

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

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QUEENSLAND

TEACHERS' UNION

Queensland Teachers' Union

**Submission to
Queensland Parliament's
Education, Employment and Training Committee
*Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families
with School Costs) Amendment Bill 2023***

Authorised by QTU Executive
November 2023

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Introduction

Established in 1889, the Queensland Teachers' Union of Employees (QTU) has chalked up more than 130 years of achievement in providing professional, industrial, and legal leadership to Queensland's state education and training sectors. In 2023, the QTU is the professional voice of more than 48,000 members including teachers and school leaders who are delivering excellence and equity in special schools, state schools, state high schools, secondary colleges, P-10/12 combined schools, TAFE, and other discrete education facilities throughout Queensland.

The QTU is a significant stakeholder in Queensland education and is committed to actively engaging in processes in which the voice of teachers ought to be heard. The QTU's submissions and participation in stakeholder consultation are informed through the Union's active membership, which includes more than 2,500 QTU Workplace Representatives and decision-making forums such as our QTU Executive, which consists of democratically elected members from across the state. This QTU submission represents positions that are supported by QTU Policy and are endorsed by QTU Conference, which consists of more than 250 democratically elected members from branches throughout Queensland.

The QTU welcomes the Member for South Brisbane's explanatory speech, as it clearly demonstrates that the Member has been listening to teachers and engaging with the Australian Education Union (AEU), to which the QTU is affiliated.

The QTU recognises that the *Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families with School Costs) Amendment Bill 2023* (the Bill) aims to amend the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)*, hereafter *EGPA*, and help families with costs associated with extracurricular activities, student resources (e.g. textbooks and laptops), and school uniforms. Another objective of the Bill is for the Director-General to "report information on enrolments and costs for each state school to the relevant Minister on an annual basis."

Organisation of this QTU submission

This QTU submission deals with the legislative provisions relevant to funding excellence and equity, as well as the QTU position on matters identified by the Bill, such as grants and subsidies, resourcing of textbooks, funding for ICT devices, and school-based decision making on student uniforms. The submission then considers legislative relationships between the Bill and the *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)*. The final section lists recommendations for the consideration of the Education, Employment and Training Committee (EETC).

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1.0 Funding excellence and equity

Queenslanders' right to education is a universal right protected by Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states:

*Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.*¹

The second sentence of Article 26 assigns the right to free education to at least the elementary stages of education. In Queensland, the right to education is dealt with by the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* and the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)*.

Section 36 of *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* states:

- (1) *Every child has the right to have access to primary and secondary education appropriate to the child's needs.*
- (2) *Every person has the right to have access, based on the person's abilities, to further vocational education and training that is equally accessible to all.*²

Unlike Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, s36 of the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* does not include the notion of "free education," although the right is expanded from elementary to primary and secondary education, as well as vocational education and training.

The state deals with the provision of education in the *EGPA*. The QTU supports the removal of gendered language from the *EGPA*, but recognises that the intent of section 5 is to establish the objects of the act. It states:

- (1) *The objects of this Act are –*
 - (a) *to make available to each Queensland child or young person a high-quality education that will –*
 - (i) *Help maximise his or her educational potential; and*
 - (ii) *Enable him or her to become an effective and informed member of the community; and*
 - (b) *to provide universal access to high quality State education.*³

In the Commonwealth jurisdiction, the *Australian Education Act (2013) (Cth)* replaces the notion of a "right" with the word "entitlement". The preamble to the *Australian Education Act (2013) (Cth)* includes, inter alia:

*All students in all schools are entitled to an excellent education, allowing each student to reach his or her full potential so that he or she can succeed, achieve his or her aspirations, and contribute fully to his or her community, now and in the future.*⁴

¹ United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/03/udhr.pdf>

² Queensland Parliament. *Human Rights Act 2019*. <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2019-005#sec.36>

³ Queensland Parliament. *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*. <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-2019-005#sec.36>

⁴ Australian Government. (2023). *Australian Education Act 2013*. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2013A00067>

The objects of the *Australian Education Act (2013) (Cth)* assume an understanding of excellence and equity in Australian schooling, and section 3(1)(c) establishes the funding objective of the Act, which is:

to provide a needs-based funding model for schools applied consistently across all schools, which includes:

- (i) *a base amount of funding for every student; and*
- (ii) *additional loadings for students and schools who need extra support.*⁵

