

# QTU Funding Policy

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# 1. Public Education

## 1.1 The importance and role of public education

The QTU asserts that the social and educational interests and needs of Australia are best served by the maintenance of a strong, fully funded, high quality public education and training system. The QTU believes that parental choice in education must include the choice of a local, free, secular, inclusive, well-resourced state school.

A strong public education and training system:

- the rights of employees to withdraw their labour; and
- the role played by trade unions in representing the rights and aspirations of workers.
- provides benefits to individual students (e.g. preparation for worthwhile work, access to important social and
- cultural knowledge)
- develops the local community, the state and the nation socially, culturally and economically
- helps build democracy
- contributes to equity and social justice
- fosters inclusivity while at the same time valuing a diversity of experiences and backgrounds.

Public education should:

- be open to all
- be free
- be secular
- offer a rich and diverse curriculum with appropriate class sizes, facilities, equipment and qualified teachers
- lead to worthwhile further education, training and/or employment opportunities.

The QTU calls on state and federal governments to recognise their primary responsibility for public education and to provide funding to ensure that public education institutions are appropriately resourced.

## 1.2 Underlying principles of a public system of education

Each child has the right to an education. Schools within the public system should be inclusive. While respecting and enhancing the culture of students and their families, public schools have an obligation to foster a free, tolerant and democratic society and to uphold educational values and objectives.

Each child has a right to experience the diversity of society, understand its workings and share equitably in its opportunities. The quality of students' educational experience should not depend upon the wealth or social class of their parents, their ethnic background, where they live or the wealth, interest or indifference of the local community.

## 2. Funding of education

### 2.1 Education funding (general)

All schools within the public system should be fully financed from public sources, should not charge fees and should operate within a public policy of equity of opportunity. Schools which choose to remain outside the public system should not be entitled to public funds and benefits. However if funds are provided by governments to all schools, then the public system must have funding priority, to maintain a system to the highest standard open to all children. A sector blind needs based funding model, providing recurrent funding to address student needs, must apply.

The QTU supports the expansion of students' access to vocational education and training (VET) through public TAFE and schooling systems. Public funding for VET should be increased, and TAFE the public provider of VET, should receive at least 70% of public funding. The QTU opposes the provision of funds for VET via competitive market mechanisms. Schools and institutes of TAFE should co-operate in the provision of VET to post-compulsory students, so that wasteful duplication and harmful competition can be minimised and the cost-effective provision of programs maximised.

The QTU affirms its support for free higher education and rejects tertiary fees as socially unjust. The QTU opposes any attempt to commercialise/privatise the higher education sector and, in particular, it expresses its concern about the setting aside of places in current tertiary institutions for full fee-paying domestic and overseas students, the growth of full fee under-graduate / post-graduate courses and the establishment of private universities or other private tertiary institutions in Australia.

The QTU supports a funding policy of positive discrimination in favour of educationally disadvantaged groups in the Australian community.

### 2.2 State funding of education

The QTU has been concerned for a number of years about the state government's inadequate funding for education. Queensland has a long record as a low spender on education in comparison to other Australian states and territories. This means that the education system in Queensland has suffered from the cumulative effects of long-term underfunding. Thus, there remains a need for long-term and continuous improvement of infrastructure.

### 2.3 Commonwealth funding of education

The QTU affirms its support for continued Commonwealth involvement in the funding of education, in order to secure a more equitable distribution of resources and educational outcomes. The Commonwealth Government should provide government schools with funds aimed at overcoming disadvantage. The QTU rejects the argument that the Commonwealth Government's role is primarily related to funding non-government schooling.

The QTU supports the concept of comprehensive resource agreements between the Commonwealth Government and all (government and non-government) education authorities. These agreements should be mutually negotiated and agreed between the Commonwealth and the states. Negotiations over the development of resource agreements should involve major stakeholders as well as governments. The Commonwealth should not use funding as a means of coercing states to follow a unilaterally determined Commonwealth Government agenda.

Funding directed to overcoming identified disadvantage must form the basis of such resource agreements. The consensus reached around definition of disadvantages in education that impact on equity of opportunity for students includes: socio-economic status, English language proficiency, Aboriginal and Torres Strait heritage, disability, school size and location.

## **2.4 Funding of state schools**

### **2.4.1 School grant**

Increases in school grants are warranted. Too much reliance is still placed on school P&C associations, parents and teachers to provide financial support for basic provisions. The grant should be, at a minimum, indexed annually to account for inflation. The grant should be sufficient to provide for all of the school's needs.

