



# ***EDUCATION AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Mrs RN Menkens MP (Chair)  
Mr SA Bennett MP  
Mr MA Boothman MP  
Mr RG Hopper MP  
Mr MR Latter MP  
Mrs DC Scott MP  
Mr NA Symes MP

**Staff present:**

Ms B Watson (Research Director)

## **PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION (STRENGTHENING DISCIPLINE IN STATE SCHOOLS) AMENDMENT BILL 2013**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2013**

**Brisbane**

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### **Committee met at 9.34 am**

**CHAIR:** Good morning and welcome to this briefing relating to the policy and procedures which will support the Education (Strengthening Discipline in State Schools) Amendment Bill 2013 when that bill is passed. Thank you all very much for your interest in the committee's inquiry and thank you to those departmental representatives who are here today. We really do appreciate it.

Before we start, I ask that mobile phones be switched off or set to silent. Members of the media who might be recording proceedings are asked to adhere to the committee's media guidelines. Secretariat staff can provide a copy of those guidelines should they require them. This briefing is being broadcast via the Queensland parliament's website and recorded and transcribed by Hansard. That transcript will be published on the committee's web page in due course. The video footage will be available there until it is superseded by footage from a future telecast briefing or hearing. I now declare this hearing open.

I am Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin and chair of this committee. With me today are Mr Ray Hopper, the member for Condamine; Mr Steve Bennett, the member for Burnett; Mr Michael Latter, the member for Waterford; Mr Neil Symes, the member for Lytton; and Mr Mark Boothman, the member for Albert. Next to me is Bernice Watson, our research director. We will welcome back the deputy chairman, Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge, very shortly.

**MULLINS, Ms Sharon, Executive Director, State Schooling Operations and Strategy,  
Department of Education, Training and Employment**

**SMITH, Ms Jean, Principal Adviser, State Schooling Operations and Strategy,  
Department of Education, Training and Employment**

**STREATFEILD, Mr Brian, Assistant Regional Director, South-East Region,  
Department of Education, Employment and Training**

**CHAIR:** On 20 August 2013 the Queensland parliament referred the Education (Strengthening Discipline in State Schools) Amendment Bill 2013 to this committee for examination. The committee has considered the bill, including evidence provided by submitters to the inquiry, and on 9 October reported back to the parliament about the policy intent to be achieved by the bill and the application of fundamental legislative principles.

Under the bill, much of the more detailed content of the current legislation relating to student discipline would be removed from legislation and addressed through departmental policy and procedures. Some of the matters raised by the committee during its inquiry into the bill and by those who made submissions to the committee's inquiry are likely, as we understand it, to be at the level of detail which would be addressed in the new policy and procedures. Given that the parliament does not have scrutiny of department policy and procedures, as opposed to its current scrutiny through legislation, the committee is keen to see those policies and procedures prior to their implementation. The department has advised us that it was happy to oblige on that count, and we do thank the department for that because there was a lot of interest in the actual background on the policy and procedures attached to this bill that has created a lot of interest in the community.

It is timely that this briefing occurs just prior to the debate of the bill in the House which I believe is set down for tomorrow. It provides an excellent opportunity for the work of the committee to support the parliament in making laws through allowing a level of examination that cannot readily occur at the Legislative Assembly level.

This briefing is a formal process of the parliament and parliamentary privilege applies to all evidence presented. Any person intentionally misleading the committee is committing a serious offence. Although this briefing is public, you are able to request through me as chair that any material or information you provide be kept private, and you can object to any particular questions. You might also wish to take questions on notice if you do not have that information at hand.

The Code of Practice for Public Service Employees Assisting or Appearing Before Parliamentary Committees is contained in schedule 8 to the parliament's standing orders, Instructions to Committees Regarding Witnesses. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask all of those of you who speak to state your name the first time you speak. I will now hand over to Ms Sharon Mullins to get us started.

**Ms Mullins:** Thank you, Chair. I seek permission to table the procedure and the statement of expectations.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted? Thank you.

**Ms Mullins:** You have the statement of expectations, which is on the web, and the procedure, which is undergoing final drafting. But it is a final draft is not likely to change.

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee on the current status of the draft policy and procedures which will support the Education (Strengthening Discipline in State Schools) Amendment Bill 2013. I propose to provide the committee with a brief outline of the department's policies and procedures which support the bill; namely, the department's Statement of Expectations for a Disciplined School Environment, which is in the pack, and the Safe, Supportive and Disciplined School Environment procedure.