Section 3(1)(c) establishes that the Australian Government's school funding arrangements, referred to in section 4 of the Act as the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), is an allocation to schools consisting of a per student base amount, as well as additional loadings to address additional learning needs.⁶

In Queensland, section 12 of the *EGPA* establishes, *inter alia*, the legislative requirements for the allocation of public funds to state schools. Like the *Australian Education Act*, the *EGPA* considers the ability and aptitude of the student, and includes:

12 Provision of State education

- (1) *For each student attending a State instructional institution, there must be provided an educational program approved by the Minister that—*
 - (a) *has regard to—*
 - (i) *the age, ability, aptitude and development of the student; and*
 - (ii) *whether enrolment in the educational program is compulsory or non-compulsory; and*
 - (b) *is an integral element within the total range of educational services offered with the prior approval of the Minister; and*
 - (c) *takes account, and promotes continuity, of the student's learning experiences; and*
 - (d) *recognises, and takes account of, the nature of knowledge.*
- (2) *The duration of the educational program must be based on the basic allocation for a student.*⁷

Relevantly, section 50(2) of the *EGPA* states:

- (2) *The cost of providing instruction, administration and facilities for the education of the person at the school must be met by the state.*⁸

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld).*

⁸ *Ibid.*

The Queensland Department of Education holds to the view that:

*Government funding for schools does not extend to individual student resources and equipment for their personal use or consumption. Supply of these items, such as textbooks and personal laptops/iPads, is the responsibility of the parent.*⁹

1.1. The Bill

The QTU supports the underpinning philosophy of free education that is contained in the Bill.

The QTU has consistently called on state and Commonwealth governments to negotiate a fairer National School Reform Agreement (NSRA). **The QTU recommends that the Queensland Government must ensure that all state schools in Queensland receive a minimum of 100 per cent of the SRS.** This will require the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments to increase their overall funding to state schools.¹⁰ Moreover, the QTU has campaigned with other AEU affiliated branches to remove the arbitrary 20 per cent cap on Commonwealth funding for state schools' SRS. The AEU has welcomed the Commonwealth support of the Member for South Brisbane's party.¹¹ **The QTU recommends that the Queensland Government joins calls for the Commonwealth Government to remove the 20 per cent funding cap on SRS payments to state schools.**

The QTU acknowledges the engagement of the Member for South Brisbane with the AEU. The [explanatory notes](#) for the Bill recognise that:

- Queensland states schools are nominally funded to just 89 per cent of the minimum funding amount required to meet the minimum educational needs of students under the national framework, and
- the shortfall between existing recurrent funding to state schools and minimum needs funding is \$1.7 billion.¹²

The QTU reaffirms the recommendation that all state schools in Queensland should receive a minimum of 100 per cent of the schooling resource standard (SRS),¹³ and the Union agrees with the statement, contained in the [Explanatory notes](#), that "Queensland state schools are not funded to meet the minimum educational needs of students."¹⁴

However, the QTU notes that the Bill does not require the Queensland Government to increase payments to schools to ensure that all state schools receive 100 per cent of the SRS.

⁹ Department of Education. (2023). *Student Resource Scheme - Participation Agreement Form*.

<https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/attachment/srs-participation-agreement-form.pdf#search=%22providing%20instruction%2C%20administration%20and%20facilities%20%22>

¹⁰ Queensland Teachers Union. (2023). *State Budget Submission 2023-24*. <https://www.qtu.asn.au/state-budget-submission-2023-24/1-invest-public-education-and-training#:~:text=The%20QTU%20calls%20on%20the,and%20cover%20the%20increasing%20costs>

¹¹ Australian Education Union. (2023). *AEU Welcomes Greens Bill to Remove Cap on Federal Funding of Public Schools*.

<https://www.aeufederal.org.au/news-media/media-releases/2023/february/250223>

¹² Queensland Parliament. (2023). *Explanatory Notes: Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families with School Costs)*

Amendment Bill 2023. <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tp/2023/5723T1622-7521.pdf>

¹³ See, for example, Queensland Teachers Union. (2007). *QTU Budget Submission 2008 – 2009*; Queensland Teachers Union. (2009).

QTU Budget Submission 2010 – 2011; Queensland Teachers Union. (2013). *QTU Budget Submission 2013*; Queensland Teachers Union. (2023). *QTU Budget Submission 2023 – 2024*.

