

## Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 1230  
**Submitted by:** QTU Members of Yarraman State School  
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**Attachments:** See attachment  
**Submitter Comments:**

## **YARRAMAN STATE SCHOOL QTU MEMBER SUBMISSION:**

### **PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) ACT 2006**

The QTU members of Yarraman State School have expressed a range of concerns about the proposed amendments to the Education (General Provisions Act) 2006, namely:

- Clause 79 ss 285, 286 – Submission against suspension
- Clause 94 Insertion of new ch 12, pt 3, div 8A 321 Policy about student support plans

#### *Submission Against Suspension:*

The members of Yarraman State School reject the proposed amendment. The reasons are as follows:

- Currently, there exists significant pressure to find alternatives to suspension placed on school leaders
  - There is no additional resourcing being provided to schools to support these alternatives
  - The proposed amendment would only increase this pressure not to suspend students
- The amendment favours the rights of students who have caused harm to members of the school community (staff and students) over and above the rights of those harmed to learn and work in a safe environment
- There will be a significant increase to the workload of school leaders as a result of preparing for appeals
  - Appeals could come in at any time and require school leaders to prepare lengthy documents in support of their decision
  - It will require school leaders to prioritise appeals over and above other emergent issues to maintain the trust of the community in the integrity of their decision-making
  - There is no indication that schools will be provided additional resources to support the preparation of a response to an appeal
- Suspensions issued by a previous school count towards the 11 day total, meaning that decisions made by school leaders in an entirely different context, with entirely different resources, will negatively impact the capacity of other school leaders to make decisions in the best interest of their school communities
- The people considering appeals have no knowledge of the local context of individual schools, and are making decisions with no understanding of the impact of the behaviour on the school community
  - OneSchool records and other documentation are often objective statements which cannot convey the impact on wellbeing or safety
- The amendment proposed undermines trust in the decision-making of school leaders, suggesting that they suspend unnecessarily

- This is absolutely not the case – suspension is always the last resort for school leaders who make difficult decisions about balancing the right of students to access an education with the right of other students and staff to learn without being harmed
- The proposal appears to be to support maximising learning days, however, the relevant authorities are not prioritising the Enforcement of Attendance, or Section 176 of the current Act

*Policy about Student Support Plans:*

The members at Yarraman State School also reject the proposal to implement Student Support Plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Students with Disability and Prep students who are suspended. The reasons are detailed below:

- Student Support Plans represent a significant workload increase for Heads of Special Education, school leaders and ultimately the teachers who are required to implement them
  - The requirements to develop these plans in consultation with parents requires meetings, and the requirement to regularly review these plans is a workload impost at a time when school leaders are working on average 55 hours per week
  - There is a workload increase for the teachers who ultimately have to read and implement these plans
- Many of the issues resulting in suspension are far beyond the capability of schools to address
  - Students are often on months long waiting lists for paediatricians
  - Students exhibiting the kinds of behaviours that require suspension as a consequence are often in need to therapeutic support through mental health professionals, or come from families that require significant intervention from outside agencies
  - Schools cannot adequately provide this level of intervention without a significant investment of resources – there is no indication in the current proposal that the required resources will be provided to schools
- These plans place a significant level of accountability on school staff, but there appears to be no accountability for students or parents to accept referrals or engage in recommended interventions or supports
- Schools already enact a wide variety of interventions and supports, including Functional Behaviour Assessments, Individual Behaviour Support Plans, Crisis/Escalation Plans, Behaviour Risk Assessments, Discipline Improvement Plans and a host of other context specific plans and interventions
  - Schools also have robust processes to match interventions to the needs of the student
  - These are simply duplicating existing workload
  - What will these new plans accomplish that the plans listed above cannot?

- There is no evidence of additional resourcing being provided to schools to successfully implement these proposed plans
  - Without additional resourcing, the likelihood of successful implementation of these plans is limited

The members of Yarraman State School reject the proposed changes. They seek amendments that address the needs of school communities, support teachers, students and parents, and provide the resources necessary for schools to reduce behaviours leading to suspension, rather than simply making it functionally impossible for school leaders to make the decisions necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their entire school community.



Caine Wager, QTU Representative

On behalf of the QTU members of Yarraman State School