

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by: Queensland Teacher's Union Members of Sandy Strait State School
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RE: EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

SANDY STRAIT STATE SCHOOL

Opposed to and request edits to the proposed Bill.

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PLEASE CONSIDER THE NEGATIVE IMPACT THE BILL AMENDMENTS WILL HAVE NOT ONLY ON TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS, BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES WHO VALUE THEIR EDUCATION.

Queensland is in the midst of a teacher shortage like it has never experienced, mostly due to attraction, retention, workload and being under paid. The Amendment Bill to the Education (General Provisions Act) 2006 that was introduced to Queensland Parliament, by Senator Di Farmer on the 6th of March, will only create a greater divide between the Queensland Government and an already flailing teaching workforce.

The following feedback is provided in earnest and is done so through rigorous consultation with staff within our school. It comes from the "boots on the ground" people who see what works and what really is needed in education to ensure 'Equity and Excellence' for ALL of our students and their families.

- contribute to the good order and management of Queensland state schools by:
 - improving procedural fairness for decision-making processes for school disciplinary absences

The decision to suspend a student is not made lightly by a principal. In doing so, they weigh up many factors that include not just those of the child who is facing suspension, but the physical and mental health of the other learners and staff delivering the programs. Suspension is often viewed as a negative outcome for a child, though through expected support of parents / carers the outcome can be that of positive change. However, where suspension may fall short is when families / carers are averse to a decision and some work to enable them to see that a suspension is necessary and warranted is undertaken.

In educating students, we are setting them up for life, including that beyond the classroom. In doing so, it is necessary for students to understand there are consequences for actions, and some consequences may require removal from the education site. Queensland is currently

suffering a youth crime crisis, with overall youth crime up 37% and car theft up 117% in 3 years. Schools should be very clear in standards and expectations and what we put into place can influence a child's understanding of what is accepted and not. If we do not have very clear, concise expectations regarding behaviour and the consequences that follow we are effectively setting them up for failure.

Students who are exposed to unacceptable behaviour, who are trying to access a quality education, are often affected adversely as their education is interrupted and they witness situations in which they should not have to leading to localised school trauma. In addition, it is vitally important that consideration is made regarding the support offered to staff who have had to endure these extreme behaviours, as well as stipulate any recourse staff can undertake for unwarranted and unfounded allegations against them.

"Procedural fairness" will not construct change. "Procedural fairness" will not provide the support that our staff and administrators need. "Procedural fairness" will not address the high end needs of students facing suspension. Instead of "procedural fairness" ask what do we need to do to address the root of the problems – SUPPORT and FUNDING. This is done through funding human resources (targeted support staff in schools that only address behaviour), alternate programs or schools that target needs / wants, parent or carer education and a focus driven by consistency rather than an 'optics over ethics' approach.

It is simple, if the government decides to continue with an amendment that clearly restricts schools in their ability act according to student behaviour, they MUST be willing to exponentially increase their funding to EVERY school to ensure appropriate to support for students, both those who need behaviour support and those effected by the behaviours, staff and families.

- o introducing a new appeal right for accumulated short suspensions

Principals need autonomy to make decisions that are in the best interest of the entire school and community. As stated previously, many factors come in to play when a decision to enforce a short suspension and the decision is not taken lightly. Principals are appointed to their positions to make the "tough choices / decisions" and in doing so they frequently come under the spotlight for them. Principals have been appointed to do this exact job, if they cannot and their professional decision-making autonomy is completely removed then what is the point of someone heading a school. The right for a student and or parent to appeal a short suspension is not required and would open up the opportunity for abuse of the right to appeal, not to mention the unnecessary workload and cost to all involved. To allow this, is to belittle the education system, it's processes and the principals professionalism and judgment.

- o introducing student support plans

Support plans are in place in schools, however explicitly forcing them upon certain groups of individuals who may not require one is ludicrous. For example, a First Nations student who is achieving above average at school and is from a middle-income home is put on to a support plan to ensure they do not fall behind and / or so the Queensland Government can collect

data as a pure compliance task to show the world we are 'closing the gap'. Whereas, one of his / her contemporaries who is from a white, middle-income family without a disability is struggling they are not entitled to the same recognition in their own Education Act. The Education Act is FOR ALL, education is for ALL and as teachers we are here for EVERYONE. By discriminating against any group is exactly that discrimination. The Education Act should simply state that ANY STUDENT WHO A SCHOOL DEEMS NECESSARY TO ACCESS A SUPPORT PLAN WILL HAVE ACCESS TO ONE.

The Queensland Government also needs to address the validity and threshold of identification if this amendment were to move forward. At the moment, any family can tick a box on an enrolment form identifying their child as a First Nations person without any credentials or validation. Without this being appropriately addressed the support of these students can become ingenuous. Students who have a disability have to be verified, why is it not the same for First Nations students?

- modernise and improve education services by:
 - removing the use of gendered language

Gendered language has its place in Education. Education is founded on science, as is the sex of students. Most students and their families want their children referred to as the gender they identify as, whether that be by birth or choice. Non-binary identification also has its place and should be used. Gender identification, male / female / non-binary is poignant for both students and staff and should be used accordingly. However, removing his / her from the Education Act is completely unnecessary and harmful to the wider community.

- acknowledging wellbeing, inclusion and diversity

Wellbeing, diversity and inclusion is the core business of every school and acknowledging this in the Education Act is vital. However, putting into policy brings with it substantial funding. Schools cannot continue to evolve and grow without the necessary funding to support successful implementation and continuation of programs. The Queensland Government MUST commit, in real dollar amounts, funding that will be provided to schools to ensure EVERY STUDENT is supported appropriately as part of the amendment.

Lead by: MASON, Wendy - QTU rep, teacher and voter

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