



EDUCATION, ARTS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr NG Hutton MP—Chair
Mr N Dametto MP
Miss AS Doolan MP
Hon. DE Farmer MP
Ms CP McMillan MP
Mrs R Young MP

Staff present:

Ms L Pretty—Committee Secretary
Dr A Lilley—Assistant Committee Secretary

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

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 2 April 2025

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 2 APRIL 2025

The committee met at 11.14 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this public briefing 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 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 deputy chair and member for Mansfield; Nick Dametto, the member for Hinchinbrook; Ariana Doolan, the member for Pumicestone; Di Farmer, the member for Bulimba, who is substituting in today for Wendy Bourne, the member for Ipswich West; and Rebecca Young, the member for Redlands, who is substituting today for John Krause, the member for Scenic Rim, and we accept their apologies.

This briefing 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 remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence.

I remind committee members that departmental officials are here today to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the briefing 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 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 have finished, and please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode.

EDWARDS, Ms Karen, Executive Director, Information and Technologies, Department of Education

FORRESTER, Ms Kathleen, Deputy Director-General, Policy, Performance, International and Intergovernmental, Department of Education

PORTER, Ms Tania, Deputy Director-General, Early Childhood, Department of Education

STEVENSON, Ms Hayley, Assistant Director-General, Schools and Student Support, Department of Education

CHAIR: Our first presentation today is from the Department of Education. I welcome the officers from the department. Would you like to make your opening statement before we begin with our questions?

Ms Forrester: Thank you, Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to brief you on the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025. The bill amends the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, or E(GP)A, to reduce the regulatory burden in the education sector and support student and community safety. The bill supports the government's commitment to ensure principals, teachers and school communities can deliver improved educational outcomes for Queensland children. This includes identifying opportunities to reduce the administrative burden on teachers to allow them more time to focus on classroom teaching and ensuring that schools are adequately resourced and authorised to maintain strong behavioural standards in Queensland schools. Details of each amendment are outlined in the explanatory notes and in the department's written submission. I will now turn to some of the key amendments.

Let me start with an amendment that was strongly supported by the Queensland Association of Special Education Leaders. The bill removes the requirement for students already assessed and enrolled at a state special school having to undertake further assessment if they are transferring to another state special school. Requiring a student to undertake the same assessment again is a regulatory burden for principals and creates uncertainty for the student and their parents while they wait for enrolment decisions.

The next amendment has been requested by a number of home educating parents and representatives. The bill amends the current age eligibility requirement for home education registration from 17 to 18 years of age by 31 December. The current legislative age limit of 17 has presented concerns for some students and parents who wish to continue registration for home education until the student is older. This aligns age eligibility for home education registration with students attending a state or non-state school. It also supports parents and students by maintaining eligibility for student related financial supports and educational resources, engaging in the state sporting competitions and applying for global travel opportunities through prizes like the Premier's Anzac Prize.

The next amendment responds to the increasingly digital environment in which Queensland state schools operate. Online services provided as third-party technology solutions support our teachers in terms of curriculum delivery, learning activities, assessments or facilitating class collaboration. Online services are also used to manage school operations and communicate with parents. At any one time, individual state schools are using hundreds of online services. These services may require a range of student information, such as name, date of birth, achievement data, email addresses and school data, to enable account registration and student access. With the growing use of online services to support teaching, learning and school administration, the existing consent management process has become overly burdensome for schools, teachers and parents. The bill establishes a robust framework that will enable personal information about a student relevant to the use of an online service to be recorded, used and disclosed by an employee of the department to an approved online service. This will reduce administration time at schools and for parents at home. Students and parents will retain the right to opt out of using online services and consent will still be required for any online service that requires sensitive information.

Only one amendment proposed in the bill relates to school disciplinary absences. Principals operate in increasingly complex environments and it can be difficult to manage the timely provision of advice to a student and parent or carer. The amendment reduces the regulatory burden for state school principals by enabling a principal to delegate the telling of a suspension decision to another senior member of the school staff, such as head of school, deputy principal or head of campus. Importantly, the suspension decision itself remains with the principal and cannot be delegated.