¹⁴ Explanatory Notes.

Rather, section 56C(3) of the Bill requires that the total amount of costs mentioned in subsection (1), that is the “cost of providing instruction, administration and facilities for the education of all relevant students,” are to be met from 100 per cent of the SRS funding amount for each state school.¹⁵ Then, section 56C(2) of the Bill requires the state to meet the costs of individual student resources, school uniform, and extracurricular activities.¹⁶ For clarity, the QTU believes that legislation pertaining to SRS funding should be separate to sections pertaining to the funding of individual student resources, school uniform, and extracurricular activities, as this would support consistency with the objects of the *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)*.

The QTU does not support the proposal of the Bill to insert a new 56C(3)(a). The effect of this new section would mean that 100 per cent of the cost of providing “the individual student resources required for each relevant student”¹⁷ are to be met from SRS. The QTU contends there are additional operational cost centres that the state can and should access to meet its funding obligations and provide the individual student resources required for each relevant student. For example, the Queensland Curriculum Assessment Authority, a statutory authority, funds some “individual student resources” that are materials for the purposes of assessment, such as external assessment processes.

Section 56D of the Bill requires the chief executive to provide a report on student enrolments for each school, the cost of providing individual student resources to be given to each student (including, *inter alia*, extracurricular services, and requirements of students with disability attending the school), economic, social or geographical disadvantages of the students attending the school, and the amount of costs met by the state.¹⁸ The QTU has concerns over the adverse workload impact that could be a consequence of this proposed amendment, and **the QTU recommends that the EETC calls on the Department of Education to produce a workload impact statement (WIS) on measures contained in the Bill and that this becomes a public document.**

1.2. QTU position

The QTU supports the underpinning philosophy of free education that is broadly encompassed by the Bill. The QTU contends that the social and educational interests and needs of Australia are best served by the maintenance of a strong, fully funded, high quality public education and training system. The QTU contends public education should:

- be safe
- be open to all
- be secular
- be free
- be fully funded with appropriate class sizes, facilities, and equipment
- employ qualified teachers
- offer a rich and diverse curriculum
- lead to worthwhile further education, training and/or employment opportunities.

¹⁵ Queensland Parliament. (2023). *Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families with School Costs) Amendment Bill 2023*. <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tp/2023/5723T1621-6086.pdf>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

1.2.1 Meeting the costs

The QTU has repeatedly called on state and Commonwealth governments to recognise their primary responsibility for public education. The QTU calls for full funding of state schools to ensure appropriate resourcing for every child, so that section 36 of the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* and the objects of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)* can be achieved.

Specifically, the QTU and AEU have called for state and Commonwealth governments to enliven the recommendations of the Commonwealth Government's *Review of Funding for Schooling – Final Report*,¹⁹ also known as the *Gonski Review*. The *Gonski Review* made 41 recommendations to the Commonwealth Government, including the adoption of a needs-based and sector blind model of school funding to address factors of educational equity. The Gonski recommendations underpin the funding model of the *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)*, which allocates a base level of funding for all students and additional equity loadings for students with disability (s36), Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander students (s37), low socioeconomic status (s38), low English language proficiency (s39), school location (s40-41), and school size (s42-51).²⁰

The QTU recognises that the Bill seeks to help families with school costs, specifically extracurricular activities, student resources (e.g. textbooks and laptops), and school uniforms. Moreover, the QTU recognises cost of living pressures that are impacting on family, school, and government budgets. The QTU supports measures that provide cost of living relief, especially in low socioeconomic communities. However, the QTU contends that the purpose of SRS payments is to address factors of educational equity, rather than cost of living issues.

1.2.2 Reducing workload of teachers and school leaders

In addition to helping families with school costs, the QTU notes that the Bill proposes to amend section 56D of the *EGPA*, which deals with reporting arrangements. The QTU is concerned that the proposed amendment has the potential to lead to incremental workload creep for school leaders. On that basis, **the QTU recommends that the EETC calls on the Department of Education to undertake and report a workload impact statement (WIS) on measures contained in the Bill and that the WIS become a public document.**

The QTU notes that at 56D(1)(a), the Bill proposes an amendment to insert a requirement for the reporting of enrolment data, which the QTU notes is already available. Then 56D(1)(b) proposes an amendment that will require the chief executive to report enrolment projections. For the purposes of staffing and facilities management, state school principals and Department of Education regional staff systemically engage in enrolment projections. The QTU appreciates the complexities in this undertaking, especially in Queensland communities with high levels of population transience.

