

Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families with School Costs) Amendment Bill 2023

Submission No: 6
Submitted by: [REDACTED]
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Attachments:

Submitter Comments:

1. The DoE currently takes advantage of the aspirations of parents by actively seeking fee-attracting out of catchment enrolments and selective entry program applicants. I believe the fees incurred are “gold plated” and charged beyond cost recovery basis allowed by the User Charging Procedure. The processes and criteria for these applications are not sufficiently transparent. “Principal discretion” is not merit-based and opens the door for conflicts of interest. Some schools offer a tiny number of places however accept an unlimited number of fee attracting applications. Fees can be between \$80-450 and are non-refundable. 2. This process entrenches disadvantage and inequity. It promotes the idea of “good schools” and “less good schools”. All public schools should be excellent and provide equitably for students in their local area. 3. Selective / excellence programs should be provided for free just as special education is provided for free. If DoE identifies through its own processes that a student would benefit from extension, this education should be provided for free. 4. Schools are not meeting their obligations to transparently consult on fees nor are they adequately reporting the expenditure of parent funds back to the public. State Schools should be required to upload annual financial reports to their websites for all to see given they use public and parent funds. This would also highlight inequity across the state school system. More transparency and accountability is required. 5. Some schools do not transparently itemise their fees for parents (eg. QASMT) in alignment with DoE procedures. 6. The inclusions of Specialised Educational Program Fees vary across the system and should be uniform. 7. Schools must transparently present optional fees as such and must transparently request parental consent to be charged for those additional services. It is unacceptable for state school parents to be charged for example, \$115 for catered lunches or \$485 for a camp without full transparency. (Again, something we experienced at QASMT). 5. “Blanket consent” for the life of a students’ enrolment does not constitute informed consent and is an unacceptable way to manage the charging of school fees for extra optional services.