Members’ bargaining priorities

In August and September 2014, QTU members held workplace meetings to identify their professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. (Members also voted in a ballot to reaffirm their commitment to take industrial action if certain unnegotiated changes to their working conditions were imposed by the Queensland Government.)

These priorities were identified as those issues that were having, or threatened to have, major negative impacts on the teaching profession in this state. In turn, these impacts affect the whole state schooling system ranging from schools in remote to metropolitan regions, in special, primary, secondary and P-10/P-12 schools, and in schools of all sizes. They affect teachers and school leaders at all stages of the education profession.

As QTU members know, teaching conditions = learning conditions, and are worth too much to lose.

The 11 priorities identified by members, and endorsed by QTU State Council on 13 September, are as follows.

1. Class sizes
2. Job security
3. Non-contact time
4. The transfer and relocation system
5. Pay
6. Remote Area Incentives Scheme (RAIS)
7. Beginning teacher issues
8. Workload issues
9. Professional pay
10. Resourcing of schools
11. Implementation of the Australian curriculum and use of C2C.

In the changed world of industrial relations, the QTU will now pursue these priorities and protect existing rights through the next EB log of claims, and through non-industrial agreements protecting both professional and industrial rights, and school resourcing. Before the state election, due at the latest in June 2015, the QTU will be asking all major political parties to inform QTU members of their policies in relation to each of the priorities.

Many of the priorities listed are conditions that the current Queensland Government attempted to remove from protected industrial instruments and turn into policy – that could be changed at any time without consultation – during the last EB.

QTU members, you are encouraged to nominate your top priorities at branch and workplace meetings, and discuss these priorities with fellow QTU members and with P&Cs, who will have valuable input into how they think their schools are affected by these issues. QTU members could also be part of delegations to your local state MPs, or write to them on behalf of the branch or workplace, to make sure that the current MPs know that teaching conditions = learning conditions, and they’re worth too much to lose. (Please copy the QTU in to your letter by emailing insert most relevant address, or let your local organiser know the outcomes of any delegations.)

For more information at www.qtu.asn.au

- “Bargaining under the revised industrial relations legislation”
  www.qtu.asn.au/bargainingRevir
- “Award stripping by Government”
  www.qtu.asn.au/award-stripping-government
- Newsflash No. 18-14 “Award stripping threatens working conditions”
Bargaining priorities: Class sizes

In August and September 2014, QTU members met in workplaces across the state to nominate their top professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. These are the issues most affecting members now, and most likely to affect the whole state schooling system in the future. Class sizes was one of the top 11 priorities identified.

Maximum class size targets were nominated by members as a top bargaining priority in workplace meetings, and as one of the most important issues by respondents in the QTU quadrennial member survey conducted in 2014.

Since 2007, maximum class size targets have been:
- Prep to year 3: 25
- Years 4 to 10: 28
- Years 11 and 12: 25

Oversized classes are a growing problem in Queensland state schools. The latest published data from the Department of Education, Training and Employment shows that class sizes have most significantly increased in the early years of schooling. Classes “over target” in prep to year 3 across the state rose from 7% in 2010 to 13% in 2014 (up to 17% in the metropolitan region’s schools), and from 6% in years 4 to 7 (primary) in 2010 to 11% in 2014.

Clearly, class sizes can only be maintained if sufficient numbers of extra teachers are employed to cover enrolment growth. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ latest report on schools, of all the state and territories, Queensland had Australia’s biggest growth in enrolment numbers in government schools between 2003 and 2013.

The over-sized classes in the primary years are partly related to the loss of the rounding benefit associated with the 2012-13 State Budget. That is, previously teacher FTEs were rounded up to whole figures – which is common sense since a teacher needs to be in front of each primary class for the whole school week. Now, however, staffing allocations are calculated only to enrolment figures; but funding for a .8 FTE is not going to put a teacher in front of a class for five days a week.

Class sizes are important to teachers for many reasons: not least because the fewer students there are in a class, the more individualised attention and feedback can be given to students, and the more interaction can be had with parents. This benefits not only those children who are at risk of falling behind; it also allows for extension activities for children who would benefit from being given “bigger asks” in the classroom.

The QTU recognises that schools have the prerogative to form classes as best suits their students and local circumstances; but they should not be forced to form oversized classes because of a lack of resources.

A recent study by Monash University academic Dr David Zygier found that smaller class sizes allowed teachers to develop more in-depth lessons, move through curricula faster and provide more enrichment activities.

Dr Zygier also found that class sizes have a significant impact on behaviour: teachers with smaller classes spent less time on behaviour management, and students were more attentive and cooperative.
The OECD “Education at a glance 2014” report reinforces that notion: across the world, class sizes are particularly important to teachers’ job satisfaction - and their ability to be most effective – when students with special needs or behavioural problems are included in their classrooms.

Students are bringing increasingly complex needs to school, as society experiences increasingly complex problems. These needs should be taken into account when deciding what is a reasonable number of students per teacher.

Complexity of the teaching task should also be considered – composite classes bring special demands, as do many subjects beyond the “three Rs”. Industrial design and technology, for example, is increasingly being offered in Queensland schools, in keeping with both students’ interests and the changing world, and is an area that requires intensive one-on-one instruction and greater attention to workplace health and safety due to the nature of the industry equipment that students access. At a school staffing level, reducing some class sizes to address this complexity may mean that class size targets are exceeded in other subjects.

Many politicians (and some commentators) prefer to discuss student-teacher ratios rather than class sizes because the former often “looks better”. For real classroom teachers and school leaders, that can be misleading since ratios are calculated by dividing student enrolment by all “education staff” – including specialist teachers and all school administrators.

That makes even more ominous one of the recommendations of the “Queensland Commission of Audit”, commonly known as the Costello report, handed to the Queensland Government in February 2013: recommendation 87 under the heading of education states that “the Government (should) minimise impediments to further devolution of workforce management responsibilities to schools by removing restrictive provisions (for example, specification of student-teacher ratios) from future certified agreements”.

In the last round of enterprise bargaining negotiations, just after the current state government was elected, maximum class size targets were among a raft of conditions that it tried to remove from industrial instruments and turn into a matter of policy that could be changed at any time, with no consultation. Strong member resolve prevented it happening then, and that resolve remains strong – QTU members voted in both the 2013 and 2014 ballots to undertake industrial action if class size targets were negated or increased.

