

Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

Submission No: 93
Submitted by: Queensland Teachers' Union
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:



Im:bc:jcm Adult Crime – Adult Time Bill

3 December 2024

Mr Martin Hunt
MP, Member of Nicklin
Chair of Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee

e: JICSC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Hunt

RE: Inquiry into the *Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024*- Queensland Teachers' Union of Employees Submission

The Queensland Teachers' Union of Employees (**QTU**) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee's (**the Committee**) *Inquiry into the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 (the Bill)*.

The QTU was established in 1889, and has chalked up 135 years of achievement as the professional, industrial, and legal voice of Queensland's public education and training sectors throughout regional, remote, and metropolitan Queensland. In 2024, the QTU represents more than 48,000 members of the teaching profession who are employed in special schools, primary schools, secondary schools, other specialist school settings, and TAFE. The QTU's advocacy represents the collective voice of Queensland's state school teachers and TAFE educators and it is heard through our democratic structures. The supreme decision-making body of the QTU is our State Council which consists of over 120 democratically elected representatives from every branch throughout the state. Positions that have been adopted by QTU State Council underpin this submission.

Issue – Timelines

The QTU has serious concerns regarding the timelines imposed by the Queensland Parliament on the Committee tasked with conducting an inquiry into the proposed Adult Crime – Adult Time Bill, particularly in light of the failure of the Bill to include amendments to the definition of "public officer" as recommended by the QTU.

During the 2024 Queensland election, the Premier committed to introducing and passing the Adult Crime – Adult Time legislation. The proposed Bill does not contribute to improving safety within Queensland schools and TAFE colleges in the absence of amendment to the public officer definition, and the expedited timelines do not allow adequate opportunity for the Committee to consult with Queenslanders directly impacted by adult crime occurring within school grounds.

The lack of consultation opportunities for affected stakeholders may undermine the credibility of the Bill.

Issue – Inadequate definition

As part of its 2024 election advocacy, the QTU urged all political parties to commit to amending the definition of “public officer” under section 340 of the *Criminal Code Act 1899* (Qld) to include principals, teachers, and other frontline staff working in state schools and TAFE colleges. The QTU contends that such an amendment is critical to enhancing protections for educators and staff in these environments.

The absence of provisions to expand the definition of “public officer” under section 340 of the *Criminal Code Act 1899* (Qld) may leave educators and frontline staff vulnerable and unprotected in the face of adult crime within school and TAFE premises.

The Queensland Government’s 2024 election campaign prominently featured the slogan “Adult Crime – Adult Time,” which continues to be displayed on billboards across the state. There were no disclaimers, qualifiers or exceptions in this messaging to exclude offences committed within school premises. Our members have a legitimate expectation that this Bill will be used to ensure their safety within the school premises.

Further, the QTU received correspondence from Mr Ben Riley, State Director of the Liberal-National Party on 7 October 2024. Mr Riley made this commitment:

Safety in schools and classrooms will be a priority under the LNP. We will introduce a zero tolerance policy for violence, vapes and drugs in our schools.

The QTU calls on the Queensland Government to comply with its election commitments to ensure zero tolerance for violence in schools.

Violence in schools

QTU members and other employees working in schools and TAFE colleges experience occupational violence that include, but are not limited to:

- adult cyber abuse
- assault occasioning bodily harm
- common assault
- emotional abuse
- grievous bodily harm
- online abuse
- psychological abuse
- serious assault
- sexual assaults
- stalking and
- unlawful wounding.

In one recent example, a teacher on playground duty had an object thrown at their face, smashing both lenses of their glasses, and requiring ongoing laser surgery.

The QTU calls on the Queensland Government to use the *Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024* to amend the law to ensure that the physical and psychological safety of teachers, school leaders and students is prioritised, and that appropriate funding and resourcing are provided so that all employees and students are safe.

The Department of Education must meet its legal obligation to ensure all regional directors, school supervisors, regional safety advisors, school leaders and Workplace Health and Safety committee members have the requisite information, training, and instruction to eliminate or significantly mitigate the risk of occupational violence occurring. Given the alarming and increasing levels of occupational violence against school leaders and teachers, the Queensland Government needs to raise public awareness of specific criminal offence provisions in relation to violence against staff in schools.

Recommendations

The QTU calls on the Queensland Government to address the following in the *Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024*:

- Amend the *Criminal Code Act 1899* (Qld) to define teachers, school leaders and TAFE educators as “public officers”
- Fund and deliver more flexible learning and diversionary spaces to mitigate violent behaviours
- Establish a dedicated capital fund for school security fencing to ensure the safety of staff and students
- Provide adequate training and resources to regional directors, school supervisors, and safety advisors to eliminate or mitigate the risk of occupational violence
- Launch public awareness campaigns about criminal offences and consequences related to violence against school staff.

This submission is filed by Brendan Crotty (Acting) General Secretary of the Queensland Teachers’ Union. Correspondence related to this submission should be directed to qtu@qtu.asn.au or by contacting the General Secretary in the Milton Office on (07) 3512 9000.

Yours sincerely



Brendan Crotty
Acting General Secretary