Finally, I will mention the proposed amendments to mandate the use of transfer notes when students transfer between Queensland state and non-state schools. The 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse considered that proportionate and proactive information sharing when students transfer between schools could support student safety and wellbeing and that of staff and other students at the student's new school. These amendments respond to that recommendation. To be clear: the intent of the new framework is for a student to have started at their new school, with a principal required to seek a transfer note within 90 days of enrolment. The requirement for a transfer note to be requested after enrolment at a new school mitigates any risk that a transfer note could be used for enrolment screening.

There are recognised impacts of moving to a proactive information-sharing framework via transfer notes. This is balanced by the critical outcome of strengthening protections for students and school communities, consistent with recommendations from the royal commission and supporting continuity of education. To balance administrative requirements, principals will not have to obtain a transfer note where they may already have access to the relevant information.

The bill proposes three amendments supporting the operation of Queensland's Parents and Citizens Association, including one that allows for donations between P&Cs and schools following natural disasters. The bill also expands eligibility criteria for eKindy, a comprehensive at-home distance education kindergarten program delivered to children in remote parts of the state who cannot access a centre-based program due to travel, work arrangements or medical reasons.

In relation to commencement of the amendments, some amendments will commence on proclamation, such as approved online services and transfer notes, to allow time for collaborative stakeholder discussions regarding implementation and to uphold any necessary guidelines, policies

and procedures. Other amendments are proposed to commence upon assent, such as extending the age eligibility for home education registration and the P&C's donation amendment. I will close there and we welcome any questions that the committee may have.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your statement. I have two questions. How many approved online services can schools currently access, and what is the process for approving those services?

Ms Forrester: I am happy to hand straight over to my colleague Karen Edwards.

Ms Edwards: Our approved online services are through a nationally recognised framework which is called the Safer Technologies 4 Schools framework. Currently we have 329 online services on the Safer Technologies 4 Schools approved list that can be used. That framework looks at the information privacy and security of those systems and every jurisdiction in Australia and New Zealand uses it to assess those systems. What was the second part of your question?

CHAIR: No, you answered both parts. You provided the number of approved online services as well as the process for the approvals, so thank you very much.

Ms McMILLAN: Good morning, everyone. My question actually is to the deputy director-general. For the benefit of the committee, as you know, a bill with the same title was introduced last year into the House and was subsequently withdrawn after the election. Obviously, significant consultation was undertaken in the preparation of that bill. Excluding matters relating to homeschooling, could you list for the committee the main differences between the 2024 bill and this version of the bill, which was introduced into the House in 2025?

Ms Forrester: You have asked me to compare the bill that lapsed last year to the bill that is before the House now. The bill that lapsed included streamlining the use of approved online services in state schools, and that is included in this bill. You have asked me not to speak to home education, so I will not mention home education. In terms of school discipline and enrolment, there were a number of amendments in the lapsed bill last year. There is one amendment from the school discipline and enrolment section of the lapsed bill that is part of the bill before the House now—that is, a principal is able to delegate the telling of an SDA.

The streamlining of special school enrolments was in the lapsed bill last year, and that is in this bill before the House. The P&C amendments were in the lapsed bill, and they are in this bill. The information sharing obligations for non-state school principals were in the lapsed bill, and they are in this bill, as is the approach to eKindy and transfer notes.

In the lapsed bill, there were proposed amendments for state delivered kindergarten. They are not in this bill. There were amendments for gendered language. They are not in this bill. There were proposals to introduce guiding principles. They are not in this bill. There were technical amendments in the lapsed bill and there are a number of technical amendments also in the bill that is before the House.

Ms McMILLAN: You mentioned the amendment where the principal is able to delegate the communication of suspensions. How does that contribute to reducing teacher workload?