The QTU also notes that at 56D(1)(c)(i)-(iii), the Bill proposes an amendment that requires the chief executive to report on cost of individual student resources, extracurricular services, and school uniforms for each school. The QTU acknowledges that the explanatory notes state this is "to provide basic information to the Minister."²¹ However, the QTU forecasts that, if legislated, this section of the Bill will result in the Department of Education delegating additional compliance

¹⁹ Australian Government. (2011). *Review of Funding for Schooling – Final Report*. <https://www.education.gov.au/download/1307/review-funding-schooling-final-report-december-2011/1280/document/pdf>

²⁰ *Australian Education Act 2013*.

²¹ Explanatory Notes.

reporting to school principals. The workload impact on schools of this proposed amendment should also be considered and reported upon in a WIS.

1.2.3 Grants and subsidies

The QTU recognises that school grants are an operational matter that are outside of the scope of the EETC's current inquiry. However, the QTU notes the impact of rising energy costs on school budgets. While the QTU has welcomed the Queensland Government's infrastructure investment and the air conditioning of all classrooms in Queensland state schools,²² the rising operational costs of air conditioning all classrooms, as well as powering ICT devices, has not been met with a commensurate increase in school grants. The QTU believes increases in school grants are warranted. The grant should be, at a minimum, indexed annually to account for inflation. The grant should be sufficient to provide for all of the school's needs.

The QTU also recognises that the Queensland Government and Department of Education facilitate programs that are designed to support parents. However, the Queensland Government should ensure that navigating websites to apply for subsidies is a user-friendly experience. There are often too many links from one site to another, and this is extremely hard for families who may be illiterate, have limited ICT access and connectivity, or are time poor because they have competing labour and familial obligations.

1.2.4 Extra-curricular activities

The QTU notes that the Bill proposes to insert a new 56C(2)(c) that will require the state to meet the costs of "the extracurricular services offered to all relevant students by state schools throughout the school year."²³ Earlier, at 56A, the Bill proposes to insert a new definition for extracurricular activities, including:

- (a) sporting programs or events
- (b) musical, dramatic or other artistic programs or performances
- (c) academic challenges or competitions
- (d) other education or cultural information or instruction provided by a person other than a staff member of the student's school
- (e) school camps.²⁴

Section 3.1 of this QTU submission includes examples of some of the costs associated with extracurricular activities. **The QTU recommends that the EETC calls on the Department of Education to prepare modelling on the budget impact of the proposal for the state to meet costs associated with extracurricular activities.**

In addition to the budget impact of the proposed 56C(2)(c), the QTU notes that the items listed as 56A(a)-(e) require invisible labour of Queensland's state school teachers. Most of activities associated with the list occur outside of rostered duty time, and state school teachers, school leaders, and other school staff undertake the additional duties without additional remuneration or

²² Queensland Government. (2022). *Air Conditioning Delivered for All Queensland State Schools* <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/94979#:~:text=Every%20single%20classroom%2C%20library%20and,start%20of%20Term%20%2C%202022>.

²³ Queensland Parliament. (2023). *Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families with School Costs) Amendment Bill 2023*. <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tp/2023/5723T1621-6086.pdf>

²⁴ Ibid.

time off in lieu. Furthermore, there are extra administrative tasks that teachers and school leaders must undertake when leading or supporting the examples of extracurricular activities. The QTU foreshadows that 56C2(c) will result in increased levels of participation, and while this might be desirable to improve the health and education outcomes of students, it will also exacerbate workload pressure on Queensland's overworked and under resourced teacher workforce. On that basis, the QTU insists that longstanding industrial conditions, like centrally funded time off in lieu provisions, are subject to consultation and agreement with the QTU.

1.2.5 Individual student resources

For clarity, the QTU does not support SRS allocations to schools being used to purchase student resources like textbooks.

The QTU contends that 56C(2) has the potential to disadvantage schools with low ICSEA scores, and might redirect SRS payments to student resources like textbooks and stationary at the expense of the types of equity measures listed in section three of this QTU submission.

However, the QTU does support a system in which all textbooks and related supplies are provided to students by schools. Textbook hiring arrangements, which are currently in place in many state schools throughout Queensland, are supported as a step in this direction. The QTU contends there should be a significant increase in the amount of funding made available to support schools in adequately providing all the necessary supplies, and that this should be in addition to increases in the state's contribution to SRS payments.

