our deep appreciation of all involved in listening to the home education community and responding with this proposed amendment inclusive of an age adjustment to home education registration.

Although clauses 9 and 10 of the bill address a longstanding inequity that has affected many students across Queensland, including my own child, it does not quite resolve the inequity, nor align with opportunities of students attending state or non-state schools. It is a vital step forward. However, I would like to see true equity afforded to home educated students whilst we have the chance to do so, to know that my youngest child would be afforded equal opportunity in how she completes her senior schooling years as had been offered to me in a state school setting.

For context, I personally completed my senior schooling years over three years for academic reasons where access to a scholarship program meant that I needed to stretch my school enrolment so I could complete year 12. Therefore, I do not feel that limiting the opportunity solely to specified students would be the most effective approach, though we did note in our submission that disability related circumstances may be a particularly common example.

While it was argued in the response to submissions that the concept of allocation of semesters does not apply to home education, the issue at hand is not about mimicking school structures but about ensuring fair access. In practice, schools may grant additional time when needed, yet no such pathway is clearly available for home educated students, even in comparable circumstances.

I absolutely refute that New South Wales's two-year registration period granted from renewal could only be granted due to the inclusion of a stated curriculum, just as it is easily refuted from their website that it is, in fact, a renewal process and not a new application each time. Furthermore, I wish to draw attention to the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal case of *DMM v Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards* [2016] NSWCATAD 260. In deciding to continue a student's registration beyond the age of 18 years, which preceded the current New South Wales guidelines for homeschooling, Professor Walker noted at paragraph 13—

The legislature made a deliberate decision to change the status of homeschooling from a marginalised activity that was treated simply as a means of exempting a child from school attendance to a form of education considered equal to government and non-government schooling.

There was no suggestion that the duration of homeschooling should be truncated so that it could occur only until a student attained 18 years. Rather, the goal was to encourage students to continue their education until they completed year 12, the act treats government schooling, non-government schooling and homeschooling as equal options for the education of students in New South Wales. Shouldn't this be a goal for our students in Queensland, too?

Queensland families already demonstrate that we are providing a high-quality education every year through our registration requirements that exceed those of any other educational environment or jurisdiction, including our own schools. Our education planning and reporting obligations already function as a quality assurance measure that is equivalent, yet different, to those required in New South Wales—one that allows for tailored, child centred learning rather than enforcing a single curriculum model. This is a strength of our system and should be supported with equitable provisions by extending the end of the currently proposed amendment by another six months.

This bill takes a big step forward, but I now urge the committee to also consider this small, but meaningful, additional change to ensure that no student is left behind due to inflexible registration limits.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. We will deal with both groups as we did earlier today. We will talk specifically to the Home Education Association first and then will have questions for Free2Homeschool. Prior to allowing for questions from members, I want to take a moment to acknowledge on behalf of the entire committee the time you have provided today to sit through the hearing. I know a further representative whom we will hear from this afternoon, Mrs Wendy Henning from ICPA, has also sat through the entire hearing. We acknowledge that is a long time for people to give of their own volition and to take the trouble to be here. We wish to thank you all for your time. I know that the committee all value that.

My first question, Mrs Bryan, is in regard to an item that was in your submission that had not been raised in others. Can you provide an example or some detail for the committee around the positive impacts that you have identified in your submission from home educated students' participation in district and regional sport and increasing the age beyond 18?

Mrs Bryan: Currently, students who are registered for home education are eligible for district and regional sport, but my understanding is that if they are no longer a student—that is, they are not registered—then they are not eligible for those kinds of programs. I presume that there are other sporting opportunities but not the recognised district and regional sport opportunities where they are competing directly against their peers.

Ms McMILLAN: Firstly, I acknowledge Miss Amanda Bartle. Thank you for all the work that you do and the constructive role that you played working with the department and also with the former government in the review of homeschooling. We certainly acknowledge your efforts. Can you comment on the process that was undertaken with the former government around homeschooling and elaborate on how the amendment will help you and homeschooling?