Ms Forrester: I am certainly happy to speak to that. As you would be aware, a number of SDAs are issued in schools each year to students. Part of the process requires that the student and their family be advised that the principal has made a decision to issue an SDA. At the moment, the legislation requires that the telling of the decision must be undertaken by the principal at each school. The feedback that we have received—including in the latest round of consultation around red-tape reduction—is that it is a workload burden for principals, particularly for those who are running very large schools, and that it is both appropriate and reasonable for another senior member of staff, such as a head of department or a deputy principal, to actually take on the role of telling the student. That is considered to be a way of reducing the workload burden for principals. In this way, people who are in appropriate positions of authority in the school and who are likely to have good relationships with those children and their families can undertake that work.

Ms McMILLAN: As a follow-up, Deputy Director-General, when the minister introduced the bill, he spoke very clearly about red-tape reduction, reducing the workload of teachers. I have heard no evidence that teachers' workloads would be reduced through that process. Further, is there not a risk that somebody other than the principal could be caught as judge and jury?

CHAIR: I will take a moment to get some advice on that question. In providing a response, please ensure you stick to both relevance and the government's policy related to it.

Ms Forrester: I might address the second part of your question first; that is, by introducing this amendment are we potentially in some way undermining the decision-making arrangements and responsibilities of the principal. I would say no. I would say that the amendment is very clear and all

of our work with schools will remain very clear. The decision about an SDA sits with the principal. There is no question around that shifting. The question about what shifts is who then takes on the responsibility of engaging with the student and their family to tell them that that is the decision that has been made and probably to start, in a practical way, a conversation about what is going to happen during the suspension and what is going to happen on their return to school. It is not just a simple 'you are suspended'. There is actually a start of a conversation which I believe would be an ongoing conversation in a school context. Going to your first question, which is a concern this would not have an impact on workload in schools—

Ms McMILLAN: Specifically relating to the minister's statement in his opening speech about red-tape reduction and reducing the work of teachers. How does that red-tape reduction mechanism reduce the workload of teachers?

Ms Forrester: Can I answer that by asking you to acknowledge there are a number of amendments in the bill sitting under the red-tape reduction initiative. It is not just a single amendment. I would point to the fact that across our system last year there were over 70,000 SDAs issued. Principals made that decision 70,000 times, so there were 70,000 'tellings' of students and engagements with families. I would propose that being able to have two people involved in that process—a decision-maker who may choose for their own reasons to be the person who tells but also to give the principal the opportunity to delegate the telling of the decision—does free up the principal. We do have consultation underway across the state at the moment. Over 20 consultation forums have been running as part of our red-tape reduction work. We are clearly getting feedback in those sessions about the amendments in this bill.

Ms McMILLAN: I would hope that reducing the number of suspensions from 70,000 would be what reduces teacher workload, but I will hand back to you, Chair.

CHAIR: I acknowledge the member's role as a former principal, pedagogical leader and qualified teacher. I think reducing the workload of all teachers in schools is something we should aspire to.

Miss DOOLAN: My question is in terms of home education. How does the department plan to make families aware of the changes to home education age eligibility?

Ms Forrester: If the bill were to proceed, this is a change that would begin on assent. It would begin as soon as the parliament passed the bill and the Governor had given assent. We have a system where we are in contact with home educating families now. We have emailed all the roughly 8,000 families to let them know that this bill is before the House and that this process is indeed underway. That is a really good mechanism. We can see quite clearly how many of those 8,000 families received the information, so we can confirm that they have received the email—

Miss DOOLAN: And opened it?

Ms Forrester: We can see that. We can encourage people to open it. Of course, we cannot make people open their emails. We have a Home Education Expert Group currently operating, and through them we will be able to both advise them around this process that is underway and get their feedback around different ways we might engage and communicate. I understand there is quite a high level of knowledge across home educating families about this amendment.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you for coming along and presenting to the committee this morning. It has been quite informative to hear you speak. Firstly, I want to give a shout-out to the homeschoolers in Queensland. They mobilised quite well last year and I think we all learned a valuable lesson: do not aggravate the homeschooling mums. They are very well resourced and equipped. Going to the member for Pumicestone's question, they already know what is going on with this bill—I can will tell you that.

My question is with regard to eligibility for financial assistance for those homeschooled children and the lapse between the age of 17 and allowing them to go to 18 after the bill is passed. Will there be a pro rata payment or a payment that could go back to help support those families?

