

QTU Special Education policy

2017–2019

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1. Introduction

The QTU special education policy sets out the Union's position on major issues related to the education of students with special educational needs, consistent with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth).

2. Principles of social justice and equity

The principles of social justice and equity include:

- equitable access, participation, engagement and demonstrable outcomes for students
- the acknowledgement, valuing and respect of the diversity of students' knowledge, skills and experiences within an inclusive framework
- acknowledgement and minimisation of inequitable outcomes of schooling for students
- empowerment of students by contestation and reduction of injustices and inequities.

3. Students with special educational needs (to be aligned with National Agenda on Disability)

Consistent with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, 2008, the QTU defines students with special educational needs (the target population for the delivery of special education services) as including those students:

- with disabilities
- with learning difficulties/disabilities
- who demonstrate significant behavioural and adjustment difficulties
- who have significant mental health and medical conditions.

In order to achieve quality learning outcomes, these students require reasonable adjustments to curriculum, support programs, services and/or other resources which are complementary and additional to those which are provided to students in general.

The QTU reaffirms its belief that the public education system needs to value, provide and maintain access to a range of services, curriculum programs and educational settings to ensure access by and the inclusion of all students. Service delivery models that are inclusive must be flexible, to allow for the movement of students and/or staff across a range of programs.

4. Rights of teachers

A significant role of the QTU is to protect and enhance the working conditions of teachers and school leaders in Queensland. In doing this, it also supports the industrial and professional rights of members to make decisions about the curriculum, programs and resources most appropriate for students with special educational needs, in consultation with students, their families and relevant service providers. This includes the right of members to acknowledge the challenges in the provision of appropriate programs for students with special educational needs. This is often a consequence of inadequate training and/or resource provision.

These rights are entirely compatible with, and absolutely essential to, the provision of the most advantageous environment for all students. The QTU commits itself to advocate for optimum safe

working conditions for members and the best possible learning environments for the students with special educational needs.

The QTU shall support members who choose not to provide or to withdraw instruction based on a collective determination by QTU members at the site. This support is in the form of a directive from the QTU at the request of members in relation to the inadequate level of resources and support at the site and/ or the safety of the student, other students or staff. If this occurs, then it is the Department of Education and Training’s responsibility to provide an appropriate placement for any students affected, and to begin immediate negotiations towards a positive resolution.

It is recognized that many students with special needs will access various external medical, therapy or other services. Teachers should not be expected to increase their workload to provide this information to external service providers.

5. Resourcing

Resourcing for students with special education needs is by its very nature intensive. This resourcing must continue to ensure adherence to philosophies and practices of equity, social justice and inclusivity.

The QTU believes in and promotes the notion of a needs-based resourcing model implemented in a timely manner. The QTU believes that access, participation, engagement and successful learning outcomes for students with special educational needs will be achieved with:

- the provision of staffing (both teaching and non-teaching) according to a needs-based model
- the provision of resources appropriate to the students’ needs according to a needs-based model
- access to a range of services and programs funded through a needs-based model
- facilities that are specifically designed, located, built and maintained to meet the needs of all students and staff

5.1 Staffing

Staffing models that are transparent, fully funded, flexible, needs and context-based must be developed for students with special educational needs.

Special schools should be entitled to classified officer positions as follows:

Band of School	Classified Officers
11	Principal + 3 DPs + 8 HOCs (0.5 teaching load)
10	Principal + 2 DPs + 8 HOCs (0.5 teaching load)
9	Principal (non-teaching) + 2 DPs + 4 HOCs (0.5 teaching load)
8	Principal (non-teaching) + DP + 4 HOCs (0.5 teaching load)
7	Principal (non-teaching) + 4 HOCs (0.5 teaching load)

Special Education Programs (SEPs) should be entitled to classified officer positions as follows:

Band of SEP	Classified officers
8	1 FTE HOSES (non-teaching) + FTE HOC
7	1 FTE HOSES (0.8 non-teaching) + 0.8 FTE HOC

6	1 FTE HOSES (0.6 non-teaching) + 0.6 FTE HOC
5 Cluster SEP	1 FTE HOSES (0.8 non-teaching)
5 single location	1 FTE HOSES (0.5 non-teaching)

These classified positions must also access non-contact time commensurate with their teaching load, and in addition to their administration time. HOSES working in clusters or hubs require additional non-teaching time reflecting both the workload and the travel required in these settings. These models should be applied consistently across the state and in line with other sectors' staffing allocations. Schools should be advised of their indicative staffing allocation and provided with relevant staff by the middle of November of the previous year, however, staffing needs to be adjusted accordingly with increased enrolments during the year.