### **2.4.2 Textbook allowances**

The QTU supports a system in which all textbooks and related supplies are provided to students by schools. Current arrangements for textbook hiring schemes are supported as a step in this direction. However, there should be a significant increase in the amount of funding made available for this purpose, to ensure that schools can adequately provide all the necessary supplies. Once an adequate system is introduced, no school should be allowed to levy students/parents for any school supplies. Once textbook grants are set at a realistic level, they should be automatically indexed to reflect price rises.

### **2.4.3 School-based budgeting**

School-based budgeting must be consistent with the following principles.

- The state has a clear responsibility to fund all state schools adequately.
- Students and schools have common as well as unique needs and the system has a responsibility to guarantee that these common and unique needs will be met.
- Running costs and other unavoidable non-educational expenditure which is outside of the "control" of schools should be a system responsibility, not a local school responsibility. No useful educational purpose is served by devolving the responsibility for meeting these costs and they can pose a serious threat to flexibility, as they are expenses which must be paid and which will have a tendency to grow as a proportion of the school's budget.
- Decision-making regarding the direction, allocation and utilisation of resources should be devolved to the school level, where such a policy will lead to the more effective achievement of educational goals. To this end, it is important that the school community defines a school philosophy which sets the framework for decisions.
- Flexibility and the meeting of unique local needs should be matters of enhancing a school's basic resource entitlements and not trade-offs for any of these basic entitlements.
- Measures need to be put in place to ensure that decisions are made in a responsible and democratic manner involving parents, teachers and school administrators, so that decisions reflect a true consensus of views in the best interests of schools.
- The professional and industrial rights of teachers must be respected.

## 2.5 Funding of non-government schools

The QTU opposes government funding of non-government schools, and in particular the provision of financial support to the wealthiest private schools.

The QTU recognises that current government policy at state and Commonwealth level supports continued funding for non-government schools. Therefore, in the short-term, the QTU advocates that funding for non-government schools be distributed according to the consensus principle of overcoming disadvantage for all students regardless of the schooling sector in which they are educated. By necessity, the direction of resources to public education will predominate as it is this sector that provides education for the vast majority of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The QTU calls for the reintroduction of a new schools policy, consistent with the concept of planned educational provision. In particular, such a policy would be a means of limiting the expansion of non-government schooling which is not economically viable, represents a duplication of existing services or would have a direct negative impact on existing government and/or non-government schools. State and federal governments should insist that any funding for non-government schools is contingent upon the preparedness of these schools to guarantee maintenance of effort in contributed services, and the recurrent expenditure from fees and donations.

State and federal governments should legislate for full public accountability in respect of the income and use of all funds, both public and private, for non-government schools.

## 2.6 Marketisation/commercialisation of education

### 2.6.1 Education vouchers

The QTU rejects the concept of vouchers for the financing of education, in that:

- they represent an attempt to break down the comprehensive systems of public education which have been developed to the advantage of Australia, by providing financial inducements for parents to take their children away from government schools
- they are effectively a system of equal per capita grants provided to schools irrespective of need and are likely to be supplemented in many non-government schools by fees, exaggerating inequities between schools in Australia
- they are harmful to effective planning in the provision of schools and employment of teachers
- their alleged objective, increased freedom of choice in education, would in practice only be available to certain Australians, resident in areas in which more than one school is available and with sufficient means to exercise that choice.

### 2.6.2 Trade in educational services

The QTU believes that Australia's involvement in the trade in educational services should:

- be consistent with principles of social justice
- maintain the quality of public education and its status and role as a free, accessible public social service providing vital social infrastructure
- aim to enhance international understanding and co-operation, as well as improve Australia's balance of payments.

- The QTU is concerned that trade in education is replacing aid in education to countries in the region, and that increasingly, financial aid is tied to expenditure in Australia on educational services, with the potential for distorting the education systems and supporting industries in recipient countries.
- The export of education services from Australia includes:
  - full cost fee studying in Australia (on–shore) or studying courses provided overseas by Australian institutions (off–shore)
  - the sale of Australian credentials overseas
  - the sale overseas of curriculum materials, professional education modules, and various education consultation services.

The QTU notes that the trade in educational services can have unintended detrimental consequences for the quality of public education in Australia, and on cultures, social structures and industries in the countries with which Australia trades. These effects are often subtle and indirect, but profound. They, as well as any positive benefits, must be fully taken into account when any proposal to trade in educational services is considered and regulations and guidelines developed. Programs must have ongoing monitoring and periodic review, evaluating all costs and benefits.

