

Question on Notice
No. 933
Asked on 23 August 2023

DR C ROWAN ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON G GRACE)

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what programs are being funded by the Queensland State Government, that are specific to addressing bullying, including cyber-bullying, in Queensland State Schools including (a) the amount of funding each program will receive in 2023-24 and (b) the funded amount for each program over the next four financial years?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to providing safe, supportive and respectful learning environments for students, free from bullying, discrimination or harassment.

At the heart of this commitment is the Department of Education's *Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student* strategy, which has a key focus on student wellbeing and engagement by creating a sense of belonging and a positive environment for teaching and working.

Principals have the autonomy to make decisions about programs offered in their school to deliver locally responsive and integrated strategies that best meet the needs of their student community. Information about specific programs implemented by schools, or school funding allocated to their delivery is not collected centrally.

Every Queensland state school has a *Student Code of Conduct* (code) that outlines the positive and proactive approaches school staff implement to support students to understand and meet the behaviour expectations of the school. The code includes a mandatory section that specifies how reports of bullying are addressed in the school, and information on response and support provisions.

School reviews explore the extent to which positive and proactive approaches to supporting student behaviour are in place in schools, as part of the National School Improvement Tool's *culture that promotes learning* domain. This domain consistently has a large number of affirmations in school review reports, with a summary of evidence in 2022 identifying that a significant proportion of schools reviewed were welcoming, supportive and inclusive and emphasised positive and caring relationships.

The Queensland Government has implemented all 29 recommendations from the nation-leading Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce, and the department has a dedicated Cybersafety team, which assists schools in responding to and preventing online issues. The team also provides general cybersafety and cyberbullying information and links to available resources for schools and parents.

On 10 July 2019, in response to Recommendation 11 of the Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce report, the Queensland Government invested \$1 million to deliver eSmart programs to state and non-state schools with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation. The service agreement with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation expired on 31 August 2023.

The eSmart Framework is an evidence-based behavioural change program designed to support a positive and inclusive culture, improve cyber safety, and help reduce cyberbullying and bullying.

Queensland is also the lead jurisdiction for the Australian Schools Anti-Bullying Collective, which delivers the *Bullying. No Way!* website and annual National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence (NDA) on behalf of all states and territories.

Registered NDA schools are provided evidence-informed resources and teaching materials to support whole-school approaches and specific curriculum delivery, relevant to the preventing of bullying behaviours.

In 2023, all Queensland state schools registered to participate in the NDA.

Bullying can have an impact on students' wellbeing and mental health; therefore, to provide increased support for students' wellbeing and mental health at school, the department is delivering on the Queensland Government's \$106.7 million commitment for a Student Wellbeing Package (the Package). Commenced in July 2021, up to 464 additional psychologists or similar wellbeing professionals are being employed through the Package over three years to provide direct support for students' mild to moderate health concerns. As at 31 July 2023, 427 wellbeing professionals have been employed.

In 2023–24, the budget to continue to employ and support additional wellbeing professionals through the Package is estimated to be \$68.4 million. Wellbeing professionals employed through the Package are well placed to provide support to students for a range of mental health concerns, including those related to bullying and cyberbullying.

By June 2024, students in every Queensland primary and secondary state school will have access to support from a wellbeing professional employed through the Package.

Through the *Youth Engagement Strategy* (2022–26), 52 schools across Queensland are delivering a bespoke approach to retaining and supporting students in their local school. FlexiSpaces are in-school flexible learning environments designed to support students who are at risk of disengaging from school and who often face challenging personal circumstances. FlexiSpaces promote inclusion and incorporate evidence-based design principles that respond directly to the learning needs of disengaged students. The Queensland Government committed \$16.6 million across 2019–22 for the establishment and delivery of innovative learning spaces. A further \$0.60 million was committed across 2022–26 to support professional learning communities to provide innovative responses to retain students at risk of disengagement.