For more information at www.qtu.asn.au
• QTU information brochure “Class sizes”
• “Class sizes: True or false?”
  www.qtu.asn.au/class-size-tof
• DETE data on class sizes
• Dr Zyngier’s research
Class sizes: True or false?

“There is no evidence that smaller class sizes somehow produce better student outcomes.” Christopher Pyne MP, Federal Education Minister

By arguing against the fact that smaller class sizes produce better student outcomes, Christopher Pyne is simply burying his head in the sand and not facing up to the overwhelming body of evidence that shows that smaller class sizes have positive impacts on student outcomes. Claiming that smaller class sizes don’t count and referring to just one study to support his claim is akin to climate change deniers who use one piece of research to support their stance, while ignoring the thousands of other studies from the across the scientific community that take the opposing view.

Major studies identifying that smaller classes have a positive impact on student achievement include:

- the Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) project
- the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) project
- the California Class Size Reduction Program (CSRP)
- the Rouse Study
- the Wenglinsky Study
- Maimonide’s Rule, Israel
- the Institute of Education Class Size Study, University of London.

Smaller class sizes have the greatest impact on the early years of learning (prep to year 3), on populations from low socio-economic backgrounds and those with English as an additional language or dialect. In these cases, the positive impact of smaller class sizes is double that in the rest of the school population. Class size research – and common sense – show that in smaller classes, teachers are able to provide more individual student attention, are better able to modify the pedagogy to suit the learner, while students are more on task and engaged in the learning, and there is less disruption to the lesson. This all leads to improved student achievement.

Christopher Pyne knows that reducing class sizes costs money. Reducing class sizes is an investment in Australia’s future that he and the federal government are not prepared to make. In fact, the federal government’s first Budget will lead to $30 billion less going into our schools over the coming years than would have been received under Gonski.

References:
Research shows that class size does not make a difference

In response to calls for reductions in class sizes, some conservative politicians repeatedly rely on one study to “prove” that class size reduction strategies don’t make a difference to student outcomes. That study was conducted by Eric Hanushek (1997), an economist, not an educational scholar, who conducted a literature review of class size studies. He concluded that class size reductions did not make a difference to student academic outcomes.

His findings have been widely criticised by scholars, who have found the analytical methods used to determine his outcomes fundamentally flawed. The most vocal critic of Hanushek’s methods is Alan Krueger, who suggests that Hanushek apportions more value to small scale studies with multiple estimates against large scale longitudinal studies with single estimates. In one example, the STAR project (involving the random allocation of more than 6,000 students in 329 classes across 79 schools in 46 districts), which has been widely accepted by scholars as determining the link between smaller class size and student achievement, was given less value than other small studies of questionable reliability and validity. Kruger has reanalysed Hanushek’s data using methods which apportion equal weight to class size studies, and found “systematic evidence of a relationship between class size and achievement” (Kruger 2002).

Despite the widespread condemnation of Hanushek’s methods, his study, which has produced flawed results, is still used by some as evidence that class size interventions don’t make a difference. This is in spite of the overwhelming number of peer reviewed studies that demonstrate the link between class size and academic achievement.

References:

Hattie (2009) says that class size doesn’t count

While some politicians and public figures have jumped on Hattie’s landmark publication “Visible learning” as evidence that class size does not count, those who take the time to read his research will see that Hattie clearly identifies class size as an important factor in improving student outcomes. Each of the interventions that Hattie studied were done so in isolation. As we would expect, Hattie reports that the biggest effect on student achievement inside the school comes from the quality of instruction delivered by the teacher. Hattie does argue, however, that it is the improved classroom pedagogy that a reduction in class size facilitates that improves student outcomes. Class size effect is maximised when desired pedagogies are implemented effectively.

Hattie argues that some class size reduction strategies may not have worked in the past as teachers were not given the professional development and training to deliver the effective pedagogies which smaller classes enable. That is common sense. We wouldn’t expect teachers to be able to deliver a specific pedagogy without the appropriate training.

Blatchford et al (2003) support this view. They report a clear effect of smaller class sizes on academic achievement of students in the early phase of learning, particularly due to increased student attentiveness and the amount of individual time a teacher is able to spend with each student. This effect is multiplied when teachers adapt their teaching style to suit the smaller classes. They recommend a greater focus on teacher training and professional development to improve pedagogies that optimise learning in smaller classes.

References:
Class size doesn’t matter. It is only the quality of the teacher that counts

Class size and teacher quality are independently important. Research by Bruhwiler & Blatchford (2011) identified an independent positive effect of class size on students’ academic performance, even after controlling variables such as teacher quality. They also reported that gains made by students due to quality teaching were independent of and in addition to the gains made from smaller class size.

The sum is greater than the parts: Classroom size reduction strategies combined with a program of teacher professional development targeting improved pedagogies has demonstrated a combined positive effect outweighing each initiative implemented independently, as shown by Evertson (2000).

References:

We need to raise the quality of teaching in public education, not reduce class sizes

There is no crisis of teacher quality in public schools; the crisis is the lack of a needs-based funding model to deliver educational outcomes for all Australian kids.

Recent research from the University of Wollongong found “no statistically significant difference between NAPLAN performance between school sectors” in relation to NAPLAN performance when controlled by student background (Moran, Neri & Rogers, 2014).

The QTU has worked hard to ensure that Queensland students in state schools are taught by great teachers. This includes pushing to have the first system of teacher registration in Australia. Currently teachers hold registration with the Queensland College of Teachers and align their practice with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. There is a requirement to maintain currency on new initiatives, with continuing professional development conducted each year. All Queensland state school teachers engage in the Developing Performance Framework process (developed in conjunction by the QTU and DETE) with their principals to reflect on their practice and develop goals around areas of development.

The attack on teacher quality is a clever way for politicians to divert attention away from chronic underfunding of public education. We all know that state schools do the heavy lifting with regards to educating the most complex and challenging students in our society. The best performing education systems in the world demonstrate high quality and high equity. Australia, with its tiered education systems, has a high quality, low equity system. The Gonski model of school funding aims to address educational disadvantage by directing funding to schools to address inequality.

References:

Reclaim the profession
Class size reduction policies are too expensive

Increased funding in education is a valuable long-term investment. Krueger (2003) reports a strong economic case for smaller class sizes. Based on meta-analyses of peer reviewed class size studies, he argues the economic benefit of reducing class size from 22 students to 15 students is around 6 per cent. He argues that the costs of reducing class sizes in the short term is outweighed by the economic benefit that will result from a reduced dependence on welfare and other social costs, reductions in crime, increased future earnings and productivity improvements. A Danish study by Bingley, Jensen & Walker (2005), also demonstrated the positive relationship between smaller class size and time spent in post-compulsory schooling (which positively correlates to future earnings).

