

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND SKILLS COMMITTEE
REPORT No. 6 ON THE EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024
QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

On 6 March 2024, the Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice introduced the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 (the Bill) into the Queensland Parliament.

The Bill was referred to the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee (the Committee) for review, with a report back date of 19 April 2024.

The Bill sets out amendments to the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (the Act) and other legislation to protect students, contribute to the good order and management of schools and to modernise and improve education services and related operations.

The Bill, as introduced, included reforms relating to School Disciplinary Absences (including Student Support Plans), transfer notes, approved online services, home education regulation, State Delivered Kindergarten, eKindy, Parents and Citizens' Associations, State Special School enrolments and nomenclature and technical amendments.

On 15 April 2024, the Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice announced that further stakeholder consultation would occur on proposed reforms about School Disciplinary Absences, and the home education regulation. Accordingly, these relevant provisions will not proceed at this time.

On 19 April 2024, the Committee tabled Report No. 6 on the Bill.

The Queensland Government thanks the Committee for its consideration of the Bill and **accepts** the recommendations of the Committee.

The Queensland Government response to the recommendations made by the Committee is set out below.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 be passed.

Government response to recommendation 1

The Queensland Government notes the Committee's recommendation that the Bill be passed.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that, during its extended consultation of provisions relating to student support plans, the Department of Education considers:

- a) Suggestions to include the participation of relevant allied health professionals for all students, and local community organisations for students who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, during the policy development of student support plans for vulnerable cohorts; and
- b) How schools could be resourced to facilitate this work.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that, during the extended consultation process, the Department of Education consults with stakeholders, including the Queensland Teachers' Union of Employees, to consider and address the concerns raised during the committee inquiry process, including clarifying

what would be incorporated in student support plans and how state schools would resource and fund the making of these plans, should similar provisions be introduced in future legislation.

Government response to recommendations 2 and 3

The Queensland Government recognises that schools operate in increasingly complex environments, and there is a need for a system to adapt so all children, young people and their families are appropriately supported.

On 30 May 2024, the Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice hosted an initial roundtable of experts and stakeholders to improve responses to increasingly complex student need and behaviour. The roundtable gave the opportunity for principals, parent organisations, youth and human rights advocates, and unions to come together to share their perspectives, identify opportunities, and confirm their commitment to better outcomes for every student.

In delivering the extended consultation, the Department of Education is consulting with stakeholders and will consider matters identified by the inquiry process and through the recommendations of the Committee. This will deliver on recommendations 2 and 3.

In addition, the Department of Education is already delivering initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and school communities generally. This includes through strategies such as the Department of Education's *Equity and Excellence: realising the potential of every student strategy* and the *Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student succeeding strategy*.

Through the existing Student Wellbeing Package, Queensland state schools have access to additional wellbeing professionals such as psychologists and social workers to provide direct support for students' mental health and wellbeing. There are also 50 GPs in schools with secondary aged students one day per week, including in rural and remote locations.

Every Queensland state school can access occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech language pathologists who support schools to identify barriers to learning, and assist them to develop adjustments to address these barriers.

The *Putting Queensland Kids First* initiative will also provide for in-school Family Support Coordinators, across 219 high needs schools to support vulnerable children transition to school and establish good patterns of attendance, behaviour and engagement in the early years of school; health practitioners in 20 priority primary schools providing access to primary healthcare and referrals to specialists; and behaviour specialists across 299 priority primary schools to provide support when there are concerns about behaviour and engagement in learning.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education conducts further consultation on the use of curricula in home education programs and particularly in relation to curricula which has been determined by the Australian, Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority to be consistent with the Australian Curriculum.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends the Department of Education conducts further consultation with stakeholders on the definition of a high-quality education.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education works with stakeholders during its extended consultation on home education regulation to design a streamlined approach to any changes in annual reporting requirements.

Government response to recommendations 4, 5 and 6

The Department of Education has established a Home Education Expert Group (HEEG) to contribute to a stakeholder-informed review of Queensland's approach to regulating home education through the Department's Home Education Unit.

The HEEG will provide a forum to share and learn from the home educating parent community and better understand their experiences of home education in Queensland; and consider topical issues highlighted through consultation on the Bill such as delivery of a high-quality education and consideration of the best interests of the child; broadly consider home education regulation; provide perspectives about supports for home education parents; and consider possible approaches for consultation with the home education sector following the review. This work will deliver on recommendations 4, 5 and 6.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that, during its review of the Home Education Unit, the Queensland Government focusses on ensuring the HEU has sufficient resources to assess annual reports in a timely manner and provide guidance to parents on how to complete any future legislative reporting requirements.

Government response to recommendation 7

The Department of Education recognises the growth and associated needs of the home education sector, which is reflected in additional resourcing provided to the Home Education Unit (HEU) over the past three years to support frontline services.

The Queensland Government has commenced a stakeholder-informed review of Queensland's approach to regulating home education through the HEU. The review will be informed by stakeholder perspectives, and explore how existing regulatory services can be improved and parents supported.

The review will consider the diverse experience and needs of home educating parents; identify any gaps and areas for improvement in the approach to regulation, education and support of home educators; and provide recommendations, where appropriate, to enhance the effectiveness of regulation, including supports for home education parents, options to engage more broadly with home educators in the absence of a peak body, and other supportive activities within the existing legislative framework of the Act.

A report on the review is to be presented to the Queensland Government in September 2024, at which time the Queensland Government will consider recommendations of the review. This work will deliver on recommendation 7.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Department of Education consults with affected stakeholders to determine what services or agencies currently used Certificates of Education as evidence of home education registration and that the Department of Education accordingly advises these services and agencies of the changes, should the provision be introduced in future legislation.

Government response to recommendation 8

The Department of Education notes the reference to a Certificate of Education in recommendation 8. For clarity in this Government Response, it is noted that this is a Certificate of Registration (in the context of home education).

The Department of Education is consulting with stakeholders through the HEEG. If provisions to remove the requirement for a Certificate of Registration (for home education) are considered at a future point, the Department of Education will consult with the home education sector and subsequently liaise with relevant agencies to ensure that they are aware of changes, delivering on recommendation 8.