The QTU believes that textbook grants should be set at a realistic level, and they should be automatically indexed. Once an adequate system of school resourcing is introduced, no school should levy students/parents for any school supplies.

The QTU considers that such a measure would help to enliven every Queenslanders' right to education.

1.2.6 Information communication technology (ICT)

The QTU recognises that students in today's Queensland classrooms will be tomorrow's global citizens. Classrooms, therefore, must enable learners to connect with one another in ways that celebrate intercultural understanding and active citizenry. Technology can be used to enable local and global connections, intra and interpersonal understanding, and connections with experiences from other times and places.²⁵

The QTU has long held the belief that matters of quality and the equity of students' educational experience should not depend upon the socio-economic status of their parents, where their school is located, or the wealth of the local school community. This long held QTU belief applies to the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in contemporary classrooms. Delivering a high quality, high equity curriculum that realises the potential of digital futures requires increased and sustained investment from the state and Commonwealth governments. ICT provision to students – or lack thereof – should not exacerbate equity gaps between the rich and the poor.²⁶

²⁵ Queensland Teachers Union. (2016). *QTU Position Statement: Information and communications technology*.

<https://www.qtu.asn.au/ps-ict>

²⁶ Ibid.

The QTU recognises that the roll out of “bring your own device” (BYOx) programs in Queensland state schools is leading to increased equity gaps. QTU members report slow rates of uptake of BYOx in low socio-economic areas, while elsewhere QTU members report challenges to quality teaching and learning programs resulting from some learners having the latest technology while other students in the same classroom have devices that are more than five years old. While socio-economic inequities between students are not new to classrooms, the use of devices to access curriculum materials and undertake learning tasks adds complexity to classroom management, as practices such as requesting that students share a textbook are no longer a solution.²⁷

The QTU believes that it is not reasonable for the government or the Department of Education to expect all students to bring their own devices to school. Families who may have difficulty providing even one computer with internet connectivity in the home should not have to endure the indignity of being unable to provide a device for each of their children.²⁸

The QTU believes that government has a responsibility to fully fund the use of ICTs in schools and ensure every Queensland child has equitable access to effective teaching and learning in the classroom. Should current or future enacted curriculum require one-to-one devices, it is the QTU’s position that these devices should be fully funded by government.²⁹

1.2.7 Student uniforms

The QTU recognises the provision set out in chapter 12 of the *EGPA* regarding dress codes,³⁰ and the QTU supports provisions for school communities to set and enforce a student dress code for all students. Dress codes in schools, whether uniform or free dress, should take into account the following issues:

- occupational health and safety
- sun and water safety
- girls’ education policy, specifically the inclusion of a choice of shorts or pants for all girls for both formal and sports uniforms in all year levels from prep-12
- cultural and religious freedoms
- functionality and cost.

School policies should ensure that students are not discriminated against. No student should be denied attendance at school because they cannot afford the student uniform. However, the QTU does not believe the state has an obligation to fund student uniforms.

1.2.8 Sample costs

Sample costs for the items listed in the Bill are set out in Table 1 below. The costs are for items found in the public domain and are examples only. The samples are drawn from a range of primary and secondary school contexts from throughout Queensland. **The QTU recommends that the committee seeks further advice from the Department of Education or Treasury on the impact the Bill will have on the Queensland Budget.** In 2023, 574,489 students are enrolled in Queensland state schools, including 328,632 in primary schools and 245,857 in a secondary school. (<https://qed.qld.gov.au/our-publications/reports/statistics/Documents/enrolments-summary.pdf>)

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)*.

In accordance with Department of Education policy and procedure, state schools and state schooling charge fees or levies. For clarity, the programs mentioned in this submission are examples only. The QTU knows that our members, who are teachers and school leaders, are delivering great opportunities for students and their communities through the examples of programs that are listed.