The department acknowledges the role discipline plays in a high-quality education system and in providing students with a safe, supportive and focused place to learn. Firstly, I am going to talk about the department's policy, the Statement of Expectations for a Disciplined School Environment. This document is the department's policy around discipline in state schools. It was released in May and is available on the department's website.

Recent research supports the fact that by consistently implementing an evidence based, whole-school, positive approach to behaviour social behaviour and student performance can be improved. Better behaviour equals better learning. An example of schools putting this expectation into action is that currently 34 per cent of state schools are using one such evidence based framework, Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support. Research also indicates that, in addition to schools taking a positive approach, the positive impact of parents and the community working together with the school and developing shared expectations is an important aspect of strong discipline in schools. Effective school leadership, quality teaching and an engaging curriculum are important factors in creating a safe and disciplined environment.

The department's policies and procedures emphasise the importance of the school community in a whole-school approach and promote a collaborative and consultative approach to student behaviour management. The Statement of Expectations for a Disciplined School Environment draws on five key elements from the research: principal leadership; parent and community engagement; data informed decision making; clear, consistent expectations of behaviour; and explicit teaching of appropriate behaviour to all students.

The approach used is prevention based in that the goal is to teach important social skills, prevent the development of new problem behaviours and reduce the intensity and frequency of existing problem behaviours. The Statement of Expectations for a Disciplined School Environment sets out those expectations and sets out the expectations that state schools develop a school-wide behaviour plan. It is called a Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students. That is developed collaboratively with the school community. The Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students describes the school's whole-school, evidence based approach to promoting positive behaviour and maintaining teaching and learning environments that support learning and wellbeing for students. The development and implementation and the evaluation of the Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students considers and adapts to the unique cultural and contextual characteristics of the school students, families, staff and community members.

In a nutshell, I have just described what we call a positive approach to developing a behaviour plan for students explicitly teaching correct behaviour to students outlining the consequences for behaviour. For most of you, that would reflect your common-sense knowledge of what it is to promote a disciplined environment. This is done in close collaboration with the parent community and reflects the parent and school community and their values and expectations.

Schools are expected to detail in the Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students how they meet the expectations outlined in the five core elements. An example of the type of expectations is that, under principal leadership, principals are expected to demonstrate visible and active support of a positive, whole-school approach to managing behaviour. In a school that is managing behaviour well, you would see the principal and the school leadership team driving an explicit, detailed and

positive approach to managing behaviour in consultation with the broader community. High standards of behaviour would be set and there would be clear expectations of student attendance, engagement, behaviour and outcomes. This approach would be widely communicated, well understood and rigorously actioned.

The department has recently developed a discipline audit tool based on the statement of expectations. It is similar to the teaching and learning audit tool, which has been very successful. Every state school will receive a discipline audit between July 2013 and November 2014 from an experienced, well respected principal. The discipline audits have been designed to assist schools to benchmark their progress in strengthening discipline and to provide an independent view of where they could further strengthen their approach to discipline.

Now I will talk about the department's procedures for applying disciplinary consequences. These are draft procedures and will be published once the bill is passed. The procedures support schools to create and maintain a safe environment conducive to learning and to enact the legislation. The procedure was developed in consultation with the principals' reference group and stakeholders. The revised procedure aligns with the proposed legislative amendments, and it provides guidance to principals regarding the processes they are to follow when implementing any disciplinary strategy or consequence. They outline behaviour management strategies such as discipline improvement plans and community service interventions and disciplinary consequences including suspension, exclusion or cancellation of enrolment of a student.

The disciplinary consequences procedures confirm the principal's authority in relation to school discipline and empower them to make decisions about how to run their school. The procedures outline the principal's responsibilities such as: developing the responsible behaviour plan that I referred to previously with the school community; making and authorising disciplinary decisions; assessing risks regarding disciplinary consequences; and documenting disciplinary consequences. In applying a disciplinary consequence the principal is required to assess the behaviour and the level of risk, take into account a student's individual circumstances such as disability or care arrangements and consider if another disciplinary consequence or strategy would be more appropriate before making any decision. Detentions, discipline improvement plans and community service interventions are optional strategies. They may be applied to prevent the escalation of inappropriate behaviour or as a last resort and are an alternative to suspension or exclusion.