The QTU believes that appropriate regulation and control should be maintained to ensure that on–shore overseas student programs and other areas of trade in education are not used for immigration rackets and other inappropriate and exploitative purposes.

### **2.6.3 Full fee overseas students in government schools**

The program of full fee overseas students in government schools in Queensland should be in line with the following guidelines.

- The QTU should be involved in decisions regarding placement of any full–fee overseas students in government schools and the monitoring and review of the program.
- The program should be based on agreements negotiated between the Queensland Government/ Department of Education and the relevant overseas governments/education authorities.
- Criteria for placement should include:
  - the welfare of those students
  - the effect on individual government schools
  - the effect on the public education system as a whole
  - full–fee overseas students in private schools
  - consultation with the school communities affected by the proposed placement of full–fee overseas students should occur and their agreement obtained before any placement of full fee students in the school.

### **2.6.4 Full fee overseas students in non-government schools**

Government school representatives, including teacher unions, have a right to involvement in decision–making regarding programs of full cost fee overseas students in private schools (profit and non–profit) because of the potential and actual impact such programs have on the general provision of schooling, use of public resources, senior secondary credentials, access to tertiary education, welfare of overseas students, overseas societies and cultures, and so on. Some of these effects are indirect and subtle, but no less significant. In particular, there may be pressures arising from the needs and demands of overseas

students which undermine the critical, creative, democratic and inclusive aspects of senior secondary credentials and curriculum and selection criteria to tertiary education. Such pressure must be resisted.

### **2.6.5 Full fee overseas students in public higher education and TAFE, and private higher education, technical and further education and non-formal course institutions**

The QTU should work with other relevant unions to monitor trade in education at the tertiary and further education levels, and to seek appropriate changes. Issues to be considered include:

- Any diversion of resources from the educational and support programs for resident and subsidised overseas students
- Any setting up of a dual system internal to institutions where full-fee students are provided with higher quality educational and support services
- Any distortion of the curriculum, resource materials or assessment procedures to meet the needs or demands of full-fee students and which are detrimental to other students
- Any exploitation of overseas students
- The need to maintain and enhance the working conditions and job satisfaction of all staff.

### **2.6.6 Sale of senior secondary credentials**

The QTU should be fully informed of and involved in any negotiations for the sale of Queensland senior secondary credentials, off-shore or on-shore, including at private (especially profit making) institutions.

### **2.6.7 Purchase and sale of curriculum materials**

The QTU recognizes the importance of quality curriculum materials and the professional expertise of teachers who develop such materials. It is vital our education system retains the capacity to develop and utilize curriculum materials that are appropriate to the local social and cultural context of students.

Increasingly Queensland schools are purchasing curriculum materials. The QTU asserts the purchase of curriculum materials should only occur when there has been consultation at the school level and there is agreement regarding the value of purchased materials.

The QTU should be informed of and involved in the negotiation of any sale by the Department of Education of curriculum materials, consultant expertise, teacher training modules, etc. both interstate and overseas. Issues to be considered include:

- any diversion of resources and creative enthusiasm from local work
- any distortion of material intended for local Australian use to suit a wider market so that economies of scale can be gained
- any undermining of the employment conditions of local teachers and other education professionals in the overseas countries concerned
- any undermining of curriculum development or printing and publishing industry in those countries, or other neo-colonialist effects
- whether full costs are recovered.

### **2.6.8 Commercial activities and sponsorship in schools**

The QTU calls for ongoing monitoring and review of commercial activities in all public schools, including consideration of equity issues and ethical considerations. The Department of Education should take steps to ensure that the spirit and letter of the National Code of Practice for Sponsorship and Promotion in School Education are rigorously applied by both sponsoring organisations and schools.

### **2.6.9 Globalisation and education**

The QTU is concerned at the potential implications of the operation of the World Trade Organisation and its associated agreements on the provision of public education services.

The operation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) has placed public provision of educational services in Australia and many other countries under great stress and open to the transfer of services to the private sphere. The further subordination of education to market forces through the processes of GATS, with global educational services corporations entering the sphere, will undermine the accessibility of education and aggravate social inequality.

GATS may also have a detrimental impact on other UN conventions, such as the right to education provided for in the convention on the rights of the child and other conventions dealing with human rights, anti-discrimination on the grounds of race or gender, etc.

The QTU calls on the Australian Government to exclude certain areas from the operation of GATS, including public education, health and social security as well as national cultural activities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and cultural rights.