Miss Bartle: The previous bill was put forward with a lack of consultation, which obviously caused some dramas in our community, so we stepped forward and put in enough submissions to be at the point we are at today. We are really grateful to see that there are not a lot of changes in the home education legislation being put forward at this point. It is currently working and it does not need a lot of change, but this one little part about increasing the age to the 18-year-olds is important for maintaining equity. We are really asking for three little words: 18 'and six months'. We would just like to add in the words 'and six months' because we need the children to be registered to the end of the year. We start prep at 4½ so we need it to say '18½' at the end so that we have full registration. We are grateful to have that level of consultation this time where we have an opportunity to come in before it is too late and we are really grateful that the previous bill was terminated. We wanted this little bit to stay in there, so we are glad that it has come back to the table so quickly.

Miss DOOLAN: Is a student allowed to repeat a year or is that not allowed because, of course, once they reach year 12 then they would be over the age of 18?

Miss Bartle: In the school system they can repeat. The problem we are finding is that they might come out of the school system in, say, grade 5 and they would be automatically registered to homeschool as a grade 6 student if they had repeated. Even though they have not done any grade 6 content, they would be stuck as a grade 6 student and they would then graduate when they were in year 10, technically, if they were born in the second half of the year—or if they were lucky enough to be younger then, in the current system that we have, they would graduate at the end of year 11. Only half of the cohort can actually complete year 12 currently. This legislation addresses that.

Ms BOURNE: Thanks to everyone who has come today and for all of the work that you have put into this. Mrs Bryan, the Home Education Association makes reference to special situations in the New South Wales legislation relating to eligibility. Could you tell us more about the arrangements in New South Wales?

Mrs Bryan: I am certainly not as au fait with them as I am with the Queensland regulations. My understanding is that families can go to the department website. If they are a new student, there is a form for initial registration. If they are renewing, there is another form that I discovered is exactly the same except for the name. On that form, if they were ticking that then they are registering for senior schooling—that is, grade 11 and 12. They can be 18 when they are applying to be registered to do that. They could be starting grade 11 already as an 18-year-old—that is eligible within the New South Wales regulation—and then they have their two years to complete years 11 and 12. It would not be common but there could be students who are 20 in New South Wales. Does that answer your question?

Ms BOURNE: It does. Thank you so much.

Mrs Fitzgerald: To add to that, this is something that I have been looking at quite in depth lately because of the age limit that we are trying to rectify. I have the New South Wales legislation in front of me. It states—

Children may be registered up to the age of 18 years and for a continued period, up to two years, in order to complete the planned educational program based on NESA's syllabuses.

They can register up until the day before they turn 18, which means that they can then be registered for a two-year period which takes them to a day before they turn 20.

Mr DAMETTO: My question refers to special situations in the New South Wales legislation relating to eligibility. Could you expand on that? I am sure that it ties in with what you have been saying, but if you can expand on that it would be helpful.

Mrs Bryan: As I was explaining earlier, with New South Wales, as Patricia just explained, they can be registering for year 11 up to the day before they turn 18 and then they have a two-year period to complete their homeschooling. We are quite aware that the states are all looking to one another and trying to benchmark and provide some continuity in the legislation. I think this is one area where New South Wales has some of the best practice and so we should actually be looking to them potentially and copying them. If we were to have legislation worded something like that, that would more than cover what the Free2homeschool proposal was for those who are 18½ and it would cover pretty much any and every situation.

Realistically, once you get students who are a day short of 20, even if there are disabilities involved or whatever, it would be appropriate that families are looking to the next stage of that child's progression in life. That would cover every situation that I could imagine. We are talking about a very small percentage of students that this would apply to. Certainly children born in the first half of the year are usually done and dusted earlier anyway, even if they have had to repeat a year.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you very much for explaining that. As a staunch Maroons supporter, I hate hearing that New South Wales is doing better than us so that is something for the committee to consider.

CHAIR: Relevance, member for Hinchinbrook! Both of the submissions spoke about the financial disadvantage currently experienced by families. Can you elaborate on that for the committee? For anyone outside of the sector, there is a lack of understanding and knowledge in that space.

Miss Bartle: I will cover that because I was personally hit with this one. My 17-year-old son is not registered at school or for homeschooling this year because he happens to have his birthday on the last day the year. He is at home today, probably gaming because I had to go to work. We have no Centrelink support anymore because he has no registration. I have to work full-time to support my Brisbane

family. If I work part-time it actually kicks off my next daughter, who also missed out on year 12 and had to go to university early. If I do part-time work, she does not get any Centrelink either, which means that our family cannot pay our rent or put food on the table.

