

Education (General Provisions) (Extension of Primary Schools in Remote Areas) Amendment Bill 2023

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Submitted by: Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network
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Submission to: [Education \(General Provisions\) \(Extension of Primary Schools in Remote Areas\) Amendment Bill 2023](#)

About Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network

The Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QIS Parents Network) is the peak body representing the families of the more than 145,000 students enrolled in Queensland's 236 independent schools.

We are regularly consulted by government and other education stakeholders on policy matters that affect the parents and carers of independent school children and attend a range of government and education sector meetings and taskforces.

We are also a strong advocate for positive and respectful learning partnerships between schools, parents and children – a burgeoning area of research known as 'parent engagement', which shows that learning and wellbeing benefits for children improve significantly when parents are engaged effectively by their child's school.

We fund research and provide practical support for independent schools who are wanting to improve their parent engagement practices. [Read more](#) about our parent engagement work with schools.

The QIS Parents Network is governed by a Board of Directors and our Executive Officer is supported by a Consultative Committee of parents from small and large independent schools across Queensland, which helps ensure our views are reflective of the diverse independent school sector. QIS Parents Networks thanks the Queensland Government for their ongoing funding since 2014 which allows us to fulfill our important work on behalf of Queensland families.

About the Queensland independent school sector

Independent schools form a key part of the education landscape in Australia and sit alongside government and Catholic schools in contributing to society.

While independent schools are sometimes colloquially referred to as 'private schools', in reality independent schools are not-for-profit educational institutions and are as diverse as the communities they serve. Queensland independent schools range from small community

schools and special assistance schools through to large P-12 colleges and boarding schools and have varying educational philosophies.

Importantly, more Queensland parents than ever before are also actively choosing to send their children to independent schools. Between 2013 and 2023, enrolments across the Queensland independent school sector have increased from 113,942 to 145,466 students. This represents an increase of 28% over the past decade. A demographic study undertaken by Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) in 2023 based on Queensland Government data, forecasts that in the 20 years from 2021 to 2041 the number of school-aged children in Queensland will increase by 13%, or approximately 117,000 students.

Our submission

- The QIS Parents Network appreciates the good intention behind this Amendment Bill but we support the concerns raised by the Isolated Children's Parents' Association Inc (ICPA Qld) in their submission about some of the consequences should this bill be passed.
- Like ICPA Qld, we would be opposed to any amendment that would have the flow on effect of disqualifying families from accessing the Living Away From Home Allowance (LAFHAS) which provides important financial assistance for boarding school families.
- We also know families value their right to make informed choices when it comes to their child's education and that families greatly value the many additional opportunities that boarding school provides in terms of extra curricular activities and social and emotional development. If this Amendment was successful and the financial assistance currently available through LAFHAS was to cease, boarding would no longer be an affordable option for some families.
- While the staffing of the 104 Queensland government-operated schools listed in the Amendment Bill are not something in our immediate field of advocacy, like ICPA Qld we are concerned at the practicality and feasibility of recruiting the additional school staff needed to make this suggested model work, given the significant workforce shortages experienced across all education sectors in Australia.

Amanda Watt | Executive Officer