References:

Some Asian school systems produce the world’s best results with classes of up to 45 students. That proves class sizes don’t count

It is wrong to compare Australian school systems with some Asian school systems without taking into account their unique cultural, social and political contexts. Many of these Asian systems exclude a vast proportion of their child population from education, including those with disabilities, those from low socio-economic backgrounds and those with foreign languages. Australian schools are for all students, and Australian PISA test results reflect the results from a diverse range of student outcomes without excluding anyone. These high performing Asian school systems typically allocate teachers 10-12 hours of contact time a week, compared to 21-22 contact hours for Queensland state school teachers. These systems have developed mentoring, induction and collaboration time for teachers to develop their skills. These elements featured in the QTU’s EB7 log of claims, which the LNP state government rejected in 2012.
Relying on PISA test results to rank education systems around the world is fundamentally flawed as there are increasing concerns about the validity of the testing methods and the results generated.

The independent schools sector heavily markets smaller class sizes to parents. Why?

Because it knows that smaller classes make a difference. State school kids deserve smaller classes too, but the inequitable funding of schools in Australia means that independent schools get two bites at the cherry, picking up government funding and money from private school fees. This helps them to fund smaller class sizes. If they thought that class sizes didn’t make a difference, would they reduce student numbers in each class and market this fact to parents so heavily?
Feedback from teachers to students is more important than class size

Hattie has indeed identified feedback as having one of the biggest effects on learning, but clearly, a teacher with fewer students in their class can spend more time with each individual student, giving them better quality feedback. The importance of class size is surely common sense, but politicians have clouded the debate by attacking teacher quality to avoid making the investments in education that are necessary to improve performance.

References:

“We should be looking to systems such as those in Finland, which are considered by some as world leaders in educational standards” Christopher Pyne MP, Federal Education Minister

Something we agree on! Finland’s educational system represents a high quality, high equity system. Finnish educator, scholar and policy advisor Pasi Sahlberg (2014) states that: “Equity in education means that students’ socio-economic status had little impact on how well they learn in school”. In Australia, too many students are currently not able to achieve their potential as they face too many barriers to education through disadvantage.

Highly equitable systems are not about delivering resources on an equal basis. Resources must be allocated unequally and directed to areas of need in order to address inequality. The QTU recognises that fair resourcing across the entire educational system drives high performance. These systems are linked to a more equitably resourced allocation between advantaged and disadvantaged schools. That is why the Gonski model of school funding is so important to Australian students.

While Finland is a good model to consider, many cultural, social and political factors in Finland make their educational system very different to the Australian model.

References:

“In spite of Australia having small class sizes for 10 years ... their outcomes have gone backwards”
“Our class sizes on average are lower than the OECD class sizes” Christopher Pyne MP, Federal Education Minister

This is simply not true. In relation to small class sizes, in 2011 Australia was ranked 22nd out of 34 countries and had class size averages higher than the OECD average.

Most countries in the OECD invested in class size reduction policies from 2000 onwards.

References:
OECD (2012), Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools, OECD Publishing.
Students’ learning conditions are under threat

Rather than viewing the further reduction of class sizes across the state as an opportunity for sound investment in the state’s future, the LNP state government views investment in Queensland kids as simply a prohibitive cost. The Costello Report recommends scrapping class size guarantees from future certified agreements.

Recommendation 87 of the Costello Report:
“The Government minimise impediments to further devolution of workforce management responsibilities to schools by removing restrictive provisions (for example, specification of student–teacher ratios) from future certified agreements. “

Qld Commission of Audit – Final Report vol. 3, p122

References:

Class sizes are at threat from award modernisation

The DETE State School Teachers’ Certified Agreement 2012 commits to staffing schools in accordance with student/teacher ratios based on established class size targets.

These targets are:
- years prep-3 and years 11-12............... 25 students per class
- years 4-10......................... 28 students per class

In a letter from the Minster for Education, Training and Employment John-Paul Langbroek MP to QTU General Secretary Graham Moloney, received 6 December 2013, the Minister writes:
“There is a clear commitment by both the government and school principals to the established (class size) targets.”

However, the modernisation of industrial instruments under the IR act will strip away any industrial guarantees that Queensland teachers and principals have around class sizes. Class sizes are a learning issue for our students and their parents right across Queensland. It is the QTU’s belief that the issue of class size can be resolved with a compact between the Director-General of the Department of Education, Training and Employment and the General Secretary of the Queensland Teachers’ Union, securing the current agreed-upon class size targets.

In conjunction with this agreement, the QTU seeks guarantees from DETE in regards to extra resourcing to address areas of disadvantage across the state schooling system delivered on a needs basis.
No commitment from the Newman government to adhere to class size targets

We have seen the number of oversized classes rise in every phase of learning in Queensland state schools over the past five years. Class size data released by DETE on Monday 28 July 2014 reveals that:

• over 10 per cent of classes in Queensland state schools are oversized, which means that more than 49,500 students are forced to endure oversized classes.

• students’ in the early phase of learning (prep to year 3) face the highest incidence of oversized classes, with 13 per cent, or nearly one in six students, being forced to endure oversized classes – the research tells us that smaller class sizes have the most impact on students in the early phase of learning, yet rather than being addressed, we have seen oversized classes in this group increase by 6 per cent in the past five years.

References:


Smaller classes are an industrial issue as well as a learning issue

Smaller classes reduce teachers’ workload outside of the classroom as well. Fewer students means fewer exams to mark, less homework to check, fewer reports to complete and parents to contact. With vastly increasing demands on teachers’ workload, this is important.

The 2014 QTU quadrennial membership survey provides key insights into members’ concerns about the current state of teaching.

• 97 per cent of respondents reported that workload/stress was important or very important to them

• 91 per cent of respondents reported that class sizes were important or very important to them.

Never before have these results been so overwhelming. DETE must agree to arrangements which allow teachers to manage their workloads effectively.
Bargaining priorities: job security

In August and September 2014, QTU members met in workplaces across the state to nominate their top professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. These are the issues most affecting members now, and most likely to affect the whole state schooling system in the future. Job security was one of the top 11 priorities identified.