Table 1 *Sample cost items*

Cost item in Bill	Practical example	Cost	School reference
Sporting programs or events	Enrolment in Keebra Park SHS Rugby League Academy and Girls Sport Academy.	\$150p.a.	School website
	Levy to trial for North Queensland Regional School Sport 16-19 year boys cricket team.	\$11 levy	Region website
	Enrolment in Brisbane State High girls swimming program.	\$135p.a.	School website
Musical, dramatic or other artistic	Levy for participation in Chancellor SC instrumental music program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school-hire instrument • own instrument. 	\$160pa \$100p.a.	School website
Academic challenges or competitions	Queensland Science Contest.	\$5 per individual entry or \$10 per group	Host website
	2023 English Speaking Union Secondary School Public Speaking Competition.	\$20	Host website
	Application fee for Queensland Academies, Health Sciences' <i>Brilliant Futures Gold Coast</i> .	\$250p.a.	Host website
Other education or cultural information or instruction provided by a person other than a staff member of the student's school	Grin N Tonic's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> .	\$8.80 per student (min 155 students)	Grin and tonic website

Cost item in Bill	Practical example	Cost	School reference
School camps	Four night "Hero's Journey" camp at Tallebudgera O&EEC.	\$425.75 per student*	School website
	4 day camp for state schools at Tinaroo Environmental Education Centre's Barron River Campus.	\$247 per student* *plus transport, costs for teachers, and related school cost	School website
Textbooks	Robina State School's student resource scheme for prep	\$270	School website
Stationery	Robina SHS Year 7 mandatory requirements	\$54.70	School website
Personal computing devices	Bundaberg North SHS is a BYOx school, and its webpage links to ACER, HP, and Dell webpages. Acer Aspire 3 15, Windows 11 Home in S Mode, Intel® Processor N4500, 4GB RAM, 128GB SSD.	\$499.00	School website
Student uniform	School Locker provide uniform services for Kirwan SHS. 1 x polo shirt, senior boys shirt, shorts, socks and jacket.	\$213.50	Host website

2.0 Legislative relationships

The QTU appreciates that the Bill proposes amendments to legislation that is enacted by the Queensland Parliament. However, the QTU contends the Bill cannot be read in isolation without consideration of the Commonwealth Government's *Australian Education Act 2013*. The QTU acknowledges that the Bill is admirable in its attempt to address equity by reducing cost of living pressures, but the SRS provisions of the Commonwealth legislation seek to address equity by addressing factors of educational disadvantage. The QTU contends the objective of the SRS is to address factors of educational equity, rather than address cost of living.

2.1. *The Bill and its relationship with the EGPA*

The QTU notes that Bill may require the repeal of a section of the *EGPA*, although the Bill is silent on this matter. For consistency, the Bill may require the repeal or further amendments to the *EGPA*. The recommends that the EETC seeks advice on consistency of the Bill with the following sections of the *EGPA*:

- s51 Power to charge particular persons or for particular educational services
- s52 Fee for distance education provided by a state school
- s55 Charging for specialised educational program
- s56 Voluntary financial contribution.

2.2. *The Bill and its relationship with the Australian Education Act (2013)*

The QTU believes the Commonwealth Government has a significant role to fund education in order to secure a more equitable distribution of resources and educational outcomes. The Commonwealth Government should provide state schools with funds aimed at overcoming disadvantage. This recognises that the Gonski Review established consensus around the definition of disadvantages in education that impact on equity of opportunity for students, including: socio-economic status, English language proficiency, Aboriginal and Torres Strait heritage, disability, school size and location. These definitions inform the funding arrangements in the *Australian Education Act (2013) (Cth)*.

The QTU is gravely concerned that the *Australian Education Act* was amended by the Commonwealth Government in 2017. The amendments cap Commonwealth payments to government schools at 20 per cent of their SRS amount.³¹ The QTU contends there is an urgent need to remove the funding cap.

The QTU contends that the funding priority is for the Queensland Government and Commonwealth Government to meet their funding obligations and ensure every Queensland state school receives 100 per cent of their SRS amount. If these funding obligations are to be met, there is an urgent need for both levels of government to increase education expenditure. The Bill does not advance this urgent need. Rather, the Bill proposes amendments that add costs to the Queensland

³¹ Australian Government. (2017). *Australian Education Act Amendment Bill 2017*.
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2013A00067>

Government Budget. The proposed amendments address cost of living pressures, without addressing equity. The following table compares the Bill with the *Australian Education Act*, specifically how additional funding would be expended.