## **3. Organisation of education**

### **3.1 Principles for the administration of education**

Essential requirements in the organisation and administration of an educational system are:

- educative relationships between the key participants in the system (teachers and children)
- curricular and teaching methods adjusted to the needs and interests of students and to the communities in which they live
- democratic decision-making involving not only government but also teachers, parents' organisations and other community groups
- strategies of change and adaptation ensuring the replacement of outmoded practices and purposes by new ones satisfying new needs.

### **3.2 The public system**

Parliament, and through it, the Minister of Education of the elected government, must have a final responsibility for the general policies which are pursued within the public system. Responsibility for matters such as curriculum development and delivery and the management of the education system should, however, reside with the profession, the Department of Education and relevant statutory agencies, in consultation with the wider community.

The QTU believes that statutory authorities operating at arm's-length from government should have a key policy determining and decision-making role.

### **3.3 Diversity within the public system**

Within a framework of equity of opportunity, freedom of choice is a necessary principle of the public system of education. Freedom of choice derives from the recognition of the diversity of norms and values

held within the community, the differing interests and abilities of children and the need for schools to be responsive to the communities which they serve.

Since children vary in interests, backgrounds and aptitudes, sufficient staffing resources must be available to schools to provide choices in curriculum and style of schooling suited to each child's needs.

The educational programs of a school and its use of facilities may change over time as the composition of its community changes.

Schools in the public system have an obligation to cooperate with other schools to collectively achieve objectives which could not be met by each acting alone. Such cooperation should be facilitated by the provision of appropriate structures and resources.

### **3.4 Change in education systems**

It is appropriate that the education system in Queensland should be subjected to ongoing analysis and development. Moves which will lead to real improvements in education should be supported. A process of gradual reform rather than of radical upheaval is the most conducive to progress. Legislation or administrative arrangements resulting in significant changes to the education structures in the state should not be developed without proper, widespread and democratic consultation and debate.

Changes to the education system should be based on analysis of evidence derived from solid research. Education change must be based on an identifiable overarching educational philosophy.

The QTU believes in defining the aims of education and of schooling broadly. Schools play a significant role in the preparation of students for entrance into the workforce and in the provision of credentials which allow entrance to it at different levels. Schools impart valuable and significant knowledge and skills and encourage students to apply them critically. Schools promote moral values such as tolerance, self-discipline, honesty and concern for truth. Schools encourage students to develop strategies for relating to others on personal, social and cultural levels. They initiate young people into society. When they work well, schools help students to create a personal identity, to analyse and value their own experiences and use them as the basis for creating the future.

### **3.5 State education structures**

The QTU believes that statutory authorities operating at arm's-length from government should have a key policy- determining and decision-making role in relation to the following areas of education:

- teacher education and registration
- school curriculum
- training and employment
- non-government school registration.

Additionally, the QTU supports the creation of a higher education consultative committee, as described in clause 3.5.5 of this policy, to advise on higher education issues and facilitate liaison between higher education institutions and schools and VET providers.

Each of these bodies should develop a code of conduct for its members.

### 3.5.1 Teacher registration

The registration of teachers should be the responsibility of an independent, representative statutory body. The function of this body should include:

- reviewing teacher education
- accrediting teacher education courses for the purposes of registration
- maintaining a register of teachers
- fostering research into teacher education.

Practising teachers, including classroom teachers and nominees of teacher unions, should be a majority on this body.

Parents, as stakeholders in the quality of education, should be directly represented on this body. It is also important for the body to develop effective consultative links with a wide cross-section of groups in the general community, including universities. In the interests of ensuring the independence of the body, it is important that appointees be nominated directly by the members of recognised representative organisations or elected by registered teachers. The representation of the public sector on the body should reflect the central role of public (state) schooling in the education of students in this state.

The body should receive significant government funding so that it is not totally dependent on teacher registration fees.

### 3.5.2 Training and employment

The training and employment body, currently Jobs Queensland, should be an independent, representative, statutory body with responsibility for ensuring that TAFE and other VET courses in Queensland have standing, comparability and acceptance in industry, commerce and the wider community and interstate. It must also see that the needs of various groups with a stake in VET are taken into account in the development and delivery of VET courses, and that no one interest group is able to monopolise input. Groups with which it would be appropriate for this body to liaise include, among others, employer groups, trade unions, school curriculum authorities and education and training providers.

The body should recognise the central role of TAFE in providing VET in Queensland and consider measures designed to improve access to TAFE programs and to employment through TAFE programs.

Membership of this body should include representatives of industry/employers, the trade union movement, community representatives and a representative of the relevant state government department responsible for vocational education and training. Membership should also include provider representatives, in particular, both management and union (i.e. QTU) representatives from the schooling and TAFE sectors. The school curriculum authority should be represented.