Job security was not only nominated as a bargaining priority in QTU member workplace meetings in August and September 2014 – it was also named as one of the most important issues (equal first with workload/stress) by respondents to the QTU quadrennial member survey conducted earlier in the year.

It is little wonder that Queensland state school teachers and principals are concerned about job security. Under the current government, they have seen more than 14,000 jobs cut in the public service; they have heard from the Queensland Nurses’ Union of more than 4300 job losses in the hospital and health service (figures which only came to light after a successful right to information request by the QNU); and they have witnessed the bitter dispute in which the government attempted to force public hospital doctors onto unfair, unnegotiated contracts.

The imposition of “performance-based, fixed-term contracts” on principals and deputy principals was announced – with no consultation with the QTU – when the Queensland Government released its “Great teachers = Great results” plan in April 2013. That plan claims that: “over time, all principals and deputy principals will be more accountable for improved outcomes in their school through employment on a fixed-term contract basis.”

There is no evidence that imposing insecure employment on school leaders would have any positive impact on schools – more likely, it would lead to more unstable school leadership which would stifle the collegiality and innovation that education systems are purportedly striving for, and fracture schools’ relationships with their local communities.

QTU members voted overwhelmingly in both the 2013 and 2014 ballots to take industrial action if such contracts are imposed on school leaders. However, the Queensland Government has shown no sign of stepping away from its intention.

Further, changes to industrial relations legislation have introduced a new form of contract for “high income senior employees” – that is, those paid more than $129,300 per year including superannuation. These contracts exclude protections around unfair dismissal, award and certified agreement entitlements, and dispute resolution – issues that were central to the doctors’ contract dispute, and which echo the excesses of the former federal Workchoices regime.

In contrast, the ALP at its recent conference passed a policy to reject fixed-term, performance-based contracts for school principals.

Another major issue facing QTU members is temporary versus permanent appointments. While the state school system will need a small proportion of temporary appointments to cover temporary absences such as parental or long service leave, the QTU believes those arrangements should be kept to a minimum.

Temporary teachers are doing the same professional job as their permanent colleagues, yet often find it difficult to secure home loans, or plan their own families’ lives with any certainty. This is particularly an issue for beginning teachers, many of whom begin their teaching careers as temporary employees.
If teachers are to continue to be attracted to and retained in the profession, maximised permanent employment is essential. Maximising permanency will only be possible if the government provides enough funding to employ sufficient new teachers to cover enrolment growth while maintaining class sizes. In this government’s first budget, delivered in September 2012, there was a shortfall of 519 FTEs. That shortfall has not been addressed in subsequent budgets.

In 2013, the Newman government legislated to override clauses that had been negotiated by unions into enterprise bargaining agreements, including maximising permanent employment arrangements in teacher agreements that go back to 1997. The QTU has analysed data from March 2014 (post day-8 figures); the proportion of temporary teachers employed by DETE was 14.9%, up from 13.9% in 2013. The increase is not explained by a matching rise in permanent teachers on leave; in five of the eight DETE regions, there are more temporary teachers than teachers on leave.

Currently, a memorandum of agreement between the QTU and the Department of Education, Training and Employment states that temporary teachers with three years of continuous service in the same role will be eligible for a permanent employment offer (as long as there has not been a break in service of more than 60 school days.)

For more information at www.qtu.asn.au
- QTU advice brochure “Teachers seeking permanent teacher employment”
- QTU information brochures “Temporary teaching (contract teachers)” and “Conversion of temporary teachers to permanency”
- Memorandum of agreement between the QTU and DETE on conversion to permanency
- Information on the QTU website about contracts:
  www.qtu.asn.au/collections/member-groups/educational-leaders/articles/three-year-terms-are-politicians-not-principals/
  www.qtu.asn.au/collections/member-groups/educational-leaders/contracts-school-leaders-kate-ruttiman-8-aug-2014/
- Insecure employment is a growing issue across the Australian workforce; the ACTU has released an in-depth report of the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work, Lives On Hold: unlocking the potential of Australia’s workforce:

Authorised by Graham Moloney, General Secretary, QTU, 21 Graham St, Milton Q 4064 October 2014 | Page 2 of 2
Bargaining priorities: non-contact time

In August and September 2014, QTU members met in workplaces across the state to nominate their top professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. These are the issues most affecting members now, and most likely to affect the whole state schooling system in the future. Non-contact time was one of the top 11 priorities identified.

QTU industrial campaigns secured non-contact time (NCT) for secondary teachers in 1972, and for primary and special education teachers in 1994. The current entitlements are 3.5 hours of NCT per week for secondary teachers, and two hours for primary and special school teachers.

The granting of NCT recognised the increasingly complex demands on the teaching profession, and the importance of a collegial approach to teaching. NCT is used for professional work such as preparing lessons, correcting and assessing student work, reporting and developing curriculum materials. It also allows a valuable opportunity for classroom teachers to work together in teams, and within and across year levels, on longer-term planning documents such as semester overviews and unit plans.

In keeping with their professional judgement, and in concert with community expectations, teachers also use this time to prepare for individualised learning for those students who would benefit, particularly those who are performing below year level expectations and those who need an accelerated program.

With the ever increasing workload pressures, which include the implementation of the Australian curriculum, OneSchool reporting and pedagogical frameworks, the need to protect and enhance non-contact time is evident. The current level of non-contact time for primary and special school teachers is the minimum non-contact time required for planning and correction. Teaching principals require more release time to attend to administration and program development.

However, there are increasing demands being placed on this time in schools that are detracting from the core reasons for this time: preparation, correction and reporting.

The 2013 OECD “Teaching and Learning International Survey” (TALIS) shows Australian teachers worked an average of 43 hours per week, five more than the average for the 24 countries surveyed. The OECD “Education at a Glance 2014” shows Australian teachers have more teaching hours than 30 of the 37 member countries.

It is important that the purpose and use of non-contact time remain protected by the industrial instruments. If the government requires teachers to attend to duties other than this during school time, then additional non-contact time should be provided.
For more information at www.qtu.asn.au

- QTU information brochures “Non-contact time (preparation and correction) secondary teachers” and “Non-contact time for teachers in primary schools (including prep) and special schools”
- QTU position statement “Planning and Preparation (including Differentiation and Individual Student Plans)”
Bargaining priorities: transfers and relocations

In August and September 2014, QTU members met in workplaces across the state to nominate their top professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. These are the issues most affecting members now, and most likely to affect the whole state schooling system in the future. Transfers and relocations was one of the top 11 priorities identified.