Ms Forrester: Are you talking about the textbook allowance?

Mr DAMETTO: Yes, that is correct.

Ms Forrester: That is something we would need to consider. I would need to take that question on notice.

Mr DAMETTO: That is fine. Once again, thank you for the work you are doing in this space. I know the homeschooling parents are very impressed.

Ms FARMER: Thank you all for your submission and for appearing before us today. I would like to go to that part of the minister's charter letter which sees him set with the task of reducing red tape by 25 per cent in terms of the administrative burden on teachers. That implies that all of the red-tape reduction measures will need to be quantified and measured in order to show there is that reduction. Could you take us through each of the elements which relate to the administrative burden on teachers in this bill and quantify for us by how much they will contribute to that reduction of 25 per cent and how in fact it will be measured?

Ms Forrester: Certainly. I think you might appreciate that at this point in the bill's progress and process we have not quantified the exact impact of each individual amendment. I would like to share with the committee that as part of the red-tape reduction work, which is much broader than just a piece of legislation, we certainly do have work underway around measuring the impact of our red-tape reduction effort on teachers. We know that it will not be an exact science because not all of the impacts are exactly quantifiable. We know that some of the tasks that get in the way of teachers can be measured in terms of the time they take. The number of minutes spent scanning a document or uploading a document, completing forms or entering data, for example, are things you can quantify. We are also aware and conscious in our work that there are other changes we will not be able to directly quantify—for example, the quality of the teaching that teachers are able to provide their students because they have more time as well as the respect teachers might feel from the community.

We know that as an early activity in implementing this we are working to establish a baseline. That is why we have consultation underway at the moment. We have 20 sessions happening across Queensland, as I said, as well as virtual feedback forms and a survey. We are generating quite a strong response through that consultation process. That feedback is giving us a starting point in terms of how red tape is impacting teachers, what we can do to reduce it and also helping us frame how we are going to finally measure the impact.

As I had said, work is underway as part of the broader work across the department. I think you would appreciate that with some things there will be a 100 per cent reduction if we stop something; other things will involve reducing the number of minutes that a teacher or principal spends in their day needing to do tasks. We have spoken to some of those examples in this bill already. Some things will be about improving the quality of the experience of teachers and principals in schools.

Ms FARMER: Chair, I just want to clarify the question I asked. Please know that as public servants I am not asking you to comment on the minister's press releases. When the minister introduced this legislation, the title of his media release was 'A fresh start for Queensland: red tape reductions to be sealed in law'. Clearly, that 25 per cent was in the first 100 days. It was the only education target in the first-100-day plan of the government. Which of these key initiatives can be measured? I appreciate not all of them can be. Which of them can be measured, just going to my original question, and how will you be measuring that to contribute to that very specific figure of 25 per cent?

Ms Forrester: My colleague is happy to start that response.

Ms Stevenson: If I point to the example around the special school enrolment, that is one we can quantify. We know that, last year in 2024, 338 special school assessments needed to occur when students transferred from one state special school to another state special school, so that will be 338 or so that will not need to occur every year. That involves not only the work of parents and their children but also our school staff who have to inform those assessments and undertake the decision-making and do the paperwork associated with it. That is one measure we know is quantifiable.

Ms Edwards: In relation to approved online services in schools not reaching consent, one of the online services that could be on that list when we go through the criteria is a product called Mathletics. Currently, we have 349 schools using Mathletics. Some of them are large schools with large enrolments—for example, Warrigal Road State School has 1,236 licences; McDowall State School has 1,003 licences; and Kawana Waters Secondary College has 1,384 licences. Every single one of those licences has a parent that has to sign a piece of paper to say that their student can use that product. By this piece of legislation going in, that is taken away from the parents and school administration to actually do that.

Ms FARMER: Will you quantify all of those when they occur as part of that 25 per cent?

