

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submission on behalf of the QTU members at Kingaroy State High School re: Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

The following submission was developed and approved at a QTU member workplace meeting at Kingaroy State High School on 21 March 2024.

Short term suspension appeal.

The meeting rejected the proposal for parents to be able to appeal a short-term suspension (1-10 days) if it means a child will be suspended through cumulative short-term suspensions for 11 or more school days in a calendar year.

Supporting arguments:

- Currently members in schools are concerned about the pressure not to suspend, although a suspension is appropriate. The amendment would increase this pressure.
- The amendment would be advancing some individual rights at the expense of the rights of the other students to learn in a safe environment and the right to a safe and supportive workplace.
- Further undermines perceptions of the state school sector. The state school sector being considered inferior to the private school sector in its response to behaviour issues.
- Alternatives to suspension are unavailable or unsupported especially away from major centres.
- The amendment would undermine the Student Code of Conduct that each school is required to develop as it would hinder implementation and enforcement of the code.
- Appeals process is likely to be time consuming and deplete resources better used for supporting students.
- Potential for inequitable treatment of students with parents who have social and cultural capital to submit appeal vs those who don't.
- Creates a new pathway for vexatious parents. Vexatious complaint numbers are increasing.
- Students swapping schools during a calendar year is common. Different schools and different contexts raise issues with the fact that suspensions from the previous school will count towards the 11 day total.
- To cut absences schools are being made more accountable, but Section 176 of the current act is not being enforced, other parties are also accountable for student absences.


Student support plans (SSPs)

The meeting also rejected the proposed amendment for policy to provide for the making of student support plans (SSPs) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability or preparatory age students who have been suspended or are at risk of exclusion.

Supporting arguments:

- Significant workload increase for school leaders, HOSES and teachers.

- Existing support plans are proactive and adaptive, this is a reactive strategy being added on that probably adds little significant benefit. SWD already have personalised learning plans in place – duplication of workload for teachers.
- Previous initiatives have been implemented without additional resourcing provided to upskill stakeholders in the creation of these plans. Time and training are needed.
- “The SSPs will allow focused strategies and support for these students and involve parents / guardians to help identify any needs or complexities contributing to the behaviour that may not otherwise be known by the school or appropriately supported.” - Without additional resourcing schools can only provide reasonable support, currently many needs and complexities are not “appropriately” supported.
- While SWD and ATSI are overrepresented in data, this is an oversimplification.
 - Students in these two groups who also get suspended often have additional complexities.
 - These complexities are often outside of school’s ability to ameliorate.
- The responsibility of parents/student to improve behaviour is absent, plans that are breached without consequence are of limited value.
- Regional/external stakeholder involvement necessary for cases with more complex needs is already difficult to achieve and will become in more demand.


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