### 3.5.3 School curriculum

The school curriculum authority should be an independent, representative, statutory body. Its functions should include:

- developing, trialling, approving and issuing P-12 syllabuses, source books and initial inservice materials, and accrediting courses

- promoting teacher development through inservice education
- advising the Minister on P–12 education, including vocational education in schools
- issuing leaving certificates
- setting core curriculum requirements in terms of goals and outcomes
- providing a means by which the overall academic achievements of students may be compared, for selection purposes for tertiary education and employment
- promoting curriculum review and development
- liaising with relevant groups in the community regarding developments in P–12 education
- liaising, where appropriate, with other Queensland and Federal statutory authorities and relevant stakeholder groups.

At least half of the membership of the authority should be practicing teachers. The QTU should have at least two representatives on the authority. Representatives of parents, business and industry, institutions of higher education, school systems and other relevant statutory authorities should also be included. The representation of the public sector on the authority should reflect the central role of public (state) schooling in the education of students in the state.

### 3.5.4 Non-government schools registration

Given the government regulation of Grammar Schools, non-government schools in Queensland ought to be subject to registration procedures that are consistent with the Grammar Schools Act 1975 (Qld). The administration of registration should be overseen by a registration authority. Where a non-government school fails to obtain registration, it should not be eligible for any state or federal funding and the governing authority of that school should be guilty of an offence if it enrolls or provides instruction to students.

Membership of the registration authority should include equal representation of government and non-government schooling sectors.

Non-government schools seeking registration should be required to satisfy the registration board that they comply with criteria relating to the following matters:

- school size and viability
- financial arrangements
- curricula
- teaching staff
- commitment to diversity and inclusivity
- equipment and facilities
- school philosophy
- organisational and management structures, including an open and accountable process for dealing with parental concerns and complaints
- industrial conditions for employees
- legislative requirements (e.g. workplace health and safety).

Proposed new non-government schools should also be required to meet appropriate planning criteria before becoming eligible for registration. Planning criteria should include assessment of:

- the potential for uneconomic use or duplication of existing facilities and services
- potentially adverse effects on existing schools
- population trends.

Penalties should be imposed on the governing authorities of any unregistered schools or schools failing to comply with the requirements of registration. Provisions should be put in place so that, from time to time, schools' compliance with the registration requirements can be monitored.

Additionally, the Minister's power to cause inspections of non-government schools and other sites of instruction ought to be amended to require inspection at intervals to be determined, rather than in response to a complaint.

### **3.5.5 Higher education consultative committee**

The QTU asserts that a state higher education consultative committee should be established to address the interface of schooling and TAFE with higher education and provide a forum for co-ordination of the concerns of higher education institutions.

Membership of the committee should include representatives from institutions of higher education, higher education unions, TAFE institutes, schools and relevant statutory authorities. The QTU should be represented on the committee.

## **3.6 Department of Education**

Departmental policy and practice should be based on a coherent, sound and articulated philosophy of public education which:

- places educational concerns at its centre
- recognises the role and importance of public education and is based on the running of a public system, not a loose collection of individual schools
- provides curriculum and resource guarantees to all students
- provides minimum entitlements and rights to teachers
- provides democratic, equitable outcomes.

Structures should relate to this overarching philosophy and serve the attainment of its goals.

Decision-making processes should be clear. Practice should be based on established structures and rights, not on personality-based or political relationships. Practice should be informed by a high degree of respect for teachers as professionals and compassion for them as human beings. Policy initiatives must be linked to adequate resource provision.

The department should adopt a policy of open communication and the teacher's right to know and involve teachers in consultative and advisory structures. The department should work in partnership with the Queensland Teachers' Union and explore ways in which consultation at various levels can be enhanced.

The QTU believes that proposals for organisational change should be checked against the following concerns.

- Change should improve service delivery and be consistent with an overarching philosophy of public education.
- It must be accepted that one structural model will not be appropriate in all cases, thus, analysis on a case by case basis is necessary.
- Proposed changes should be checked out with the personnel involved and alternative suggestions given objective analysis.
- Consultation with all stakeholders, including the QTU, should occur before implementation.

## **3.7 State schools**

### **3.7.1 School planning and reporting**

School planning should address the following areas:

- educational goals and priorities
- educational programs to achieve these goals
- evaluation strategies related to educational goals
- proposed use of facilities and resources
- evaluation strategies related to use of facilities and resources.