Ms Forrester: That work will go on over the term of government. As I indicated, the work is underway to establish the baseline. This is one aspect of the red-tape reduction process for whole of government, but there is a process underway. I think you can hear there are metrics that certainly underpin some. As I mentioned, you would look at those 70,000 SDAs as a starting point. For the

home educating families, I believe there were 600-odd students for whom we would say a regulatory barrier has been reduced—those 17-year-olds who are turning 18. The work to set the baseline is underway.

Mrs YOUNG: I am going to turn to P&Cs. P&Cs form a large part of the school community and do a lot of heavy lifting. I was just curious with regard to the human rights aspect of these changes, specifically around the right to take part in public life. What is your opinion with regard to that specific point?

Ms Forrester: I might consider that in the context of the amendment proposed to preclude persons convicted of an indictable offence from membership of a P&C executive committee. We have had regard to the Human Rights Act and the obligations under that. You will see that a human rights statement is part of the pack that is in front of the parliament. We have, in putting forward this amendment, clarified that, if a person is convicted of an indictable offence, unless it is a spent conviction, they may not hold a position as a P&C executive member or executive officer, but that reform does not prevent a person from being an ordinary member of a P&C. That approach is actually a consistent approach with the current approach to membership of school councils. I would put that forward in terms of how the rights for people to participate in the work of P&Cs has been considered and been balanced in terms of the amendment that is put forward.

CHAIR: My question is with regard to transfer notes, recognising that the reference is to the 90-day period for principals to request a transfer note. Is the intent behind that to be replicated with students from interstate?

Ms Forrester: There is a transfer note system in place now for students who move interstate. A bit like the arrangement that exists in Queensland now, there is an arrangement in place, but it is not mandated. A student can move from one state to another and it is possible that that information is transferred through the SDTP—I forget what the acronym stands for—but there is a student data transfer protocol and one of the comments that the royal commission made was that we just do not have visibility about how often that process and system is used. At the state level, we are putting forward a proposal to mandate the transfer of information, using a transfer note if that is required, but at the national level, the current arrangement will continue. I would note, though, in the national arena, there is work underway also in response to royal commission recommendations, to support the electronic transfer of student data. We hope that there will be a trial of that system at some point this year, and we may well see an increase in the use of transfer notes for students moving from one state to another through the support that is available with that electronic system.

Ms FARMER: I understand that the minister has established a red-tape reduction taskforce or a working group of some similar kind. Could you tell us, please, who is on that taskforce and how those people were chosen?

Ms Forrester: I will take that on notice. Chair, I am happy to provide that information on notice. I do not have the membership of the taskforce with me today.

Ms FARMER: Could I just confirm it has been established?

Ms Forrester: The taskforce has been established and it has met a number of times. I am happy to provide that.

Miss DOOLAN: When forming distinct P&C associations at school campuses, is there potential for this to lead to inconsistent policies between campuses?

Ms Forrester: That is not the intention. The intention is that for schools where there are multiple campuses, the principal has the decision-making power and authority and would consult within their community to decide if it was in the best interests of the school community to have more than one P&C. Once a P&C is set up, then they operate within a framework, within a set of rules, requirements, guidelines, financial management practices and accounting requirements. There is a very strong framework that guides the operation of all P&Cs. I would expect that the first point would be the principal considering whether it was in the best interests of their school to have two P&Cs, and if they had a genuine concern about things becoming really different and disparate and problematic, it would be for them to make a decision not to have multiple P&Cs.

Miss DOOLAN: Is it quite common to have multiple P&Cs at a school?

Ms Stevenson: At the moment, there are no multiple P&Cs across the state. This would enable it to occur. It would also enable it to occur by regulation, so we would need to prescribe the schools that were able to establish multiple P&Cs. We would have tight regulation about that. The initial consideration would be for Tagai State College, which has 17 campuses, to be able to establish P&Cs that are able to respond to their particular community and context.

Ms FARMER: Looking at the minister's introductory speech for this bill, he refers to \$44 million in funding for a behaviour management boost, to give teachers more support in the classroom. Is this new funding, or is this the funding that was already committed by the previous government for this purpose?

Ms Stevenson: I might take that on notice because I am not certain, and I certainly do not want to give incorrect information about that.