I have personally been affected by this legislation three times. I have three children. To bring it into perspective, I might have had three children at this age but we are not talking about huge numbers. They are significant but they are not huge. I have looked up the figures for you. The Department of Education tracks how many students we have. In 2024 we had 710 home education students registered for year 11. For year 12, they had 178. We lost 500 kids. They just vanished. Where did they go? We would expect that half of those students will re-register or would have stayed registered. Some of them will not.

Do not get me wrong: my kids went to university early because they were capable so they enrolled and they just went and did it. My son is not ready for that. He really needs a mum at home teaching him. He needs more education. He has an apprenticeship. He is currently running under the radar a little on that one because he is supposed to be registered at school to continue doing his TAFE at School apprenticeship. He cannot go full-time. His boss cannot support him full-time. He is not ready for full-time work. He really needs to work more on his maths and his English, but I am not at home to do that with him. Financially, it does create stresses in families that have low income but it also creates stresses in families that do not have a plan B and cannot do an alternative option.

It does offer other alternatives as well. We have the AIC payment, which lots of families use. It is Assistance for Isolated Children. A lot of homeschoolers use that to pay for resources for their children who are medically isolated or physically isolated across the country. We also have things like transport tickets. We cannot get a bus card so my son has to pay adult fares even though he is not an adult because he has no school registration so I cannot get a ticket for him. Thankfully, with 50-cent fares that is not so much of an issue at the moment, but it is if we are not in Brisbane, right?

Mrs Bryan: Or if you are catching the train to the airport.

Miss Bartle: My daughter lost her registration when she turned 17 as well. She could not then access the Head Start program that she was utilising through the University of the Sunshine Coast, which meant that she would have been able to do four university subjects for \$300 or \$700—very little. That would have made a significant impact on her HECS debt if she had been able to do them through that program, but because she did not have registration she just was not eligible and she now has a larger HECS debt because of that.

With the TAFE at School access, at the moment students at school can access TAFE at school and do a certificate III or even a certificate IV, starting in year 10. By the time they have finished year 12, they are a fairly good way through it and potentially they could finish it while they are in year 12. Our homeschool students who are getting kicked out early have to actually go full-time on their TAFE at School program the day they lose their registration. They cannot continue the course unless they are capable of completing it full-time. These kids are going from one day a week to full-time study in that subject overnight. That can be quite a lot to ask for many of our homeschool students, especially considering our population is over-represented with neurodiversities, disabilities and what not compared to the school population.

CHAIR: In your submissions you spoke about the flexibility that the provision for increasing the age provides, particularly around students who may be alternating from mainstream schooling or those with disabilities. Would you be willing to elaborate on that?

Mrs Bryan: Since I began home educating 22 years ago, we have seen a great increase in what we tend to call accidental homeschoolers. Those are people who had no intention of homeschooling from the start. They have put their kid in school just like most normal folk do but for a variety of reasons those children do not cope in the school situation. I think there were a few nodding heads with the previous speaker, acknowledging the complexities of kids who have disabilities and school resources to cope with that. We take our hats off to teachers and other school staff who are dealing with that and mean no disrespect to any of them.

For a variety of reasons—whether it is mental health, whether it is disability, whether it is some trauma that has happened in the child's life—the family makes the choice to take their child out of school and home educate. When they have had these kinds of issues—when there has been disability and struggle academically, when there has been severe bullying and the child has not retained anything because going to school is just so stressful or when there has been school refusal and they have not even been showing up to learn anything—families will often make the choice to start their child at a lower grade level than their age would suggest. You just do the math. That obviously means that by the time that child gets to be 18 they may only be in year 10. Certainly if you factor in those

kids in the last half of the year, if you have your birthday in December or something, you would have already kind of been getting pushed anyway when you have had an extra year or two of schooling. You have to make sure you are really grounding your child in those foundational things so that they can continue to have success rather than struggle the whole way along. I hope that provides some clarity.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Ms BOURNE: Thank you for that question, Chair; that is the question I was going to ask. I do not know a lot about homeschooling and why people choose to homeschool their children. I hope this is not outside the scope of the bill. Do you feel there is enough support for parents who homeschool their children?

