

Education and the 2020 state election

What is your party's commitment, policy or approach to the following issues?

1. Increasing the state government expenditure to TAFE (as the public provider) to 80 per cent of the state's Vocational Education and Training (VET) expenditure

Building skills and re-training is fundamental to economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and to providing more secure and adaptable employment in the future. Funding for TAFE and Central Queensland University VET as the public providers of vocational education and training VET supports quality, generic, transferable education and training. The priority of government expenditure on VET should be its public provider, particularly in light of the well-documented failure of for-profit private providers.

2. Reducing teacher and principal workload to less than 42 hours per school week during the term of government

The reduction of excessive teacher and principal workload in a sustainable way is the Union's top priority for members, based on the results of the QTU's 2019 Member Survey and the 2018 Workload Survey conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Averaging the annual hours of an office-based public servant over the 40 weeks of student learning results in an average of just less than 42 hours per school week. The ACER workload survey showed principals working an average of 61.8 hours per week and 46 per cent of teachers working more than 45 hours per week. Excessive workload reduces both health and wellbeing and the quality of teaching.

3. Increasing state government expenditure on state schools to more than 69 per cent of the Schooling Resources Standard (SRS) during the term of the government

The SRS is a measure of the funding required to deliver the national goals of schooling (then in the Melbourne Declaration) devised by the Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling. The standard is now enshrined in the Australian Education Act. The bilateral agreement between the Queensland government and the federal government commits the state to funding 69 per cent of the SRS and the federal government to 20 per cent – a total of 89 per cent and a shortfall in the funding to achieve national goals of 11 per cent. The dual issues are increasing funding to the SRS and the allocation of needs on the basis of educational need.

4. Protecting teachers, principals and TAFE educators from occupational violence, including physical, verbal, cyber – and sexual abuse and harassment

There is increased reporting of and arguably an increased incidence of occupational violence against teachers and principals by both adults and students. The Department of Education has a zero-tolerance policy in response to occupational violence, yet gaps remain in the legislative and administrative response to matters like abuse and defamation on social media, frivolous or vexatious complaints and sexual harassment.

5. Provision of alternative learning settings for disengaged students or students with persistent behavioral problems

Poor student behaviour can disrupt learning for an entire class or series of classes. To cater for extreme cases, a series of positive learning centres were established with specialist staff to address student behaviour and rehabilitate the student into mainstream schooling. The need remains for alternative learning centres to address student behaviour and separate centres for students, most commonly in the later years of schooling, who are unable to engage in learning in traditional school settings.

- 6. A capital works program (including a share of stimulus funding) to:**
- a. replace aging school buildings
 - b. upgrade the ICT capacity of all schools
 - c. construction of new schools to cater for growth across all sectors, including special education.

School infrastructure should be included within the stimulus packages for recovery from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Areas for particular consideration are replacement of a generation of schools and school buildings, the upgrade of ICT infrastructure to address problems that became evident with the move to remote learning at the start of term 2 this year, and the ongoing need to build additional schools to cater for population growth.

- 7. The abolition of National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in its current form**

The negative impacts of NAPLAN on students, on narrowing the curriculum, on time wasted on practice tests and more are well documented, as are numerous expressions by teachers and principals of opposition to the continuation of the current testing regime through a number of QTU membership ballots over recent years. The recent review commissioned by four states considered only expansion of the tests, and ignored the voices of teachers, principals, students and parents.

- 8. The review of school curriculum to remove excess content and focus on essential learnings for the future**

Overcrowding of the curriculum is recognised as having an impact on student achievement and teacher workload. New knowledge and skills are required for students for the future but cannot be accommodated within an overcrowded Australian Curriculum 'owned' by the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. What is your approach to review and de-cluttering of the school curriculum?

- 9. Maintaining and maximising permanent employment for teachers, principals and TAFE**

Job security is the number two concern of QTU members as expressed in the 2019 QTU Member Survey. Security of employment is a fundamental condition of public sector employment. The QTU also seeks a guarantee of permanency of employment for all levels of the teaching service, including principals.

- 10. At least one Head of Department (Curriculum) in every primary school above 200 and every special school**

While secondary schools have for at least 40 years had positions of heads of department with responsibility for subject areas and a range of other responsibilities in addition to the principal and deputy principal, primary and special schools historically have not had such positions. A number of years ago, 300 head of curriculum positions were funded, with an emphasis on schools below the enrolment threshold for a deputy principal. Additional promoted positions in primary and special schools are long overdue.

- 11. A full-time teacher-aide (30 hours) in every primary and special school classroom**

A full-time teacher-aide in every primary and special education classroom would contribute to student learning, support for struggling or high achieving students, behaviour management, as well as providing employment as part of addressing unemployment arising from current recession.

- 12. Continued payment of employer superannuation contributions during unpaid parental leave**

The financial position of women continues to be affected by an unequal distribution of child-care responsibilities. The continuation of employer contributions during unpaid parental leave is a practical step to address this disparity, particularly in a teaching workforce that is increasingly feminised.