

TO: QTU MEMBERS

End of term



Over the last term, the QTU has kept members updated with a weekly EB10 bulletin. The interests of the QTU and the department have been unpacked and negotiations are ongoing.

In May, QTU State Council decided that an offer should only be recommended to members if it:

- allowed for salaries among the highest in the country
- compensated for the rising cost of living
- addressed the issues of rural, remote and regional attraction and retention
- included initiatives and processes to address the teacher shortage.

The QTU has been active in campaigning for the state government to raise its 2.5 per cent government wages policy, as we know that the current policy would not be sufficient to address both the salary and cost of living components of the Council decision. We will advise members of any changes to the government wages policy as they become known. However, this is only one element of the Council decision - any agreement should also include advancements in working conditions.

A certified agreement is more than salaries, and the package must address the teacher shortage. It is also essential that, as more and more is expected of schools, the way resources are allocated to schools is reviewed. The allocative methodology may have been fit for purpose back in the 90s, but the minor tinkering that has occurred over the past 30 years is insufficient to truly cater for the needs of today's students and meet the changing roles schools play in the 21st century. With the nominal expiry date quickly approaching, it is necessary that the department's offer incorporates the core elements of our claim.

Should an offer be made prior to 30 June, a special meeting of the QTU Executive (which is comprised of 13 teacher, school leader and heads of program members from across the state, one TAFE member and the six QTU senior officers) will be convened to consider if the offer should be recommended to members.

If no offer is received by 30 June, QTU Executive will convene a special meeting on 1 July to determine the next steps in the campaign.

This will include consideration of the negotiations to date, the ability to retain the 1 July increase date, the QTU's obligations under the good faith bargaining guidelines, and our requirement to comply with the peace obligation period (the time, under law, during which QTU members must not take action to further their EB claims). This period does not prevent us from continuing to meet with MPs and write to the premier etc, but does limit other actions.

The QTU will continue to update the website and social media and will contact members over the holidays if there are significant developments in the campaign.

Authorised by Kate Ruttiman - General Secretary

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Industrial Relations Act to be amended

Yesterday, the state government introduced amendments to the Queensland Industrial Relations Act. The amendments include a clear definition of the importance of being a registered organisation. The new act includes other important changes, such as gender pay equity provisions, leave for stillbirths, and industrial provisions around sexual and gender-based harassment. A more detailed analysis of the proposed changes will be included in a forthcoming Journal.

State Budget and education

The media has described the Budget as "neutral" in relation to education. Overall, expenditure on state schools is set to increase by a little under 6 per cent. Inflation is estimated to be at 3.75 per cent for 2022-23 (which is possibly an underestimate) and the Budget Papers are silent on how much enrolments will increase by. Education fell as a proportion of overall funding from 25 per cent in 2021-22 to 24.3 per cent for 2022-23.

On the plus side, the Budget maintains the government's commitment to building new schools in growth areas and of refurbishing and expanding facilities in existing schools, as well as the provision of \$80 million in funding for students with disabilities. Nevertheless, as noted in a recent State Auditors report, the department is falling behind in the race against population and enrolment growth. While not schools funding, increased expenditure on early childhood education and care is also welcome. As noted above, the announcements in relation to Respectful Relationships and Share the Dignity are welcome, although the financial commitment to the former is inadequate and the extent of the roll-out of the latter is unclear. Likewise, the commitment to provide an additional \$80.6 million over three years to support the transition to reasonable adjustment resourcing (RAR) for students with disabilities is welcome, but short-term.

A major area of concern is teacher staffing. While the government continues to express confidence that it will meet its election commitment to provide "6,190 new teachers" over four years, the numbers provided so far do not seem adequate and have almost exclusively been related to enrolment increases and new school openings. There have been no measures to address teacher shortages or provide additional teaching support for schools.

A more detailed analysis of the Budget is available on the QTU website.

Vaccine mandate

Today, the Chief Health Officer announced that schools will no longer be classed as high-risk settings under the public health directive, with decisions around mandatory vaccinations to instead be made by the relevant government department.

The QTU will be in consultation with the Department of Education today and next week to discuss the process around managing health and safety risks in all school sites.

The QTU will also be requesting that the department directs support to school leaders if and when it is necessary to manage a transition.

As has been the case throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the QTU will always put the health, safety and wellbeing of its members at the forefront of negotiations.

The public health directive mandating the COVID-19 vaccine for workers in healthcare, hospitals, aged care and disability care remains unchanged.

Any issue around employment status should be directed to the department at this stage.

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Next term, QTU members will be asked to get involved in the next steps of the EB campaign, as we work together to win for and with members. Thank you for your hard work this term - teachers and school leaders make a difference in the lives of their students every day. They go above and beyond to ensure students feel safe in their learning and are empowered to succeed. As you head off on a well-deserved holiday, we hope that you have the time to disconnect from work, reconnect with family and friends, and find some time to relax.

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