The Teacher Relief Scheme (TRS) in Special Schools should equate to the allocation currently afforded to primary schools, including the underlying assumption regarding internal relief. Special Schools are entitled to full, one-hundred percent reimbursement of an overrun of TRS. This takes into consideration the specific nature of working with students with special educational needs including:

- increased exposure to communicable diseases
- the importance of protecting vulnerable students
- the lack of flexibility to make alternative supervisory arrangements, such as the inability to merge classes.

5.2 Facilities

Facilities and buildings must be of the highest standard and incorporate design specifications and additional equipment appropriate to the needs of students and staff. Additionally a separate area needs to be identified for students with special educational needs to be and feel safe.

Funding, resources and processes must be put in place to ensure that current facilities and buildings across the state, in all settings, are brought up to standard and maintained at this standard by the Department of Education and Training. Future facilities should be specifically designed, located, built and maintained throughout the state in line with demographic information of growth areas to meet the needs of all students and staff, this should be done in a planned manner to cater for growth within current special schools. The QTU supports the building of new special schools to ease the pressure on existing schools.

It should be recognised that students with special educational needs may require the provision of specific equipment and facilities not found in all schools so that they may have equitable access to educational programs. These facilities and additional ongoing costs should be fully funded by the Department of Education and Training, not funded from school budgets.

Specialists require facilities that provide a confidential environment and suitable furniture/equipment at their base and at each school supported.

6. Curriculum

Curriculum is the totality of students' experiences within schooling. It includes all learning, teaching, assessment and reporting processes that occur across a range of settings. It includes systemic curriculum documents, school/class/ and individual curriculum and education plans.

Curriculum needs to be designed to maximise students' access, participation and engagement in and outcomes from the educational process. All systemic curriculum documents should acknowledge and address the learning needs of all students. The appropriateness of the curriculum to student needs should be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

The QTU needs to ensure that Department of Education and Training acknowledges the commitment in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians 2008 to support all Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens. The development of robust curriculum and curriculum resources to meet the educational needs of all students should continue.

At school, class or individual curriculum level, there needs to be special emphasis on processes to identify and plan for the high expectations for each individual learner. Pedagogical practices should be planned and implemented to meet the individual learning needs of all students.

Assessment procedures should be designed and implemented in a variety of modes consistent with curriculum documentation that give students an equitable opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do, as opposed to assessing for the sole purpose of data collection. Reporting should directly reflect the year level curriculum and commensurate A to E reporting descriptors the student is accessing.

For many students with special educational needs, the QTU strongly supports the rationalisation of plans for these students, where appropriate (i.e. health plans, behaviour plans and Individual Curriculum Plan).

7. Service delivery

The Department of Education and Training should provide a full array of settings, series and programs for students with special educational needs.

The QTU strongly opposes any reorganisation of services and resources which would eliminate facilities which have a specific identity, rationale, status and role in providing special education services to students in schools.

A clarification of the roles of special educators should be accompanied by the updating or development of role statements and position descriptions for all special educators.

The Queensland Government must establish and maintain the following within its public education system:

- Special schools – these provide specialised support for students with disabilities and high support needs. They provide a diverse curriculum based on the individual needs of students, and aligned with systemic frameworks.
- Special education programs in regular schools – these provide support to students with special educational needs in primary and secondary schools by delivering services directly to students and/or supporting these students in regular classes. The prep year should be available in all schools that cater for primary age students, including special schools.