The disciplinary consequences procedures enable principals to determine the school's processes relating to detention. The bill removes current prescription and restrictions around the provision of detentions and will provide principals with greater flexibility to exercise their discretion as to when to apply detention. The procedure requires principals to make decisions about how detentions will be applied in their school, taking into consideration the behaviour of the student, the age of the student and the other circumstances that surround the student's context. If a detention is to be applied out of school hours, the principal is required to arrange for an appropriate school based employee to supervise the detention and to consult with the student's parent about a suitable day and time for the detention to be completed within any parameters set by the school. The principal is required to notify the student and their parent of the school's detention procedure, including the responsibilities of the student, parent and school in relation to supervision arrangements and the start and finish times of the detention.

A principal can develop a discipline improvement plan in consultation with a student and their parent. A discipline improvement plan is a written agreement that sets out the expectations for behaviour, the consequences of not meeting the expectations and strategies to support the improvement of a student's behaviour.

A principal may decide that a community service intervention is a useful strategy for dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Community service interventions must take place outside of school hours so that they do not interrupt a student's learning program. For a community service intervention where the student is under the direct supervision of a school based staff member, the principal will conduct a risk assessment, develop a risk management plan and ensure activities occur either on school grounds or as a part of a school activity, for example, a school working bee. Principals are required to arrange appropriate supervision of the participating student by a school based employee and obtain written consent from the student's parent prior to their participation. Community service interventions with a host organisation may be undertaken by students over 14 years of age. Prior to the student's participation the principal will follow the requirements of the Workplace Experience Placements for School Students procedure. Insurance has been arranged for students participating in these activities.

Noncompliance with the conditions of a detention, community service intervention or a discipline improvement plan by the student is not a ground for suspension, exclusion or cancellation of enrolment; however, the original behaviour to which the disciplinary consequence was applied may be a reason for suspension, exclusion or cancellation of enrolment.

Suspensions, exclusions and cancellations of enrolment will all be managed through the department's student and school management system OneSchool. OneSchool will walk the principals through the legislation and the department's procedures. The procedures for disciplinary consequences closely mirror the bill. Care has been taken not to add further unnecessary red tape and administrative burden which was removed by the bill. The department trusts school principals to make good decisions about all of the students' circumstances, including disciplinary consequences.

In applying a suspension, a principal will consider whether the behaviour constitutes a ground for discipline. To ensure procedural fairness, the principal will give the student and the parent the opportunity to consider the relevant evidence and discuss and respond to the allegations if they choose. Once the principal has made a decision, they will verbally notify the student and the parent of the decision, the date the suspension will commence and give a decision notice to the student and the parent advising them of their decision. If the student is suspended, the principal will take reasonable steps to arrange for the student to access an educational program to allow the student to continue with their education whilst they are suspended.

As a result of the bill's inclusion of additional grounds for suspension, a principal may now suspend a student in certain circumstances for charge related grounds. The process for charge related suspensions is the same as for other suspensions; however, as soon as the charge is dealt with, the principal must decide to propose the exclusion of the student and move directly to the proposal to exclude process, or decide not to propose to exclude the student. The principal must inform the student and the parent of this decision.

Consistent with the amended legislation, a principal may consider exclusion only if suspension is inadequate to deal with the behaviour or the risk. A student can either be excluded for a period of up to 12 months or permanently. If the principal determines exclusion is the most appropriate disciplinary consequence in the circumstances, they are required to give the student and the parent the opportunity to consider the relevant evidence and discuss and respond to the allegations if they choose to do so. The principal must verbally notify the student and the parent of the decision to suspend with the proposal to exclude and give a written notice to the student and the parent. The principal is required to ensure a regional case manager is allocated and must take reasonable steps to arrange for the student to access an educational program whilst suspended. Within 20 days the principal must decide whether to exclude or not exclude the student and give the student the proposed exclusion notice. The principal must provide the student with details about their right to make a submission against the decision. Where a student's behaviour constitutes a ground for exclusion, the director-general may consider whether the student should be excluded from certain state schools or from all state schools. The processes for exclusions of this type are for the most part the same; however, the director-general will determine whether to exclude or not exclude the student within 30 days of giving the student the proposed exclusion notice.

Before cancelling a student's enrolment, the principal must consider if the behaviour of the student who is older than compulsory school age amounts to a refusal to participate in the educational program at the school. 'Compulsory school age' refers to a student who is at least six years and six months and less than 16 years of age; however, a child is no longer of compulsory school age if the child has completed year 10. The principal may choose to verbally warn the student of the refusal to participate, the school's expectations for participation and allow the student a reasonable opportunity to meet the school's expectations. While this is no longer required under the legislation, it represents good practice and it was recommended by the principals' reference group to retain this as an option for principals. The principal also has the option to provide the student and the parent with a written warning notice. The principal is required to consider the evidence and make a decision about whether to cancel the student's enrolment if the student continues to refuse to participate. They must verbally inform the student and the parent if the student is less than 18 years of age of their decision as soon as practicable and provide a decision notice advising the student and the parent of their decision. They must also advise them of the student's right to make a submission against the decision.

