

Question on Notice

No. 804

Asked on 17 August 2022

MR J LISTER ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON G GRACE)

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what measures are being implemented in Queensland state schools to provide school staff with clear authority and departmental support to decisively intervene in cases of bullying and school fights, and to enforce acceptable standards of student conduct, including the prohibition of vaping, smoking and illicit drug use?

ANSWER:

Queensland state school principals have the broadest powers of disciplinary autonomy in Australia; these are detailed in the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* and the *Student discipline procedure*. Principals make decisions at the local level to suspend, exclude or cancel the enrolment of students whose behaviour does not meet expectations.

All Queensland state schools have a *Student Code of Conduct* which outlines expectations for student behaviour; including what students may not bring to school such as smoking and vaping products; local policies on the use of technology, such as mobile phones; and procedures for reporting bullying.

The *Student Code of Conduct* clearly sets out expectations regarding staff responsibilities to support students to understand and meet discipline expectations of the school, and guidance on the application, where required, of disciplinary consequences.

Principals have the sole discretionary authority to use suspension or exclusion to address serious misbehaviour. Suspensions, exclusions and cancellations of enrolment are used as a last resort option by principals, after considering individual circumstances, the actions of the student and the needs and rights of other school community members.

Smoking, including e-cigarettes, is banned at all Queensland state and non-state schools, and for five metres beyond their boundaries. In line with their *Student Code of Conduct*, principals may apply disciplinary consequences where they deem appropriate.

Queensland state schools also use a range of resources to educate students about the dangers of vaping, including those developed by the Cancer Council Queensland and the Lung Foundation Australia.

Individual schools are addressing behaviours such as smoking and vaping within their own school communities. The Department of Education's Years 7 to 12 Alcohol and Other Drugs Education Program is available for use by teachers with all Queensland students. The program uses a harm-minimisation approach to support young Queenslanders to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the impacts of alcohol and other drug use.

In secondary schools, School Based Youth Health Nurses (SBYHN) work with students and staff to highlight the risks associated with vaping. They also link with Dovetail, a drug and alcohol support service, that provides clinical advice and professional support to staff working with young people who vape.

The Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health and the Lung Foundation Australia have developed a vaping prevention educational video, which is now available to all schools via YouTube.

The Palaszczuk Government has tackled the issues of bullying and cyberbullying head on, including:

- In 2018, the Premier established the anti-cyberbullying taskforce, chaired by Ms Madonna King, and accepted all 29 recommendations.
- Leading the National Day of Action against bullying: *Bullying No Way!*
- Our \$100 million student wellbeing plan providing every student across the State with access to a psychologist or other health wellbeing professional, plus GPs in 50 selected schools.
- Our \$45 million youth engagement strategy for programs like Link and Launch, Flexispaces, and regional engagement hubs to support at-risk secondary students.
- Jacaranda Place opened in April 2020; a new Queensland adolescent extended treatment centre.
- \$450,000 in funding to the Dolly's Dream Foundation in partnership with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation to implement the eSmart Schools Program.
- Establishing a Ministerial Student Advisory Council to hear from students firsthand on issues like bullying and mental health.