Within the established policy, legislative and industrial frameworks, school policies shall be democratically formulated on the basis of established school needs by the full staff meeting. Copies of school policies shall be circulated to all members of staff and available to all parents. Where policies will have an impact on the working practices of teachers, they should be approved by the LCC.

### **3.7.2 School-based management**

The QTU supports as a general principle that resources and services ought to be moved close to schools. Decentralisation or any other form of organisational change should not, however, be pursued for its own sake. It should take place where a convincing case can be made that it will enhance service delivery.

The QTU does not support forms of school-based management that allow governments to divest themselves of their legitimate responsibility to properly resource a public education system, create education markets, undermine working conditions or introduce managerial modes of school governance.

A high quality statewide public education system is a government responsibility. Government must provide central control over general administration and funding of schools, including guaranteed levels of staffing and resources. The central education authority has a responsibility to ensure that all children – no matter what school they attend – have access to a full and challenging education and to act to minimise the inequitable distribution of resources and outcomes in the education system. Central education authorities have the responsibility to facilitate the development of broad curriculum guidelines and to provide resources and personnel to facilitate curriculum development within schools.

The QTU supports a form of school-based management that provides for teachers to have a significant involvement in the way their schools are run.

Where school-based management is introduced, the following stipulations must apply.

- The department must commit itself to the maximisation of permanent employment.

- The school budget should be at least adequate for its needs and exclude any salary component (other than existing grants for employment of casual administrative staff), major capital works and non-routine maintenance projects.
- Schools should continue to be staffed by a central allocative model, and this model should at least maintain current entitlements. Furthermore there shall be no substitution of teachers on a higher salary increment with those on a lower level of the scale for the purpose of gaining use of the funds that make up the difference in salaries.
- Specialist services shall continue to be provided by teachers and other professionals with specialist training and/or qualifications.
- Teachers shall continue to enjoy full transfer rights.
- The considerable expansion of the responsibilities and workloads of principals and school staffs arising from the devolution of decision-making to schools must be recognised and addressed through inservice and additional administrative support.
- Principals shall ensure that the LCC functions as the body that considers and approves all proposals that have an impact on the working conditions or industrial entitlements of employees.

### **3.7.3 Flexible staffing**

The QTU asserts that, at the present time, it is staffing levels not staffing mix that is the main problem to be addressed in schools. Flexible staffing proposals which threaten the security of employment or working conditions of teachers are unacceptable.

A workable and just flexible staffing scheme must be based on choices related to the enhancement of basic services, not on trade-offs of basic school (or student) entitlements.

### **3.7.4 Student decision-making**

It is imperative that children experience democracy in decision-making to instil in them a developing sense of control over their own lives, and of co-operation and responsibility in decision-making. Students should be given the opportunity to have an input into school policy decisions through representation on a student council.

In the classroom, students and teachers should negotiate learning experiences within the guidelines of the syllabus. Students should be progressively enabled to assume more responsibility for their educational development as they proceed through schooling. Cooperation should be fostered to develop an ability to work with others and an understanding of and respect for other human beings.

### **3.7.5 Parent decision-making**

Parents have a clear right to be involved in the education of their children and in school decision-making processes. The QTU recommends that schools become open to parents by:

- involving parents in appropriate decision-making areas in the school
- inviting parents to participate in the school's activities, including classroom activities
- recognising the expertise and experience that parents have to offer, which may be drawn upon to enhance the curriculum
- attempting to time some activities so that parents working during school time can become more involved

- offering childcare facilities to parents who would otherwise be restricted in their involvement
- developing strategies for involving those parents who are not confident in the school setting.

### **3.7.6 Community involvement in education**

The state government should stimulate community involvement in its schools by providing personnel such as social workers, interpreters, community liaison personnel and other resource and ancillary staff to facilitate the establishment of community programs based in schools and school programs based in the community, as well as the increased funding to support these programs.

The QTU recognises that any involvement that draws only on the skills of the advantaged is likely to further disadvantage the already disadvantaged. Therefore, all community involvement programs should give special attention to developing new strategies designed to draw on the skills of all sections of the community.

### **3.7.7 School councils**

The role of the school council is to focus on the broad strategic direction of the school, with day-to-day management remaining the responsibility of the principal.

The school council shall have no role in the appointment, termination or determination of salary or conditions of employees, other than participation of a school council representative in the selection panel for the principal of the school.

School councils should include appropriate representation of professionally qualified teaching staff.