The disciplinary consequences procedure outlines how the department will respond if the student, their parent or another person nominated by the student makes a submission to the principal or the director-general. The principal is required to respond to any request from the director-general or delegate for further information. The disciplinary consequences procedures

reflect the government's direction in Great Teachers = Great Results to give principals greater autonomy and flexibility to work with the school community to strengthen discipline in ways which reflect the community's expectations.

The department has carefully managed the tension between providing sufficient information and advice to principals to enable them to enact the legislation, whilst at the same time cutting red tape and removing unnecessary administrative burden. The principals' reference group and the key stakeholders played a crucial role in advising the department in this area. The procedure also ensures that procedural fairness is paramount and the rights of students are protected. The department has also developed operational guidelines to support principals to enact the new disciplinary strategies and it provides fact sheets for students, parents and school staff. The department will communicate the changes to principals, students, parents and the wider community in a variety of ways, including email alerts, departmental newsletters, departmental websites, principals association newsletters, P&C Queensland newsletters and education publications. Training is also going to be made available for principals and school staff on the reforms. Changes in legislation, policy and procedures and changes made to OneSchool to meet the new requirements will be part of this training. The department will also provide training for principals on good decision-making based on the Queensland Ombudsman's *Good Decision-Making Guide*. The suite of the resources developed by the department is designed to provide enough information and guidance to support principals and school staff to enable the successful implementation of the new reforms.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for that, Ms Mullins. Firstly, could you please note that the draft documents that you have provided will be published on the committee's web page unless you request otherwise. Please advise if you do want to make any request.

**Ms Mullins:** We would make a request for a week's leave of grace to put the procedures up pending the passage of the bill and finalisation by the director-general. Is that appropriate?

**CHAIR:** We do appreciate that what you have given us are actually draft notifications. Do the committee agree to at least a week's grace? Yes, thank you. We do appreciate that they are draft documents.

**Ms Mullins:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** In our report we did put in quite a few recommendations and some of those you have certainly responded to and answered. The very last one, recommendation 8, where we recommended that the department actively communicates changes to policy and procedures documentation through email notification and newsletters, you did address in quite some length. I thank you for that. It has definitely thrown a lot more information into the actual bill. I find this extremely interesting. I will now turn to questions from the committee members.

**Mr HOPPER:** You said that every state school would be audited by principals, is that right?

**Ms Mullins:** Yes.

**Mr HOPPER:** Could you explain that a bit more? That is a fair bit of work to do.

**Ms Mullins:** Yes.

**Mr HOPPER:** What principals will be doing this?

**Ms Mullins:** Principals are selected. For the last 18 months or so there have been teaching and learning audits.

**Mr Streatfeild:** For four years.

**Ms Mullins:** For four years now.

**Mr Streatfeild:** In 2010 the teaching and learning audits started.

**Ms Mullins:** Yes.

**Mr Streatfeild:** So each year we have a group of principals who are selected and taken off line for that period of conducting those audits. They go through a recruitment and selection process. They are identified as being high-performing principals through their school performance data. Likewise in regards to those who have been taken off line for the discipline audits. They have been recognised in their school data and the work that they have undertaken for their expertise in that area and they can produce outcomes and so they are the principals. They have the credibility and respect of their peers because that is the case, yes.

**Ms Mullins:** That model of the teaching and learning audits, because it has been highly successful and well received by principals, the discipline audits are based on that model. So, as Brian said, a team of well-respected, high-performing principals are now conducting discipline audits aligned with the statement of expectations which we have tabled.

**Mr HOPPER:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** You mentioned a regional case manager would manage the discipline outcomes and where there are suspensions et cetera. Can you tell us more about a regional case manager?

**Ms Mullins:** In each region a qualified teacher is a regional case manager or a guidance officer. An officer with professional expertise manages the student, provides the student with counselling on what their educational options may be if they are excluded, supports the student to make transition to an alternative school and provides the student with holistic support. It is the same holistic support that every school student is provided with whilst at school: access to a guidance officer, access to a youth support coordinator and ensuring that the student has educational activities to engage in.

