

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

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# Submission to Committee Inquiry on Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

*Presented by: Michelle Jensen*

## Introduction

As a passionate advocate for inclusive education and a mother deeply invested in the well-being of my son, [REDACTED], I am compelled to voice my unequivocal support for the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. As a dedicated primary school teacher with two decades of experience, my commitment to ensuring every child receives a quality education is unwavering. However, my journey as an educator takes on an added dimension of urgency and purpose as I navigate the challenges faced by [REDACTED], my eldest child, who has an additional challenge having a rare genetic condition.

[REDACTED] educational journey has been characterised by resilience and determination in the face of adversity. Born with a microdeletion on the 6th Chromosome, [REDACTED] physical challenges and speech communication disorder have presented as potential hurdles for schools and teachers. Yet, his intellect shines as bright as ever, a testament to his unwavering spirit and the boundless potential within him. As a mother of four boys, [REDACTED] holds a special place in my heart, motivating me to advocate tirelessly for his right to a quality education, free from discrimination and neglect.

## General Position

It is imperative: non-government schools must be governed by the same laws as state schools in Queensland. This isn't merely about fairness; it's about ensuring every child has equal access to education and protection under the law. The current discrepancy in governance not only breeds discrimination and neglect but also enables the abuse of power within unregulated hierarchical structures. This leaves vulnerable students like my son [REDACTED] at risk, subjected to unjust treatment and denied their fundamental rights within educational institutions.

## Issues at Hand

- 1. Disparate Governance:** The current system of governance allows non-government schools to operate with a concerning level of autonomy, leading to inconsistencies in accountability and protection of students' rights. This disparity perpetuates a culture where vulnerable students, such as those with disabilities, are left vulnerable to discrimination and neglect.

Personal Experience: When advocating for [REDACTED] rights within non-government schools, my family encountered resistance and victimisation. Our legitimate concerns were dismissed, and [REDACTED] enrolment was unjustly cancelled. This experience highlights the urgent need for uniform legislation to ensure equal protection and opportunities for all students.

- 2. Victimization and Discrimination:** Parents advocating for their children's rights within non-government schools often face victimisation and resistance from school authorities. This adversarial climate obstructs efforts to secure necessary accommodations and support, perpetuating discrimination against students with disabilities and their families.

Personal Experience: Despite our efforts to ensure [REDACTED] educational rights were upheld, we faced intimidation and silencing tactics from the school administration. Our advocacy efforts were met with hostility, leaving us feeling powerless and marginalised. This is not an isolated incident but a systemic issue that must be addressed through legislative reform.

- 3. Inequitable Treatment:** The absence of uniform legislation enables non-government schools to operate with impunity, resulting in inequitable treatment and exclusion of students based on disability. This systemic flaw undermines the fundamental principle of equal access to education and perpetuates discrimination within the education system.

## Recommendations

- 1. Mandatory Uniform Legislation:** Amend the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation to mandate uniform governance standards across all educational institutions. This includes holding non-government schools accountable to the same regulations as their state counterparts, ensuring equal protection and opportunities for all students.
- 2. Robust Enforcement Mechanisms:** Implement rigorous enforcement mechanisms to monitor compliance with educational legislation. Regular audits, reporting mechanisms, and consequences for violations are essential to ensure accountability and prevent discrimination within the education system.
- 3. Education and Advocacy:** Provide comprehensive education and advocacy resources to empower parents, caregivers, and educators in navigating the complexities of educational legislation. Equipped with knowledge and support, stakeholders can effectively advocate for the rights of students with disabilities and foster a culture of inclusion within educational environments.

## Conclusion

The Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 represents a critical opportunity to address systemic inequalities within our education system. By mandating uniform legislation and fostering a culture of accountability and inclusivity, we can ensure that every child, including those with disabilities, receives the quality education they deserve. It is time to level the playing field and hold all educational institutions accountable for the well-being and educational outcomes of their students. Let us not falter in our duty to create a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape for all.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Sincerely,

Michelle Jensen