### **3.7.8 Local consultative committees (LCCs)**

A local consultative committee (LCC) is a representative group of management and union nominees that is established to provide a forum for discussion of work-related issues. An LCC should be the key consultative body within the school focusing on workers and how they do their work. The LCC should be an integral component of management structures and processes. An LCC should be empowered by industrial instruments to make key decisions impacting on the working and learning conditions on schools.

### **3.7.9 The Education Consultative Committee**

The Education Consultative Committee is the peak employer-union consultative body for workplace reform and other significant employee relations issues.

### **3.7.10 Naming public education facilities**

All new and existing public education facilities wishing to change their names should include the word “State” in the proposed name. The QTU should be included in timely consultation on decisions emanating from a proposal to name or re-name a public education facility.

## **3.8 School organisational structures**

### **School size**

While a variety of factors contribute to the growth of school size over recent years, dominant amongst them is the failure by governments to adequately plan for the construction of new schools.

Research indicates that an appropriate and effective size is up to 400 students for primary schools and up to 800 students for secondary schools. An appropriate compromise must also be reached for the combined school structures (P-10 and P-12) prevalent in Queensland.

School size impacts variably on:

- attitudes of students, staff, teachers and parents
- student outcomes
- student social behaviour
- student attendance
- cost of education provision
- quality of curriculum.

A long-term plan for education must include the provision for new school construction to urgently reduce the size of Queensland schools to more closely match the ideal school size indicated in research.

### **3.8.1 Comprehensive secondary schools**

The QTU supports the retention of comprehensive secondary schools, which should be resourced to a level which will ensure equitable educational outcomes for all students.

### **3.8.2 Small schools**

The QTU believes in the educational viability of most small schools. They provide an essential training ground for beginning principals. They also provide an alternative and unique educational environment which some teachers and principals find more satisfying to work in. They also provide an alternative and unique learning environment which may be better suited to some students.

The QTU opposes clustering under the area school concept, where schools would operate under a cluster principal.

### **3.8.3 P-12 schools**

The QTU supports the introduction of additional P-12 state schools in Queensland, on the basis of the following principles:

- before a P-12 school is to be established, consultation must occur between the QTU and Department of Education and Training
- the P-12 school initiative is an education strategy
- the P-12 school initiative is designed to improve the market share of state schools and increase the retention rate for students within the state system
- that any such increase in market share and retention rate originates outside of the public education system

- that, in accordance with established awards and agreements, the Queensland Teachers' Union is included in timely consultation on decisions emanating from a proposal for the establishment of a P-12 school.

### 3.8.4 Special schools

The QTU believes that due to enrolment demand there is extreme pressure on primary and Special schools. The provision of more Special schools in some areas should become a high priority for government.

### 3.8.5 Increased school autonomy

The Queensland Teachers' Union is aware of the majority of educational research that has not established a causal link between increased levels of school accountability and improved student learning outcomes. However, the Queensland Teachers' Union also understands that some Queensland public schools may wish to utilise varying degrees of autonomy of school governance and accountability, as manifest in initiatives such as Independent Public Schools.

The QTU recognises the failure of school autonomy schemes in New Zealand, Victoria, WA, the United States and other jurisdictions to deliver any improvement in the quality of education. Indeed, autonomous public schools can create:

- A two tiered public system that concentrates students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the same school
- Unacceptable accountability measures for teachers
- Precarious industrial conditions

In Queensland autonomous public schools may significantly undermine the transfer system and consequently the integrity of public education in rural areas.

The Queensland Teachers' Union supports schools wishing to exercise increased school autonomy within the following parameters:

- schools wishing to move to models of higher degrees of school-based management and decision-making, do so only after a thorough process of consultation with and approval by the school community, including endorsement by the Local Consultative Committee
- school funds that are allocated to the school for staffing must be used for the employment of staff
- notional allocations for staffing should be used rather than real dollar allocations to schools for staffing
- all state schools should remain a part of a continuing viable transfer system for classroom teachers and relocation system for classified officers
- where schools move to a model of governance incorporating school councils, the role of those councils will focus only on broad strategic direction
- the government retains responsibility for funding of specific systemic imperatives eg. workers compensation, workplace health and safety requirements
- school decision and actions are compliant with existing industrial agreements and conditions within certified agreement or established memoranda of agreement

- any scheme must be the subject of negotiation and agreement between the QTU and the department, and the agreement must be in an enforceable form.

## **3.9 Education acts and regulations**

### **3.9.1 Bible lessons**

The provisions in the Education Act Regulations allowing bible lessons in primary schools ought to be rescinded.