Ms FARMER: If I could clarify, Chair, clearly the previous government made a significant commitment to behaviour management support in classrooms, including these range of extra support personnel. So, could we have it on the sticky paper, I suppose, what we are actually comparing those to.

CHAIR: With regard to special school enrolments, do we have data with regard to how many students we have who have transferred from one Queensland special school to a further Queensland special school, and are you able to share that data with the committee?

Ms Stevenson: We do have those numbers. Last year, 338 students transferred between state special schools. From 2020 to 2024, there were 1,808 transitions.

Ms FARMER: In terms of the other red-tape reduction measures that will be undertaken, are you able to give us a timeline? You referred earlier to the consultation process. One would assume that the taskforce has a program which has been clearly communicated across the education system. What are the timelines for when we will start to see proposed measures, but, most importantly, when you will have established a baseline? Clearly, with a target of 25 per cent, it will be very important that that baseline is established quite soon, given we are six months into the term. Can you give us an idea of the timing?

CHAIR: Member, prior to the officers offering up an answer, I firstly encourage people to be very conscious of long preambles. I think we need to be succinct and guided, but also to remember that we are here today receiving a briefing in regards to the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025. The officers are here to provide feedback on that bill and the amendments that are provided, and not to comment on other government policy. Those things that may occur at estimates hearings are not what would occur at a public briefing of this nature on this bill. I would ask you to reword your question to find a way to make it fit where we are going, and I will give you the opportunity to do so.

Ms FARMER: Thank you for your guidance, Chair. Referring to our earlier interaction about these matters being part of that general 25 per cent reduction, you referred, Ms Forrester, to the need to establish a baseline to which these measures will contribute—and it will be important, obviously, to have a baseline as early as possible—can you give us an idea of timelines, please?

Ms Forrester: These are the amendments. The broad red-tape reduction process is well underway. I would be happy to provide feedback for you that has been provided to all of the schools around that process and contained within that. I am sure they have the next steps set out. I do not have that with me today because I am here to brief you on the bill, and we are very comfortable and confident that the amendments in the bill will contribute to the 25 per cent reduction, as I said, over the term of the government.

CHAIR: We would ask that that feedback on the process is provided back to the committee. I thank you very much for providing that.

Miss DOOLAN: Back to the P&C associations, do you have any data around how many P&Cs we have across Queensland?

Ms Forrester: We assume we have one for every school, and now we may have two for up to 24 schools. So, it is equivalent to the number of schools, but we can double check that with our P&C association colleagues.

Ms FARMER: On the funding of the Behavioural Boost which the minister referred to in his introductory speech, will that be one of the measurements for reducing red tape? I appreciate that you have some elements in this bill, but, as the minister mentioned it in his introductory speech, will that be part of the red-tape reduction as well?

Ms Stevenson: In the distribution of the Behavioural Boost funding, it was provided directly to schools through the transfer of other funding resources, so in that way there was no red tape associated with the delivery of the FTE. The allocation goes straight into school bank accounts and

there is no application process. Principals are able to make decisions as to how to utilise that resource—to top up existing staff, for example, or engage additional staff. Being mindful of the red tape involved was the design of the distribution of the program and then to have extra support for behaviour in schools in the classrooms for our students.

Mrs YOUNG: With regard to the P&Cs again, how does the department plan to communicate the changes to P&Cs, and if there is anybody currently sitting on executives with convictions, how will that be properly communicated or managed?

Ms Forrester: We work with P&Cs Queensland quite closely on a number of matters. We have briefed them on the fact that this bill was being introduced into the parliament and they are aware of the parliamentary committee process. We encourage all of our stakeholders to take part and provide their views to this committee process. We would use our regular engagement and communication channels working with P&Cs Queensland to advise them of the progress of the bill. In terms of implementation, we will be developing guidance material including fact sheets and FAQs—frequently asked questions—on the impact of the amendment on their executive committees and subcommittees. We do maintain a Parents & Citizens' Association procedure. We will review that document and update it as required to reflect the amendments in the bill. We will certainly also be reviewing the *P&C Association Model Constitution* model and *P&C Association Accounting Manual*. We will review those and update those as necessary to align with the legislative amendments, if they are passed.