Table 2: Comparison of funding priorities

<i>Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families with School Costs) Amendment Bill 2023³²</i>	<i>Australian Education Act³³</i>
s56C(2)(a) the individual student resources required for each relevant student.	s35(a) student with disability
s56C(2)(b) an adequate quantity of the required school uniform for the student for each school year the student is enrolled at the school.	s35(b) students who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person
s56C(2)(c) the extracurricular services offered to all relevant students by state schools throughout the school year.	s35(c) socioeconomic status
S56C(2)(d) any other resources necessary to ensure (i) the student's participation in a state school's educational program; and (ii) the academic and extracurricular services offered at state schools are comparable to the services offered at non-state schools.	s35(d) English proficiency
	s35(e) school's location
	s35(f) school's size

2.3. Addressing educational disadvantage in Queensland state schools

The QTU has consistently called for increases in state and federal allocations to government schools, so that both levels of government meet funding obligations. The QTU notes with concern that the Bill could skew additional funding allocations from addressing educational disadvantage towards offsetting cost of living pressures, which is not the purpose of the *Australian Education Act*. Notwithstanding the underfunding of the SRS, which was addressed in the Member for South Brisbane's [explanatory speech](#)³⁴ of the Bill, in Queensland, school leaders and school communities are making decisions about investing SRS, known as Invest for Success. The QTU contends that additional funding is required so that Queensland's state schools can deliver tailored responses that address equity issues. Table 3 below, demonstrates decision making that invests SRS in equity, rather than cost of living. The table includes example only of some of the Invest for Success decisions reported on school websites in 2022. The QTU recognises that in 2022, more than 1,250 school communities made these types of decisions.

³² Queensland Parliament. (2023). *Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families with School Costs) Amendment Bill 2023*. <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tp/2023/5723T1621-6086.pdf>

³³ Australian Government. (2023). *Australian Education Act 2013*. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2013A00067>

³⁴ Queensland Parliament. (2023). *Explanatory Speech: Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families with School Costs) Amendment Bill 2023*. https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/events/han/2023/2023_10_11_WEEKLY.pdf#page=40

Table 3: Examples of school-based IAS decisions, 2022

School	Region	Equity data	SRS allocation	Investment decisions include:
Charters Towers SDE ³⁵	NQ	FTE 2704 ICSEA 962 LBOTE 5% ATSI 21%	\$712,172	Fund GOs to support interventions for at-risk youth, improve mental health, pathways to further learning or labour market.
Dalby SS ³⁶	DDSW	FTE 1015 ICSEA 941 LBOTE 6% ATSI 20%	\$537,031	HOD (personalised learning) to provide intervention for students and two teachers to provide interventions
Innisfail SC ³⁷	FNQ	FTE 989 ICSEA 886 LBOTE 17% ATSI 34%	\$670,193	Teacher aides to support at-risk students, and a DP to support pedagogy
Mountain Creek SS ³⁸	NCR	FTE 2178 ICSEA 1044 LBOTE 10% ATSI 4%	\$526,273	Support literacy/numeracy, attendance and wellbeing
Nerang SS ³⁹	SER	FTE 253 ICSEA 951 LBOTE 19% ATSI 17%	\$142,542	Speech language therapist and staff capacity building
Nursery Road Special School ⁴⁰	Metro	FTE 157 ICSEA 1037 LBOTE 29% ATSI 6%	\$76,333	T/A support to increase engagement with the Australian Curriculum
Park Avenue SS ⁴¹	CQ	FTE 163 ICSEA 928 LBOTE 5% ATSI 29%	\$117,377	Inquiry cycle process to improve teaching in learning in English

³⁵ My School. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/47626>

³⁶ My School. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/46414>

³⁷ My School. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/40838>

³⁸ My School. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/47406>

³⁹ My School. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/46565>

⁴⁰ My School. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/47617>

⁴¹ My School. <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/46977>

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 The QTU recommends that the Queensland Government must ensure that all state schools in Queensland receive a minimum of 100 per cent of the schooling resource standard (SRS).
- 3.2 The QTU recommends that the Queensland Government joins calls for the Commonwealth Government to remove the 20 per cent funding cap on SRS payments to state schools.
- 3.3 The QTU recommends that the EETC calls on the Department of Education to produce a workload impact statement (WIS) on measures contained in the Bill, and that this become a public document.
- 3.4 The QTU recommends that the EETC calls on the Department of Education to prepare modelling on the budget impact of the proposal for the state to meet costs associated with extracurricular activities.
- 3.5 The QTU recommends that the committee seek further advice from the Department of Education or Treasury on the impact the Bill will have on the Queensland Budget.