**CHAIR:** But some of our regions are huge. I come from North Queensland and they are huge regions. Do you say that there would only be one case manager?

**Ms Mullins:** No, there will be a case manager appointed from a suite of available staff.

**Mr Streatfeild:** In our region we have 10 senior guidance officers who act as case managers.

**CHAIR:** They would have to be placed in geographical areas particularly in the large regions.

**Mr Streatfeild:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** You are south-east region, which would encompass—

**Mr Streatfeild:** From the border up to Redlands and Logan and out to Scenic Rim.

**CHAIR:** That answers my question, thank you. Any other questions?

**Mr SYMES:** I have two questions around supervision of students out of school hours. What happens if a student does not turn up for out-of-school-hours detention for whatever reason, be it valid or not?

**Mr Streatfeild:** Well, that is dealt with at a school level within their responsible behaviour plan. They will have procedures in their responsible behaviour plan about how that is dealt with; a practice that is consistent across the school. As you have seen in the procedures, not turning up is not a grounds for suspension or exclusion or cancellation. But typically what I would have done as a principal in that circumstance is investigate what is the reason behind it. Often there can be family catastrophes that have occurred and things happen which means that you need to provide another opportunity for the student to show that they are willing to participate in what you are trying to provide for them as a way back. Then again, if they do not want to participate at that level with it you go back to the original circumstance that caused the issue and see what other consequences may be applied that are required to reinforce with the student that what has happened is not acceptable.

**Mr SYMES:** My follow-up question is do the policy and procedures specify that parents must be advised in advance before the proposed detentions out of school hours?

**Ms Mullins:** Yes, they do.

**CHAIR:** I was a little confused when you discussed the behaviour of students who are older than the compulsory school age when it comes to cancellation of enrolment and then you mentioned a student who has completed year 10. Does that become a basic level of achievement or acknowledged level of achievement?

**Ms Mullins:** The cancellation of enrolment is designed around the compulsory schooling age and the compulsory participation phase. It is compulsory for students to attend school until they turn 16 or complete year 10, whichever comes first, and then they enter the compulsory participation phase where it is compulsory for students to participate in schooling, employment or training for a minimum 20 hours a week. The cancellation of enrolment applies to the compulsory participation phase—that is, students who are 16 and older or who have completed year 10. A cancellation of enrolment is related to a refusal to participate. It is based on the notion that you can, if you like, bring a horse to water but you cannot make them drink. If you have a student who is in school and refusing to participate then the principal has the right to cancel their enrolment because they are actually not participating and it is the compulsory participation phase.

**CHAIR:** So if they have completed year 10 by age 15, but decide to be totally obnoxious they can be excluded?

**Ms Mullins:** Totally obnoxious might be a suspension or exclusion. Refusing to participate means not attending school and probably being totally obnoxious in thought, deed and manner.

**CHAIR:** I apologise for the description.

**Ms Mullins:** You are speaking the language that is spoken.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Just by way of clarification, when a student has charges against them, they are then put on suspension, an education pathway, be it in a flexi school or distance ed or whatever is appropriate, until those charges are heard and there is an outcome from that.

**Ms Mullins:** Yes, or they are dropped.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Yes, okay.

**Ms Smith:** Or the principal makes a decision that the student no longer poses a risk to other students or it is not in the best interests of other students.

**Mrs SCOTT:** At which time they are taken back. Yes, that is fine. The 16 to 18 age group, is it recommended that they then may be referred to an agency like a flexi school or Boystown or a VET program or something like that so that we are actually trying to re-engage them in something?

**Mr Streatfeild:** Yes, and if they are in the judicial system there are other agencies that come into play as well supporting those students so they are not on their own.

**Mrs SCOTT:** So we are not just excluding them and they are out there causing trouble. Okay, thank you.

**Mr Streatfeild:** Mind you, the willingness of the young person to engage with those resources is something that you cannot control.

**Mrs SCOTT:** However, the workers in places like Boystown and YFS and so on are used to being able to actually engage with them.

**Mr Streatfeild:** And actually are quite persuasive at times.

**Mrs SCOTT:** They can be very persuasive, using art or whatever it takes—art, sport and so on—to re-engage them.

**CHAIR:** In our submissions there was a lot of concern expressed on the necessity for early intervention and behaviour management plans. Will there still be positive behaviour plans, for instance, for students who may have a disability or might have some challenging behaviours?