Ms FARMER: We are talking a lot about P&Cs today. They are very important groups. The reform to allow the P&C of one school to support a P&C at another school, as a ballpark figure, how many instances of this are we talking about?

Ms Stevenson: It has never been allowed previously, so we are really uncertain as to how many P&Cs will take up that opportunity, but I am aware in my experience and when there have been natural disasters, we have had inquiries from P&Cs wanting this provision and wanting to support their school down the road or a school in another area of the state. It is difficult for us to quantify at this point in time, but we also know it is a decision that the entire P&C is involved with, so it would not be a rushed decision. We have those safeguards proposed to be in place as well, if this is passed.

Ms FARMER: To clarify, are we talking in the hundreds, in terms of the number of inquiries you might have had, 'Can we actually do this?'

Ms Stevenson: Yes. The number of inquiries I have received in the past would be less than five.

Ms Forrester: I would just say it depends on the year as well. In a natural disaster year like we seem to be having this year, if this bill were to proceed and this amendment were to be passed, that might see more P&Cs engage in this opportunity to donate to other P&Cs versus a year where we were cyclone and natural disaster free.

Ms McMILLAN: P&Cs already donate material goods. That is able to occur. Are you suggesting in this bill that it is financial goods? We know that already material goods are donated from school to school.

Ms Stevenson: Yes, and this also allows for P&Cs, should they wish to fundraise, to make clear that they are fundraising to be able to donate those funds to another school.

CHAIR: My question is with regard to the eKindy changes and how they have been provided. How do the amendments that are in this bill reduce the burden of the tyranny of distance versus the medical necessities?

Ms Porter: As you would know, eKindy is a comprehensive at-home education program for children who do not have access in two ways. One is that children who have a medical condition are able to access eKindy. Currently, they are only allowed to have absences of 10 consecutive weeks. The introduction of this bill will be cumulative. A child who has to travel in and out of hospital will then be able to access eKindy after those 10 cumulative weeks. We expect more children who are not well will be able to access eKindy. We know that children who access kindy transition better to school and we are really looking forward to this bill being able to provide more access to those children who need it most. The other part of the bill is that currently a family who resides 16 kilometres from a service currently cannot access eKindy regardless of whether that kindergarten is delivering an approved kindergarten program by a teacher. This bill will remove that and just add clarity to say an 'approved kindergarten program'. Currently, the wording is an 'education care service or an early childhood service'. This will actually be very specific that they can access eKindy regardless of whether there is a free kindergarten or not.

CHAIR: Obviously, eKindy is a service that is offered across the state. How many students or families do we currently have accessing the eKindy service?

Ms Porter: We have 112 children accessing eKindy at this point and the majority of those children are in very remote locations, as I said, with some of those children accessing it because of their health.

Ms McMILLAN: As a follow-up question to a few of the questions that the shadow minister asked, what baseline data has been established to see that a 25 per cent red-tape reduction will improve student outcomes?

CHAIR: I am going to take advice on that. I am going to draw the committee as a whole back to the provisions that we are looking at as part of the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025. I know that we have had some leniency in the scope based on the minister's introductory speech. Those items are not addressed in these amendments. The officers are here today to provide a briefing on these items and I would draw the committee back to that and ask if you have a further question or a different question.

Ms McMILLAN: Thank you, Chair. The bill clearly articulates a number of measures or means to reduce red tape in schools, in particular the workload of teachers. How will the department measure the improved learning as a result of those reductions?

Ms Forrester: As I have indicated previously, the legislative amendments are one aspect of the red-tape reduction work that is underway in the department now, and it will continue over the four-year term. In this early stage, we have consultation underway as part of the much broader piece of work that is underway in the department and that consultation will help us establish the work of the baseline. We have a bill before us at the moment that has not yet been through the parliament so is not yet law or legislation. We are very clear on the need to focus and be able to measure the reduction in red tape. That is happening as a whole-of-department initiative. We do have the work underway and we will be working on that for the term of the government.