- Early Childhood Development Programs (ECDPs) – should provide early intervention for children with disabilities, or suspicion of a disability, from birth to five years.
- Advisory visiting teachers (early intervention) should provide early intervention for children with disabilities, or suspicion of a disability, from birth to five years across an array of settings.
- Advisory visiting teacher services – students identified as having special educational needs arising from their disabilities, or who have special behavioural needs, or who require assistance transitioning from school to post-school and their teachers should have access to advisory visiting teacher support. Special programs in hospital settings – these provide an important service in the array of options for students who are hospitalised and/or whose parents, carers or siblings are hospitalised or having treatment. Resourcing should be provided to support the particular needs of students with medical and mental health issues and to support the liaison role necessary for transition to and from the school in which they are enrolled.
- Special service provided to students with special educational needs at home – students with medically diagnosed conditions or severe and challenging behaviours that prevent them from attending schools should be provided with educational and other relevant services at home (e.g. visiting teachers and therapists, flexible arrangements, dual enrolment procedures).
- Guidance services – all students should have sufficient and timely access to guidance services provided by qualified guidance officers to meet their individual needs. There should be sufficient senior guidance officers to provide support to guidance officers through technical and clinical supervision and through facilitation of professional support.
- Learning support services – should be provided to students with learning difficulties/disabilities and their teachers. The number of learning support teachers in primary and secondary schools should be proportionate to the number of students with learning difficulties/disabilities in each school.
- Special service provisions is for students with medical or mental health conditions or severe social/emotional difficulties. The treatment of medical/mental health conditions is the primary responsibility of a relevant health professional. Where a student has been diagnosed with a medical or mental health condition, severe social/ emotional difficulties or a conduct disorder, the QTU supports the provision of additional resources determined by the development of a support plan. Where the student’s needs are beyond the school’s capacity, the QTU will support the school’s right to suspend and/or seek temporary/permanent placement in an appropriate setting for the student.
- Therapy and nursing services – these services should be funded by DET according to need and provided to identified students regardless of age or setting. Nurses must be available for all students with specialised medical support needs, especially when these students have life threatening medical conditions. Medical intervention should be provided by expert staff in the relevant field. All nursing staff employed in schools should work in a consultative model and under the direction of the principal.
- Behaviour management services – a range of programs and services should be provided for students with extreme and challenging behaviours. This should include appropriate alternative settings and programs, staffed by personnel with appropriate expertise.

Queensland state schools provide education for the majority of students with disabilities. Queensland state schools provide education for 29,432 students with a verified disability as at February 2015. This represents 5.6% of total school enrolments, compared to those (2.9%)

approximately 7,470 students with a disability who attend non-government schools. 14% of students with disabilities (4,131) attend special schools. 86.1% of students with disabilities (25,336) attend a state primary or secondary school.

Of growing concern is the increase of the verified students with autism spectrum disorder 12,500 (43.5%).

The QUTU recognises that a significant percentage of students with special educational needs undertake the majority of their schooling in a regular classroom. Many of these programs are delivered in rural and remote locations, using a multi-aged approach.

Class sizes need to be considered by schools and appropriately reduced where students with special educational needs are included in regular classes. In order to meet the needs of all students, additional qualified/trained staff must be employed. These additional qualified staff should not be tied to a specific student. The school allocation should be reviewed as the need arises.

All students with special educational needs who require therapy services should have access to Department of Education and Training funded appropriate levels of services, regardless of setting, age, disability or socio-economic status.

8. Qualifications and professional development

The pre-service training of all teachers must include mandatory components related to the education of students with special educational needs, exposure to and understanding of the philosophies and practice of inclusive schooling policies and at least one practicum in a setting providing education to students with special educational needs.

All students with special educational needs, in all settings, should have access to appropriately qualified teachers.

The Department of Education and Training should facilitate the provision of training for specialist teachers as one means of ensuring an adequate supply of specialist teachers.

All teachers should have access to and receive professional development, provided by DET, to foster positive attitudes and equip them with the skills needed to deliver appropriate educational outcomes for students with special educational needs. All teachers should be able to access Department of Education and Training funded professional development opportunities regardless of the timing of these opportunities. All special educators should have access to, and receive, all professional development provided by the Department of Education and Training.

Guidance services should be provided by guidance officers who possess appropriate and comprehensive guidance training, teaching qualifications and experience. The training should be undertaken prior to commencing the role and should be supported by the Department of Education and Training.