### **3.9.2 Student dress codes**

School communities should have the capacity to set and enforce a student dress code for all students. Schools should equally be able to adopt a free dress policy.

Dress codes in schools, whether uniform or free dress, should take into account the following issues:

- occupational health and safety
- sun and water safety
- girls education policy, specifically the inclusion of a choice of shorts or pants for all girls for both formal and sports uniforms in all year levels from Prep–12.
- cultural and religious freedoms
- functionality and cost.

School policies should ensure that students are not discriminated against. No student should be denied attendance at school should they not be able to afford the student uniform. Student uniforms should not carry advertising and where possible should be sourced locally and through ethical suppliers.

### **3.9.3 Official documents**

Teachers should be entitled to receive their own copies of all department directives, memoranda, etc. and any other official documents affecting their school and work, including any reports, assessment or criticisms of their performance, duties or activities related to their work or involvement in the school. Teachers should receive these copies prior to their being forwarded to any other person or section of the department or other authority, and should be allowed to attach to such a report their own explanation or argument in their favour.

## **4. General public sector funding and organisation**

### **4.1 Public sector role**

The maintenance and expansion of a strong and viable public sector is vital to both the Australian economy and the general well-being of the community. In particular, the public sector:

- is a major, and efficient producer of both products and services. As such, it materially assists the development of markets for Australian products, particularly in the area of new technology
- is a major source of training in Australia
- provides research and development and industry assistance and advice on sectoral economic development

- contributes to the general cultural development and social empowerment of ordinary Australians, as well as providing major social wage benefits such as education, health care and welfare programs which assist in meeting the fundamental needs of members of the community
- provides major items of economic infrastructure.

The QTU believes that the public sector should be run efficiently, democratically and in the interests of the Australian community. The QTU calls on the state and Commonwealth governments to reject free market policies of privatisation, deregulation, commercialisation and small government and to pursue funding policies which would ensure an active and effective public sector.

## 4.2 Privatisation and the public sector

Privatisation is a major issue in Australia. Privatisation is associated with:

- a heightening of class divisiveness and inequality, as a result of the development of two classes of services
- undermining of public sector activity through the removal of profitable sectors which enable cross subsidisation
- loss of jobs and deterioration of condition for workers
- a lower standard of service which is often more expensive, as well as a loss of accountability and
- profits to private firms at the expense of government authorities.

The QTU and the trade union movement as a whole must vigorously oppose all attempts to privatise aspects of the public sector.

## 4.3 Public/private partnerships

In recent years, Australian state governments have been increasingly interested in “public/private partnerships” (PPPs).

It needs to be recognised that PPPs do not resolve the problem of financing a growing infrastructure program within arbitrary debt limits. The appearance that infrastructure is being delivered without incurring a corresponding debt is illusory. The use of private finance or PPPs does not provide a means of expanding the overall level of resources available to a state government to spend on government-funded infrastructure. Even though social infrastructure may be financed by the private sector, the government, through payments made through the contract’s life, will ultimately fund it.

It is argued that PPPs can deliver infrastructure services at lower costs. However, in many cases apparent cost savings have been achieved through reductions in wages and working conditions, with no net benefit to the community as a whole. Much of the argument in favour of PPPs is based on ideological assumptions about the superiority of the private sector, and is not supported by empirical evidence.

The QTU does not believe that PPPs provide a useful strategy for addressing the state’s infrastructure needs.

## 4.4 General economic policy

The QTU rejects the proposition that unemployment and inflation are caused by wage and salary claims and that, therefore, wage and salary earners (who produce the country’s wealth) must bear the burden of economic crises or restructuring. We specifically reject government policies that deliberately cut

government expenditure in social welfare areas while granting generous tax concessions and “incentives” to corporations without any consideration of their benefit to society as a whole.

Government efforts must be directed towards ensuring that the living standards and quality of life of ordinary people are, at the very least, maintained. Accordingly, the QTU calls for:

- increased expenditure on socially-beneficial public works and programs to assist schools, hospitals, homes, transport, Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait Islander peoples and migrants, which would also help to stimulate employment
- selective government intervention, with equity, into industries which can contribute to the overall benefit of the people
- resolute action to curb the power of multi-national and local corporations
- measures specifically designed to provide employment and/or training for school leavers so that no unemployment occurs among these young people
- restructuring the taxation system to ensure an adequate level of government revenue, to increase equity by maximising the redistribution of national income, to ease where appropriate the burden on lower and middle income earners, and to encourage socially, environmentally and economically appropriate behaviours.

The QTU will campaign in conjunction with trade unions and other appropriate organisations around these objectives.