Mrs Bryan: That is a great question. Amanda and I are representatives on the Home Education Expert Group that was established last year. In one sense I would say no, there is not enough support. We would love to see more. There is a lot of support in the community with groups like ours that is available to families if they are aware of our existence and happen to get connected with us. The community does a wonderful job of providing support for families who are just getting started and feel overwhelmed and bewildered—for example, 'It is my first time reporting'; 'How do I get my child into university?'; 'What are the tertiary pathways?' There is support in the community, but we would love to see more coming through the Home Education Unit. If the government is able to act on the recommendations in the review, that is something that will be improved. We are thrilled to see the proposals in that review.

CHAIR: There being no further questions, thank you for the time you have taken today. We appreciate your written submissions, your presentation, answering our questions and educating us a bit more on a field of study that is quite unique in Queensland.

HENNING, Mrs Wendy, President, ICPA Australia (via videoconference)

CHAIR: Good afternoon and thank you for your time today. Would you like to make an opening statement before committee members ask any questions?

Mrs Henning: Thank you all for this opportunity today. ICPA, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Queensland, advocates for equitable access to quality educational opportunities for all children living in rural and remote areas throughout the state. We represent over 45 branches and encompass over 1,300 families throughout rural and remote Queensland. We also advocate for every child who lives in those areas, regardless of membership. I had the privilege to be elected president to represent the members of our organisation. With regard to this bill, ICPA Queensland will provide comments on the amendments that directly affect our organisation's members and are within our policy.

For eKindy and kindy students, regardless of where they live, it is proven that early education programs have a benefit for children throughout their years. It is a valuable service. Without eKindy, our member base would not have access to early qualified teachers or resources and would not have the same access as their urban counterparts of the same age and stage. Without essential access to centre-based visits, eKindy is what provides a program to these students to have not only learning but also socialisation, albeit virtually. It is also imperative that eKindy students continue to receive equitable access to these services regardless of workforce shortages or where they live. We ask that any changes to this legislation be mindful of the vastness of the state and that the geography of enrolments is considered to allow face-to-face virtualisation.

ICPA supports the P&C changes due to the vastness and adversities experienced by the state which at the moment are at the forefront of so many people's minds due to the devastating flooding in Western Queensland. ICPA Queensland welcomes the change to enable P&Cs to donate funds and goods to other P&Cs that have also experienced adverse events. Rural Queensland is not immune to them. They are very familiar with them and generous with their support. Being able to extend that through P&Cs is vital.

With regard to transfer notes, due to the vastness of the state there are always families moving not only from school to school but also to different education-providing sectors. The opportunity to have timely transfer notes between schools during the enrolment processes enables the assessment of students in order to receive the best educational outcomes and support to enhance all of their learning needs. The sharing of transfer notes in a timely manner will provide schools with the opportunity to plan, staff and support the student's learning and wellbeing needs from the commencement of schooling at their new location.

ICPA Queensland approves the use of online platforms to assist with the delivery and consolidation of learning engagement with the Australian Curriculum. The permission and approval processes of schools, staff, students and families need to be streamlined in order to ensure not only their effective and efficient use but also that all processes are followed.

The bill amends the act to simplify the enrolment process for students transferring between special schools, reducing the regulatory burden on principals, parents and students. This streamlined procedure will ensure that students and their families do not have lapses of enrolment and learning due to reassessment and/or added complexity and stress of enrolment when all requirements have previously been assessed.

CHAIR: We now have a few questions on behalf of the committee. With regard to your support for the proposal to allow individual campuses to form P&Cs, what benefits do you perceive allowing them to have P&Cs in individual campuses—as opposed to school-wide for multi-campus schools—will have for the campus community?

Mrs Henning: ICPA Queensland supports this. Schools are not only about the student; they are also about families and communities and the support that group creates. Having a P&C for an individual campus allows that school to maintain its individuality and its own community, thereby supporting the students, staff and families who attend that facility.

Ms McMILLAN: Do you believe the amendments are much the same, if not the same, as the amendments in the bill introduced by the Labor Party government prior to the dissolving of the 57th Parliament?

Mrs Henning: We did go through them. We previously put in a submission with the former government as well. This time we did not directly correlate the two legislative changes due to the fact that we could not actually bring back the past. We are working with what we currently have. The only

point ICPA Queensland did note which is not in there was having kindergarten children recognised so they are eligible for school bus travel. That is one of the major disadvantages for children attending face-to-face early childhood programs in rural and remote areas.

Miss DOOLAN: Are there any benefits to making transfer note requests mandatory when students are coming from interstate?

