

TO: QTU MEMBERS

Have your say on our NAPLAN strategy; International Women's Day 2021 – #choosetochallenge

At its meeting on Saturday, the 120 democratically elected delegates of State Council endorsed the decision of the QTU Executive and Senior Officers to comply with the Industrial Court's orders to withdraw the directive to ban NAPLAN.

Council delegates were informed that the department had applied for an injunction against the ban – i.e. a cease-and-desist order from the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) – in late November, despite it having been in place for more than six weeks by that point. This is a different type of order than those issued in the event of a dispute conference or arbitration. Instead of allowing an opportunity for the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) to argue the negative impacts of NAPLAN on workload and member health and safety (as would have occurred in an arbitration), the department instead sought to shut down the ban. It viewed the potential of loss of federal funding as more significant than allowing members the opportunity to provide evidence in the commission on the true impact of NAPLAN.

Despite submissions that the QTU's actions in Term 4 were equivalent to the implementation of the Department of Education (DoE) and QTU joint statement, the QIRC determined that the ban constituted "unprotected" industrial action and ordered the QTU to immediately lift the ban. The QTU did not follow this order and instead appealed it to the Industrial Court. When the court affirmed the decision of the QIRC and issued orders in late January, QTU Executive considered the costs of an appeal against the orders and other potential penalties. Orders from the Industrial Court are like orders from all other courts; the penalties are significant. It is the duty of the Senior Officers and the Executive to best utilise the resources of the Union; they determined that the Union's resources would be better used to fight NAPLAN publicly as part of the QTU's "For the Profession" strategy, rather than on fighting any penalties for non-compliance with the court's orders.

You have received a lot of communication about NAPLAN from both the QTU and the department. One of the QTU's core values is to be member-focused. We appreciate that some members are disappointed with the decision to lift the directive to ban NAPLAN, while others have a different view. Consequently, we want you to have your say about the QTU's NAPLAN strategy.

You can do this by completing the following survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WCMGSMJ>

The survey opens today and closes at midnight on Sunday 14 March.

It should take you less than 5 minutes (depending on how much you choose to write in the free text section of the survey) and will provide important information about the future direction of the NAPLAN strategy.

The strategy includes ensuring that the department complies with its own joint statement – an agreement between ourselves and the DoE about what should (and should not) happen with regard to NAPLAN – and campaigning to lower the high stakes nature of the test.

If NAPLAN (or some equivalent form of standardised test) is to stay, then we need to campaign to stop the high stakes nature of the test. If we are to stop NAPLAN from being used by politicians to “measure” teacher, school leader and school performance, then the state and federal governments need to stop using it for this purpose. Consequently, the following should happen:

- NAPLAN results are removed from the headline indicators of schools
- NAPLAN results are not aggregated – if they are to be used to assist in differentiating learning for students, keep them as individual reports
- NAPLAN is not a census test – if the government believes it to be an indicator about the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, it can satisfy itself by making it a sample test (similar to PISA)
- The NAPLAN writing test is abandoned – it delivers nothing and instead results in students being taught genres of writing out of context and too early.

The QTU's NAPLAN strategy is to campaign to abolish NAPLAN in its current form, based on QTU policy that was endorsed at the Biennial Conference 2019.

The strategy is formed on the basis of what we all know:

- Students are so much more than NAPLAN
- Teachers are so much more than NAPLAN
- School leaders are so much more than NAPLAN
- Schools are so much more than NAPLAN.

International Women's Day 2021 – #choosetochallenge

In the midst of a global pandemic, International Women's Day (IWD) will be commemorated in vastly different ways across Queensland, our nation and globally. IWD reminds us to stop and reflect on women's achievements, the health and economic status of women and girls and the genuine gender equity we are yet to achieve.

Each year across the state, QTU members coordinate events in their schools and workplaces for staff and students. We have enjoyed having the opportunity to visit school-based events, and by far the most exciting and energising are those led by the students themselves. The QTU has established the tradition of an IWD event to conclude the annual Union Reps Conference, and it is acknowledged at our first State Council each year. For the first time in our history, our feminised Union is being led by women; Kate Ruttiman is the first woman to hold the position of General Secretary and Cresta Richardson is the fourth woman to hold the position of QTU President. Further to this, never has the presidential team been three women, with Leah Olsson as Vice-President and Jenny Swadling our Honorary Vice-President.

IWD is an opportunity to broadcast the many challenges we need to address as a society; the continued wage gap, employment insecurity, gender-based violence in all its forms, the lack of representation of Indigenous women and women with a disability, the additional discrimination and erasure in media and texts of women of colour, the overt misogyny displayed through mainstream news channels and politics, the lack of affordable childcare and period poverty.

Our nation is reeling from reports of sexual assaults in our nation's parliament building. As the Australian Human Rights Commission's Respect @ Work report clearly demonstrates, sexual harassment and managing gendered-based violence is a reality for most of the girls we teach, our female colleagues, friends and family, and it occurs at alarming rates within workplaces, including schools. There is still much to be done in investing in genuine preventative measures such as a school-wide approach to respectful relationships education (that *actually* has funds attached and isn't just a further impost on schools). Watch this space for the QTU's #ExpectRespect campaign, which seeks to address gendered based violence in TAFE and schools.

However, no change occurs without those bold and brave enough to challenge. The 2021 theme of IWD, #choosetochallenge, encourages us all to find our voice; calling out gendered actions or assumptions, challenging gender stereotypes, challenging leaders to be genuinely more inclusive, and challenging ourselves to find our voice.

There is much work to be done; educating about gender equity can be exciting and inspiring. Celebrating the great achievements of inspiring women and girls is a great way to start. We have the unique opportunity to inspire, to give platform and space, to educate and to listen. The next generation are watching and learning. As teachers, we hold a space that is crucial in terms of role modelling, and also questioning and enquiring. Ensuring our pedagogical practices include gender diverse resources is important; our narratives include the voices of *all* women, and when we look to historical texts, we ensure that we always include an analysis of whose history is being told and whose voices were not permitted.

So, this year we would encourage QTU women and activists to continue to choose to challenge, whether it be through workload, work/life balance, the sexist uncle you've always been polite to, or the inequitable decision at your workplace!