Queensland’s teacher transfer and principal relocation system is the key to ensuring that Queensland children have the same access to quality state school education, regardless of their postcode.

The state has one of the most geographically diverse education systems in the nation. According to the Productivity Commission’s “Report on Government Services” released in 2014, Queensland has a high proportion of very small schools (with between one and 35 students), second only to the Northern Territory. Of Queensland’s 1259 state schools, 157 are classified as remote (more than three hours drive to the nearest major provincial centre or large town) and 472 are rural (within 1.5 hours drive to the nearest major provincial or regional centre).

These are the schools which depend on a robust transfer and relocation system. With nearly half of Queensland’s population living in the Greater Brisbane area, followed by the Gold and Sunshine Coast regions, rural and remote schools must attract and retain education professionals from metropolitan areas if they are to have adequate staffing.

Teachers accept that service in these locations is necessary – in fact many remember their years of what was known as “country service” as some of the most memorable in their careers. Yet this service also takes many teachers far from their own homes, families and friends, and is even more complicated when those teachers have partners and children.

While rural and remote placements are often the first appointments for beginning teachers, principals and experienced teachers may want to move for a period into these settings throughout their careers, to broaden their professional horizons. These moves bring valuable expertise into both the schools and local communities – but are less likely to be requested if teachers and principals are not able to return to their preferred areas of residence.

In the 2014 teacher transfer process, there is evidence that a number of teachers who have completed significant rural or remote service have not received transfers in their requested geographic area.

The transfer and relocation system is also critical in staffing challenging metropolitan schools. While working in these schools often brings a great sense of achievement, it can also take its toll on teachers through the complex demands they face.

In the current teacher transfer system, points are accrued according to a school’s rating and the teacher’s period of service at that school. School ratings are based on remoteness, access to and level of community services, complexity and staffing requirements.
For the sake of Queensland’s state school system, and out of respect for the individuals who comprise that system’s professional workforce, it is crucial that transfer processes are transparent and fair across the state. Any weakening of that system will threaten the delivery of education in the state’s most vulnerable schools.

All Queensland students are entitled to be engaged in high quality programs of teaching and learning, regardless of remoteness or regional location. The QTU has grave concerns over the ability of remote and regional schools to recruit and retain teachers and school leaders if they are unable to relocate back to preferred areas of service. This would create inequity and jeopardise the entitlement of students in those communities to high quality curriculum and pedagogy.

The QTU has raised concerns with the department about the potential impact of the Independent Public Schools program on the transfer and relocation systems and has committed to working with the department on ensuring that viable systems are in place so that all students in Queensland have access to a high quality education.

The same applies to principal recruitment and selection. Yet the Queensland Government has already compromised the application of procedural fairness by removing QTU representatives from principal selection panels in 2013. The move was allegedly made to “give parents a say” – yet selection panels already included a parent representative, either from the local community or from P&Cs Qld. Removing the QTU nominees has removed the expertise of those who are best placed to understand the principal role in diverse settings, and to have a solid understanding of the industrial context.

Most worryingly, the new principal relocation process does not take into consideration a principal’s length of service in remote or rural settings; this is very likely to dissuade candidates from applying for roles in those locations since they will have no confidence that they will be able to later relocate to their preferred location.

The government alleged its changes were in response to parents wanting more stability in school leadership – the impact will be quite the opposite as any certainty around their future careers is removed from principals.

For more information at www.qtu.asn.au
- QTU information brochure on “Relocations for deputy principals, heads of program and guidance officers”
- QTU web pages on principal recruitment and selection
- DETE document “Teacher transfer guidelines”
Bargaining priorities: pay

In August and September 2014, QTU members met in workplaces across the state to nominate their top professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. These are the issues most affecting members now, and most likely to affect the whole state schooling system in the future. Pay was one of the top 11 priorities identified.

Queensland’s teacher transfer and principal relocation system is the key to ensuring that Queensland children have the same access to quality state school education, regardless of their postcode.

The state has one of the most geographically diverse education systems in the nation. According to the Productivity Commission’s “Report on Government Services” released in 2014, Queensland has a high proportion of very small schools (with between one and 35 students), second only to the Northern Territory. Of Queensland’s 1259 state schools, 157 are classified as remote (more than three hours drive to the nearest major provincial centre or large town) and 472 are rural (within 1.5 hours drive to the nearest major provincial or regional centre).

These are the schools which depend on a robust transfer and relocation system. With nearly half of Queensland’s population living in the Greater Brisbane area, followed by the Gold and Sunshine Coast regions, rural and remote schools must attract and retain education professionals from metropolitan areas if they are to have adequate staffing.

Teachers accept that service in these locations is necessary – in fact many remember their years of what was known as “country service” as some of the most memorable in their careers. Yet this service also takes many teachers far from their own homes, families and friends, and is even more complicated when those teachers have partners and children.

While rural and remote placements are often the first appointments for beginning teachers, principals and experienced teachers may want to move for a period into these settings throughout their careers, to broaden their professional horizons. These moves bring valuable expertise into both the schools and local communities – but are less likely to be requested if teachers and principals are not able to return to their preferred areas of residence.

In the 2014 teacher transfer process, there is evidence that a number of teachers who have completed significant rural or remote service have not received transfers in their requested geographic area.

The transfer and relocation system is also critical in staffing challenging metropolitan schools. While working in these schools often brings a great sense of achievement, it can also take its toll on teachers through the complex demands they face.

In the current teacher transfer system, points are accrued according to a school’s rating and the teacher’s period of service at that school. School ratings are based on remoteness, access to and level of community services, complexity and staffing requirements.
Bargaining priorities: RAIS

In August and September 2014, QTU members met in workplaces across the state to nominate their top professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. These are the issues most affecting members now, and most likely to affect the whole state schooling system in the future. RAIS was one of the top 11 priorities identified.

The Remote Area Incentives Scheme (RAIS) was won by QTU members in 1991. The incentives attract teachers and principals to Queensland’s remotest schools such as those in the Torres Strait and western Queensland, and reward them for ongoing service in those communities.

The current scheme was achieved after a significant member campaign in 1996, including 48-hour strikes in rural and remote schools. The scheme includes incentive payments for those who remain in rural and remote locations beyond their minimum service requirements, and compensation payments for travel to and from remote locations.