**Ms Mullins:** Absolutely, and that is part of the plan. The ultimate goal is that we reduce the amount of exclusions and suspensions. We understand that some young people need intensive intervention and behaviour management intervention and plans for intensive intervention. That is a very important part of the system now and it will continue to be a very important part of the system in the future.

**CHAIR:** Because in some of these cases with these children discipline improvement does not really sound quite right for such circumstances.

**Mr Streatfeild:** No, and there is other legislation that comes into play for a principal making decisions around that. If a student has a disability then the antidiscrimination legislation is something that a principal is really very carefully aware of. In the decision that they are making they need to be able to be certain that they have provided development and they are not confusing the situation with the disability and so they will regularly take expert advice from senior guidance officers and from people in special education who have expertise in those disabilities. It is not totally within the frame of this legislation that a principal would make the decision.

**Ms Mullins:** The discipline improvement plan is not meant to replace a behaviour improvement plan. They are two completely different things. A discipline improvement plan is an agreement with parents and the student and a collaborative approach across home and school to address particular behaviours. A discipline improvement plan is not always the right solution. It is one option that a principal may choose. The formative behaviour improvement plans that teachers and guidance officers and behaviour specialists formulate for a student who needs intensive intervention is a completely different thing.

**Mr Streatfeild:** Students who have disabilities have an individual learning plan that is developed in partnership with the parents and the specialist staff at the school. Often that will involve goals around their ability to socialise and be able to manage in different environments.

**CHAIR:** I understand that.



**Mr LATTER:** I just want to clarify, if I can, the outside-of-school-hours detentions. I note first and foremost that it is optional and that obviously schools will have the discretion to determine whether this is an appropriate measure for them. I note that the procedures and/or policy seems fairly strict that it be in the school and that it be provided by an employee of the school. I am fully aware that it may not be circumstances that are suitable for everyone, but, for example, in Beenleigh we have the PCYC that is very, very actively engaged in the community and with our schools; is there any scope in here whatsoever for, say, PCYCs to be a provider of weekend detention by agreement or by arrangement with the school?

**Ms Smith:** The issue around out of school hours that we came across when we were developing the community service intervention work was that we need to manage the risk to students of harm and a principal needs to assess that risk, and it was determined in doing the work experience procedure that 14 in the act would be the age at which students could safely be managed within the community, taking account of their needs. We decided to stay with that 14 years and above that the community service interventions could be with a host organisation outside of school hours. So arguably it could be a community service intervention rather than a detention that was being done there in the example you have used.

**Mr LATTER:** Thank you.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** I have a quick question about the process when it comes to individuals who wish to challenge the principal's decision. It is something that has been asked of me by a couple of my principals. What will transpire after a suspension or a community service order?

**Ms Smith:** With the community service interventions, that would be a complaint to the principal. It would be dealt with in a similar way to how complaints are dealt with through a process where the parent will talk with the school and if they are not happy with the result at the school they have an option to go to the regional office and take their complaint there or go further and take it to the director-general. The same process would apply for those types of interventions that are not mandated in legislation or process. The ones that are mandated, like suspension, long suspension or exclusion, there is the specific process outlined in the disciplinary consequences procedure which says that the student or the parent makes a submission to the director-general and then the director-general considers that submission. What happens in practice is that the parent will generally raise a number of issues in a written submission that they are concerned about. We will have a look at what the evidence is about those issues that they have raised. The director-general then considers all of that information and makes a decision to either confirm, amend or set aside that decision that was made by the principal.

**CHAIR:** What is a 'reasonable step' to arrange an alternative educational program?

**Ms Mullins:** The reasonable step is a principal's and a school's reasonable attempt. The language 'reasonable' is meant to straddle the tension between the complexity of a young person who has been suspended or excluded and their learning needs and the demands on the school to provide an appropriate learning package. Clearly, when a student is excluded or suspended they cannot have one-on-one attention from a teacher. That would be economically impractical. Reasonable is meant to indicate that you would expect the school to make professional decisions that are in the interests of the student and meet the needs of the student without having to provide one-on-one engagement or intensive engagement for the student or to supervise the student for the same hours of schooling that they would have if they were at the school. That is a cost issue.

**CHAIR:** Excellent. It seems that you have satisfied all of the queries. It certainly has thrown a lot more light and put a lot more information into the legislation. We really do thank you for that. It has been most informative. I would certainly urge all of those people who do have an interest in the work of the Education and Innovation Committee to subscribe to the committee's email subscription list via the Queensland parliament's website. I now declare this briefing closed.

**Committee adjourned at 10.21 am.**