Ms McMILLAN: Is it true that any element of the work of government must be about improving student learning?

CHAIR: I am going to take advice on that question. I would invite you to answer as you see fit.

Ms Forrester: Thank you. The amendments that we have put forward are certainly geared around reducing red tape for teachers and also supporting principals to do their job and protect students at schools and school safety, so community safety. I would be so bold as to suggest that the work of the education department and the purpose of it is indeed to support the improvement of student outcomes.

CHAIR: Member for Redlands, you had a further question?

Ms YOUNG: Thank you, yes. With regard to eKindy, you mentioned that 112 children are currently enrolled. Has any modelling been done with regard to the changes and what the uplift in participation would be?

Ms Porter: At the moment, we have around five children with medical conditions who access kindy. Given the bill has not passed yet, we are only making assumptions, based on the information that we have from families and requests from families, that that number may increase. We would expect it to be relatively small in number though. We have 139 state-delivered kindies in our rural and remote areas and many families take the opportunity to access kindergarten in those locations.

Ms FARMER: My question is to Ms Porter. I acknowledge that Queensland is recognised for our great work in the early years so congratulations on that. For the benefit of the committee, and perhaps other members of parliament when they are looking at contributing to the debate in parliament, could you describe to us what eKindy looks like? I think of a primary or secondary school aged student who is doing distance education or doing online education. Obviously, that is much more challenging for younger children, and in particular for parents. Can you describe to us what eKindy looks like?

Ms Porter: eKindy is very much a play-based program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher through our School of Distance Education so our youngest Queenslanders get access to a variety of experiences in their home with their families through an online environment. You would expect to see children being able to have stories read to them with puppets, doing science experiments and then families are encouraged to take that learning throughout the rest of the week. Families will be given tools such as maybe different cooking experiences and learning through maths using some of the opportunities that they have on properties. It could be, as I said, doing some maths

measurements outside by counting, if they are on a farm, counting their animals. It is certainly providing some of that education to families that they would use in their everyday environment. We know that the access they get to the teacher is really important, but also so are the ongoing opportunities they have with their family members who support their kindergarten program at home.

CHAIR: I have a further question with regard to the approved online services. My question is to understand the processes that schools are undertaking prior to providing to parents the list of programs that they access. What engagement do schools take to prepare to assure the quality of the programs they are providing to the community and families?

Ms Edwards: Thank you for your question. Currently, what happens is, as I mentioned before, we have a national way of assessing online services which is called Safer Technologies 4 Schools. That process then comes to Queensland and we do an element of it that provides information to schools around what consent it is, whether it is available on our systems, the information that you should put into those services and the risks associated, and schools then make a determination about what services they use in their day-to-day instruction for teaching and learning and also for school administration, which are the two components that they use these online services for. Schools make that local decision based on the information that they get from the Online Service Risk Review register and they then determine locally which products are suitable for their local needs and what those schools need to do. They obviously then make that selection of the products that they use and they go and reach out to their parent body for consent to be able to provide the information into those services in order to use them.

CHAIR: I understand from your earlier answer that we have 329 different platforms or apps that our schools are currently using based on that Safer Technologies 4 Schools framework provided at a federal government level—

Ms Edwards: I probably should clarify that is 329 that are approved at a national level and then obviously we make a determination in Queensland and as part of this there are new criteria in this bill for us to make that determination. That is the list that we will start with and then with the criteria that is outlined in here we will make sure that there is a list of approved services that will not require consent as part of this amendment.

CHAIR: Thank you. I appreciate your time today. There are a number of questions on notice that we would ask are provided back to the committee: how many P&Cs in Queensland; feedback on the consultation process; a reference to the \$44 million worth of funding for behaviour support for teachers and is this new funding; the reference to the taskforce on reducing red tape, who is on the taskforce and how they are appointed; and the impact of the homeschooling provisions on the backdating of the textbook allowance, which was a particular question from the member for Hinchinbrook. We appreciate your time today and thank each of the members for their time serving on this committee. We will conclude this briefing. Thank you to everyone who has participated today.

The committee adjourned at 12.12 pm.