Despite the scheme’s central importance in a state as geographically diverse as Queensland, RAIS was one of the many conditions the state government attempted to turn into a matter of policy, with no industrial protections, during the last round of enterprise bargaining in 2012.

Without RAIS, teachers and their families in rural and remote settings risk losing:

- Compensation benefits (related to travel) $1200 - $6000 pa
- Compensation for spouse and dependents $600 - $6000 pa
- Incentives to stay beyond initial posting $2400 - $6000 pa
- Special emergent leave 2 – 5 days
- Special induction program for new teachers.

The incentives recognise that teachers – many of them in their first few years in the profession – are relocating far from their own homes and families to undertake service in remote communities. The cost of living is often much higher in these communities. The Queensland Government Statistician’s Office publishes a regular report on retail prices for a range of goods and services in regional centres across Queensland; the latest, published in May 2014, shows that a centre such as Weipa has a 13.5% higher cost than Brisbane for all surveyed items excluding housing, and 22.5% higher when housing is included. Those living and working in remote areas also have to travel much further for a range of professional services, including specialist health care, than those in the south-east corner and major provincial centres.

RAIS not only helps attract education professionals to remote and rural areas; it also helps to provide stability in the teaching workforce over time.

Members have gained improvements to RAIS in previous certified agreements. In the 2006 agreement, DETE recognised the complexity of work for teachers and principals in communities with Alcohol Management Plans (AMPs), and provided additional release days and support for relocation to and from these communities. In the 2010 agreement, DETE recognised the unique circumstances relating to travel and the cost of living in the most remote parts of the state; through negotiations with the QTU, DETE introduced the “Identified Location Incentive” for teachers and school leaders in very remote locations.
While the government refers to RAIS as a “matter of policy”, the increase in incentives and compensation benefits and additional leave have been achieved through negotiations in successive agreements. These are not matters of policy but should be protected and recognised as working conditions for teachers and school leaders in the most remote areas of Queensland.

The following schools/centres (shown with transfer rating) rely on RAIS to help attract and retain teachers and school leaders.

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For more information at www.qtu.asn.au

- QTU information brochure “Remote Area Incentives Scheme (RAIS)”
- Latest Queensland Government Statistician’s Office report on the cost of living in various regions of Queensland


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¹ - locations where teachers receive the identified location incentive
Bargaining priorities: beginning teacher issues

The whole Queensland state school teaching profession has backed new teachers by nominating “beginning teacher issues” in the top bargaining priorities for the QTU.

Attacks on colleagues at the start of their careers were roundly rejected by QTU members in the last round of enterprise bargaining negotiations in 2012, when the Queensland Government attempted to freeze beginning teachers’ pay for three years.

The QTU’s log of claims in that EB included a reduction of the teaching load for beginning teachers to 0.8 - as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership says: “the beginning teacher is in the unique position of learning to teach at the same time as having to teach.” This is equally true for those starting on permanent or temporary appointments.

This issue has become even more important over the past few years as all teachers – including those at the start of their profession – struggle with increased societal problems being reflected in their classrooms, chronic inadequate funding, and incessant workload increases through data collection, reporting and the implementation of major changes such as NAPLAN testing and the Australian curriculum.

From day one in the classroom, new teachers must also learn to teach students with disabilities, liaise with parents and the local community and manage the behaviour of their students.

As new employees of the Queensland Government, they must also undertake mandatory training in:

- Code of conduct and ethical decision-making
- Keys to managing information
- Health, safety and wellbeing
- Internal controls
- Student protection training
- Curriculum activity risk assessment.

All of these demands place extra pressure on education professionals at an already stressful time in their careers, when they are undergoing the eight-month probation period on which their futures depend.

Most other Australian states and territories recognise that beginning teachers need a reduced teaching load: beginning or graduate teachers have extra release time in New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT.

There have been some recent improvements for Queensland’s new teachers. In one of the very few
commendable actions in the government’s “Great teachers = great results” agenda, mentoring is tied, for each beginning teacher, to two hours’ release time per week for 36 weeks for mentor teachers. However, there is no associated funded release time for beginning teachers to take full advantage of the mentoring program.

For more information at www.qtu.asn.au

- QTU information brochures on “Beginning to teach (probation, provisional registration & induction)” and “Teacher employment processes and suitability rankings”
- DETE information for beginning teachers
Bargaining priorities: workload

In August and September 2014, QTU members met in workplaces across the state to nominate their top professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. These are the issues most affecting members now, and most likely to affect the whole state schooling system in the future. Workload was one of the top 11 priorities identified.

Rapidly escalating workload is one of the most significant issues facing Queensland’s state school teachers and principals: it rated as the equal number one issue in the 2014 QTU quadrennial member survey, with 97% saying it was important. In a recent pilot workload survey run by the QTU, 92% of respondents reported a significant to drastic increase in workload in the past two years, with 90% saying there had been a significant to drastic increase in computer time spent on administrative tasks.

The “National Teaching Workforce Dataset” analysis report, released by the Australian Government in October 2014, showed that the most common reason for teachers to leave the profession was heavy workload.

The third most common reason (after insufficient recognition or reward) was “changes imposed on schools from outside”. Many of these changes have been prompted by the political obsession with data – providing as it does a “dummy’s guide” to a highly complex profession. Data should inform teaching and school leadership, not drive it. Yet there has been an explosion of mandatory, data-driven reporting in all Queensland state schools.

As teachers and school administrators have been obliged to undertake heavier workloads, little if anything has been removed from their obligations.

To illustrate just some of the extra demands on teachers and school leaders, the following changes have occurred in state schools across Queensland in the past 10 years.