Mrs Henning: What we have found, and what our members have been telling us as a parent-based organisation, is that transfer notes are vital—particularly in rural and remote areas that have exacerbated complexities with the workforce—to make sure that as much information as possible comes with the child, or even prior to the child's arrival, to ensure those schools have supports in place in terms of staffing and other arrangements to ensure there is a continuation of learning. Regardless of whether they are coming from within the state or out of the state, our rural and remote families say it is important to ensure these school communities have support not only for that child but also for all of the other children attending that facility in order for their learning to continue.

Ms BOURNE: Would you mind painting a picture for us as to what these amendments will mean to an isolated child?

Mrs Henning: I can group them all in and give you a lovely hearsay story from late on a Thursday afternoon before the Easter break. If we have a child transferring with learning needs and a family that needs support, being able to go into a school that has a P&C to embrace that family and welcome them and support them in their transition means the school is ready to welcome them into their community. It means that their child's learning can continue. The family will have the knowledge that the school is there to do the very best by that child and their learning. They are the key parts of this change we would like to see.

In terms of improved online services, as we hear so often from our families, everybody—not only school staff—is time poor. If the approval process is streamlined, it will reduce the burden for everybody involved, whether it is school staff, the child or the family. ICPA Queensland advocates that schooling is not just about the child; it is about the whole family and the community that surrounds them. With the special schools, having a streamlined transferring system is vital. No one child's learning is more important than another's. The children who need that support need to have a seamless transition, just like everybody else.

Mr DAMETTO: With regard to the proposed process for approving online services, do you believe it is sufficient to ensure student information is adequately protected?

Mrs Henning: When we looked into it and consulted with our members, we believe it is. Having to also use, in good faith, the platforms the children need to use are what is required for them to get the best out of their education. In terms of delivery, so many of the families we represent are already online, just like you and I are today. That is the way they receive their education; it is not new to them. Streamlining is also not replicating that information to every platform and having to do it individually.

Mr DAMETTO: The bush has always been ahead of the city when it comes to online services and knowing how to utilise them; right?

Mrs Henning: Very much so.

Mr KRAUSE: Thank you, Wendy, for your submission and for your advocacy of ICPA. I have met with your association a few times over the last several years, and thank you for spreading the word to members who do not represent those areas that you cover. My question—and I do not think it has been asked—is about P&C changes and the ability to donate funds or goods to other P&Cs in areas of need. This is going to sound a bit like a Dorothy Dixter question, but can you give any examples in recent years or weeks of schools where this would have been helpful or needed?

Mrs Henning: Yes, it is very topical at the moment. Whilst we are on school holidays, schools and supporting communities are working tirelessly in the background for those families, and at the moment we are particularly thinking of our schools of distance education P&Cs as well. Those families have a home classroom where their children receive online and physical delivery of their school, and we are aware of many families who have lost all of their resources.

This change would allow donations from not just distance education P&Cs but also those throughout Queensland with the capacity to support. We had another example where a school in a rural cluster burned down and P&Cs were wanting to give books out of their libraries, school books and other facilities. They wanted to make donations to support the school with the purchasing of new items so the children and staff at that school could have items that other families in the area know are so important. They are just two examples of what we know and what our members are telling us is so important for us to be able to support other schools and their P&Cs.

Mr KRAUSE: Thanks for that.

Ms McMILLAN: Can I just confirm that schools are already able to make donations of books, stationery and so on—so that is already allowed to happen. The bill is really about allowing schools to make financial/monetary donations.

CHAIR: For P&Cs to make that.

Ms McMILLAN: Sorry, yes, for P&Cs to make financial/monetary donations, but P&Cs can already make donations in goods—just to confirm.

Mrs Henning: Can I clarify: there are so many times when people want to be generous but the actual giving of money is so much more beneficial for the schools and the P&Cs so they can buy the resources that those families need at that time. That is what we are finding at the moment for those families who have been inundated. They do not want somebody's second-hand books; they want the capacity to buy what is needed at that time, and that comes by having dollars.

CHAIR: There being no further questions, I thank you, Wendy, for your time this afternoon. On behalf of the committee, thank you for your submission. That concludes this hearing. Thank you to everyone who has participated today. Thank you to our committee secretariat and our Hansard reporters. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. I now declare this public hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 3.47 pm.