- NAPLAN testing
- School annual reports, including information on the school context (including distinct curriculum offerings, school income broken down by funding source and the results of parent, student and teacher satisfaction surveys), staff information (including expenditure on professional development, unplanned absences and retention) and key student outcomes (including attendance rates for each year level, non-attendance strategies and NAPLAN results) My School reporting requirements
- Teaching and learning audits
- Discipline audits
- Changes to school assessment methods and practices in senior syllabus areas
- Data cycles, data reflection, data analysis, increasing expectations around the production and analysis of data: pre-test, test and post-test (plus “data placemats”)
- Australian curriculum, including familiarisation, adaptation and adoption of C2C materials in context
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- Development and implementation of the pedagogical framework
- Transition to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)
- Classroom observations and collegial engagement
- Logging professional development
- Expectations of the use of One School on C4T devices, including responding to the rapidly changing requirements of the system
- School maintenance, particularly with BAS and direct-to-market processes
- Community engagement frameworks
- Mandatory planning, including: school planning, reviewing and reporting frameworks; school plans; annual implementation plans; annual review of enrolment management plans; school-wide behaviour plans; and principal performance plans
- Increasing expectations of rapid response to emails and text messages, including after hours and during holidays
- Increasing expectations of communication with parents and carers, including class e-letters (in some cases, weekly) and diversified homework tasks
- VET in schools: training package changes, Australian Skills Quality Authority audits, and Registered Training Organisation audits and visits
- Mandatory training on DETE policies (such as code of conduct)
- Increased student protection accountability
- Additional roles and expectations of teachers associated with the loss of specialist support staff
- Adhering to 33 school management procedures, 10 school community procedures, seven student learning and wellbeing procedures and nearly 40 policies.

Social changes are also adding to the extra duties teachers and principals are taking on, largely in their own time (and often funded out of their own wallets) because of local community needs. These duties include: providing breakfast and learning materials for students; running out-of-school-hours homework clubs, chess clubs and gardening clubs, among many others; providing extra tutoring for students with particular needs; and extra-curricular activities such as music camps, leadership camps, competitions and performing arts events.

Many parents are also more engaged with their children’s education – while that is a valuable development in building the school/family relationship, it also brings heightened expectations and workload for teachers and principals.

More and more of society’s increasingly complex problems are being brought to school; and schools are being given more and more responsibility to “solve” those problems. Never has it been truer that teachers aren’t just teachers, but also providers of a myriad of student and community support roles.

International research confirms the heavy workload of Australian teachers. The 2013 OECD “Teaching and Learning International Survey” (TALIS) shows Australian teachers worked an average of 43 hours per week, five more than the average for the 24 countries surveyed. The OECD “Education at a Glance 2014” shows Australian teachers have more teaching hours than 30 of the 37 member countries.
The QTU believes that a new classroom teacher classification needs to be introduced over and above the existing scale for classroom and senior teachers to ensure that the system can attract and retain great teachers.

**Definition**

Professional pay is the creation of a new classification for classroom teachers that is designed to reward experienced teachers through recognition of their teaching knowledge and practice.

**Purpose**

Professional pay is designed to establish a salary horizon for classroom teachers that will encourage great teachers to remain in the classroom.

**Measures**

Professional pay would be determined by the demonstration of how a teacher’s experience and professional development contribute to improved professional practice based on the DETE/QTU Professional Standards for Teachers.

It is important to note that attainment of the new classification will not be automatic. Teachers will be required to demonstrate the DETE/QTU Professional Standards for Teachers within their professional practice.

How this will be assessed will need to be negotiated. QTU policy suggests that the process should include self and peer assessment. However, the QTU is willing to explore a variety of options that focus on the recognition of the teacher’s demonstration of the standards by their peers.

**Access**

Professional pay can be accessed by all classroom teachers with more than five years teaching experience.

Teachers will be able to apply for the new classification at any stage beyond five years teaching experience. If successful in attaining the classification, the teacher would move automatically to the new classification, which will be the highest salary rate attainable for a classroom teacher, regardless of years of experience.

As the new classification will sit above the incremental pay scale, a teacher will retain the salary of the new classification while they continue to demonstrate the professional standards. This will require a regular review of their professional practice, however this review should not be onerous.

If a teacher chooses not to apply for the new classification they will retain access to the incremental salary scale and continue to progress through the scale to senior teacher. However, a teacher cannot access the new classification without having successfully participated in the application process.

**Impact on current salary structures**

Professional pay would require the retention of the incremental salary scale so that those teachers not wanting to access the new classification will continue to receive recognition for their experience up to and including senior teacher.

**Funding**

It is the QTU’s position that the professional pay scheme should be fully funded by the government. For the scheme to be successful in retaining professional classroom teachers, it should also be supported by professional teaching and learning conditions. It is the view of the QTU that any funding for the scheme should be additional to that which is currently provided for education.
Within the classroom teacher classification structure, the new “professional pay” classification would be recognised in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Progression</th>
<th>Eligibility for professional pay classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Used to determine the remuneration of paid internships in rural and remote schools, complex schools and difficult to staff subjects</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Access by “early career teachers”. Progression through this band would be in annual increments in accordance with the current award</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Access by “continuing/experienced teachers”. Progression through this band would be in annual increments in accordance with the current award</td>
<td>Eligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior teacher</td>
<td>Access by teachers with nine years experience. Same conditions apply regarding the signing of the undertaking and the development of a personal action plan</td>
<td>Eligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional pay classification</td>
<td>Criteria: 1. must have five years teaching experience 2. determined upon assessment of application 3. retained while Professional Standards continue to be demonstrated 4. highest possible salary attainable for classroom teacher.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The QTU is committed to negotiating a classification for classroom teachers that will recognise their professionalism and commitment to education. It also believes that for quality teachers to be retained in the profession and in the classroom, a classification such as suggested in this proposal is essential.

Members should actively campaign to ensure that the state and federal governments know that professional teachers deserve to be recognised and rewarded.

If you require further information on professional pay for classroom teachers, visit the QTU website: www.qtu.asn.au or contact the Queensland Teachers’ Assist Desk on 1300 11 7823.
Bargaining priorities: resourcing of schools

In August and September 2014, QTU members met in workplaces across the state to nominate their top professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. These are the issues most affecting members now, and most likely to affect the whole state schooling system in the future. Resourcing of schools was one of the top 11 priorities identified.

One of the 11 priorities identified by QTU members, and endorsed by State Council on 13 September, was the resourcing of schools. This has rightly been identified by members, for governments at both the state and federal level have let schools, teachers, and most importantly students, down in recent years. Schools are required to do ever more with ever less.

The LNP at both government levels squandered the opportunity to introduce the Gonski needs-based school funding model, which would have dramatically improved schools’ ability to meet their students’ needs. While the Queensland Education Minister has downplayed the impact of the 2014-15 federal budget, even writing to school Parents and Citizens Associations accusing the QTU of telling lies about school funding, the information prepared by his own department reveals the truth. There will be a decrease in school funding of $30 billion nationally over the period 2014-15 to 2024-25, compared to the former Australian Government arrangements. Queensland schools will miss out on $6 billion in funding under the 2014-15 budget projections for funding over the next 10 years, of which $3.7 billion will be lost from government schools.

At the state level, there are announcements of “record spending” on education in every state budget. Given annual increasing enrolments and the rising costs of delivering education, “record” is not necessarily adequate.

The 2012-13 State Budget delivered the first under-resourcing blow. The loss of the rounding benefit for primary schools, the abolition of the year 2 net teacher allocation and the removal of the resource teacher allocation from secondary schools, combined with a shortfall of funding for adequate staffing to cover enrolment growth while maintaining class sizes, equalled a total shortfall of 519 FTEs. This shortfall has not been subsequently addressed by the Queensland Government.

Of current concern is the Whole School Support – Student Learning Resources (WSS-SLR) model of direct-to-school funding. DETE has announced that there will be no centrally funded regional allocation of advisory visiting teachers (AVTs) to support students in state schools, with the future of the service depending on schools opting in and contributing to it from their WSS-SLR allocation. If schools choose not to contribute to the allocation of AVTs, the service will disappear and AVTs will be redeployed into teaching positions in schools. This will potentially reduce the ability of schools to support the teachers of students with intellectual impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical impairment and autistic spectrum disorder.
There are also concerns regarding the future of flexible learning centres (FLCs), which are dependent on schools in their cluster contributing part of their WSS-SLR allocation to fund them.

Teacher workload rates as a significant issue for QTU members, with 97% of respondents to the 2014 QTU quadrennial member survey saying that it was important. The QTU suggests that additional planning time through curriculum coordination time (CCT) and Heads of Curriculum in all primary and special schools could assist with workload pressures.

Inadequate resourcing also affects schools with regard to student behaviour management and support for students with complex social or behavioural issues. DETE has a responsibility to assist schools through a range of measures, including: implementing QTU class sizes policy; equipping schools with positive and supportive learning environments, as well as withdrawal room facilities; providing behaviour management personnel, such as guidance officers, in all schools; and providing teachers and school leaders with sufficient professional development.

The QTU supports school-based management guarantees as contained in the certified agreement, particularly around school-based consultation involving local consultative committees and flexibility on areas such as staffing and professional development. It is critical, though, to distinguish these arrangements from one-line school budgets, as was proposed in the first government announcements about Independent Public Schools (IPS). Such budgeting is often used overseas, with schools allocated one “bucket” of money for all costs, including staffing, maintenance and resources. Almost invariably, and particularly for complex schools, the amount is inadequate and has forced school leaders to cut corners wherever they can – perhaps by sacrificing resources for staffing, or by hiring only the least expensive (and least experienced) staff to make up funds for maintenance.

The memorandum of agreement between the QTU and DETE on IPS is clear that “funds allocated in the total school budget for staffing must be used for the employment of staff”, and that “notional allocations for staffing are to be used rather than real dollar allocations to schools for staffing.”

Another area of resourcing concern is the provision and maintenance of teacher housing. The 2013/14 State Budget reports a decrease in funds allocated to teacher housing from $5.8m to $2.5m. The $2.5m allocated for the 13/14 year is deferred spending from the 2012/13 budget, it is not new money.

For more information at www.qtu.asn.au

- QTU/DETE memorandum of agreement on IPS
Bargaining priorities: Australian curriculum

In August and September 2014, QTU members met in workplaces across the state to nominate their top professional, industrial and resourcing priorities. These are the issues most affecting members now, and most likely to affect the whole state schooling system in the future. The Australian curriculum was one of the top 11 priorities identified.

Queensland has been an early adopter of the Australian curriculum. The workload and professional demands placed on teachers and school leaders in implementing the curriculum – including familiarisation, professional development and the use of resources – have been nominated as one of QTU members’ major concerns.

In 2012, Queensland became one of the first states or territories to teach English, mathematics and science from prep to year 10, with history added in 2014. According to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, Queensland also had ambitious plans in implementing all the curriculum’s learning areas or subjects.

That plan has been modified after negotiations between the QTU and DETE – the complexities and workload associated with the move of year 7 into secondary from 2015 means that the original timetable was unworkable. Civics and citizenship (from year 3) and economics and business (from year 5) are due to rollout in 2015, with languages implemented by language teachers. No more than two new p-10 learning areas are to be implemented at the same time by any one teacher. The arts, technologies and health and physical education are to be in a familiarisation or implementation phase by 2015.

To support implementation, DETE developed, and continues to develop, C2C resources. The original purpose of these resources was to provide examples and learning activities that could be modified if teachers chose to do so; basically, a resource bank from which classroom teachers could draw from in line with their professional judgement.

Issues arise when there are suggestions that the use of these materials is mandated, particularly against data-driven timelines. Education is not, and never will be, a “teach by numbers” process, but will always rely on the experience and skills of professional educators to make judgements that best serve the learning needs of their students.

Further complications arose this year when the Australian Government commissioned a hasty review of the curriculum, before it had been fully implemented. Questions (and even scandal) has surrounded the people involved in the review and so raised questions about whether the review was done for educational or political purposes.

Some of the findings hardly came as a surprise to those people responsible for implementing the curriculum. Most obvious were the findings that the curriculum is overcrowded, and not inclusive for students with a disability.
The review’s recommendation to deal with the first issue is worrying – Queensland’s introduction of prep as a play-based year of learning in 2007 was widely welcomed by teachers, yet the review has proposed narrowing the curriculum focus to literacy and numeracy in prep to year 2. With play-based learning considered best practice in the early years, and the introduction of prep credited with improvements to Queensland’s NAPLAN results, any changes are considered with suspicion by education professionals.

Other recommendations appear to be based on ideology not pedagogy; for example, a “reconceptualising” of cross-curriculum priorities about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and an increased emphasis on “morals, values, and spirituality to better recognise our Judeo-Christian heritage” (“our” is hardly an inclusive term in that context).

For teachers and principals, the concern is that they will be expected to rapidly adapt to curriculum changes made for political reasons. This concern is heightened in light of another recommendation of the review to reconstitute ACARA as a company with a board which has no representation of education authorities.

Curriculum content is not static, and clearly must evolve over time. That time, however, should be informed by social and professional evolution, and not be defined by election cycles.

The QTU encourages members to share their experiences with implementing the Australian curriculum through workplace and branch meetings, advocates for suitable resources and supports members in asserting their professional rights in managing curriculum change.

For more information at www.qtu.asn.au
• QTU fact sheet on the Australian curriculum