

**TO: QTU MEMBERS**

## **End of the 2020 school year for remote schools**

Today marks the end of the school year for many of the state's northern and western schools. Many adjectives have been used to describe this year – unprecedented, once in a lifetime, never before seen, unusual – but what is left unsaid in all of these descriptions is the huge amount of work you have done this year to adapt to the needs of the students you teach and the communities you live in. It was a professional feat without parallel, and when students attended school again, you supported essential services and the entire community.

Ironically, the Union's focus this year was, and is still, reducing workload. The workload reduction reviews completed in Term 3 were only the beginning, and more work will be undertaken in 2021 to continue to reduce workload. We know that every member of the QTU needs this summer holiday period to relax, unwind and rejuvenate.

We have written to the Department of Education requesting that, over the summer holidays, communication with school leaders and other members only occurs in exceptional or urgent circumstances. The QTU commits to doing the same.

We also know that in education, every year is different. This year marked the first of the new QCE and senior assessment and tertiary entrance processes, and next year more challenges will present themselves, as the full implementation continues and other changes are proposed. But change should not and will not occur without support and resourcing, and can only be by replacement, not by addition, if we are to reduce workload.

As you head off on holidays, we congratulate you for your continued commitment to public education and the students you teach. We look forward to making teaching, and leading teachers, better in 2021.

### **NAPLAN ban**

As you know, the Department of Education has lodged a dispute seeking an injunction against the QTU's directive to ban NAPLAN. A conference was held in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) last Friday. A further conference will be held in the QIRC on Tuesday next week.

On Monday night, after hearing reports on the first QIRC conference, the QTU Executive reaffirmed its commitment to the unanimous decision of State Council endorsing the NAPLAN directive.

### **2020-2021 state budget**

The state budget handed down yesterday delivers on the election promises made by the Palaszczuk government. Investment in education, through the employment of more teachers and teacher-aides, massive infrastructure expansion and renewal in line with student growth, and new and expanded support for TAFE, are the highlights.

Two issues require further investigation. Firstly, the government has identified net migration of 86,000 people from interstate by 2024, which will impact upon already rapidly growing school enrolments. Employment of teachers and building efforts must keep pace. The second issue relates to cost savings across the public service. The QTU cannot accept cost-shifting onto schools or increases in workload for school-based personnel arising

from cost-saving efforts. The QTU will engage with the Department of Education and the government to explore cost savings that ditch defunct programs, such as NAPLAN and IPS, while also reducing workload for teachers and principals.

Further analysis of the budget is currently being undertaken and will be published on the QTU website when completed. An initial analysis by QTU President Kevin Bates is available [here](#).

## **New QCE workload**

Following decisions by the QTU State Council in November, the QTU has written to the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) to advise it of a comprehensive list of issues that members have identified with the new QCE and the workload associated with the new senior curriculum and assessment processes.

The issues identified in the letter include problems with confirmation, endorsement, external assessment and marking. The Union has also advised the QCAA of concerns associated with communication, timelines and workload.

The Department of Education has also commenced a brief survey to provide input for the QCAA. While we recognise that the word limit (500 words) may not allow you to say everything you would like, members are encouraged to complete the survey. The more information available to highlight possible improvements, the better.

A meeting will be held this week to further discuss QCE workload.

## **Public sector reforms**

The Department of Education has sought an extension to the transition arrangements for the public sector reforms mandating permanency as the default position for employment in the public service. These require the department to act on the conversion of hundreds of teachers on temporary contracts to permanency, and to consider the appointment of people acting in classified teaching positions for more than 12 months to the higher classification. Under the act, the deadline of the current arrangements is 14 December, however, given some contingencies the QTU has agreed to support an extension of the arrangements until 31 March 2021. From the QTU point of view, this will maximise both the opportunities for relocation/transfer AND permanency when 2021 staffing is settled. This will enable the department to work through the issues relating to permanency, including the merit selection process, transfers and relocations, and the identification of substantive vacancies.

The department has agreed that no member currently seeking permanency under the arrangements will be disadvantaged in terms of their right to appeal etc.

## **Recruitment and selection**

It is the Union's view that the principles of the new Recruitment and Selection Directive should be used to fill any temporary vacancies that extend or have the potential to extend beyond six months. This would mean that a statewide expression of interest (EOI) process could be conducted, allowing for transparency of available vacancies across the state and ensuring that all members currently seeking to extend their experience are aware of the opportunities available.

## **Workplace reforms**

One of the issues that has been identified in the conversion to permanency process is the establishment of workplace reforms. Schools are reminded that workplace reforms that extend beyond 12 months can be made permanent. In fact, when a reform continues for three years, a decision must be made. Consultation (including the use of the LCC) is required when deciding whether a reform becomes permanent or is discontinued. Schools are encouraged to review their current reforms. If they have been ongoing for a period of 12 months or more, consideration should be given to whether the position should become permanent, subject to the appropriate

process being followed. The new directive requires an approved business case for any temporary positions that extend beyond 12 months.

Additionally, schools are reminded that workplace reforms can only occur where a substantive vacancy exists. If the position being used to create the reform is not vacant (e.g. the person who usually holds the position is on leave or is undertaking other duties in the school etc.), this position cannot be used to create another.

The QTU is currently reviewing end of year workplace reform applications and working with the department to finalise these as soon as possible.

## End of year gifts

In line with the ethics and integrity reviews, the department has recently reissued existing instructions in relation to gifts and benefits.

The department's document requires that gifts or benefits received that are valued at more than \$150 are declared and authorised by the school principal or relevant supervisor. Any gift to the value of \$350 is required to be authorised by regional office.

The relevant section of the documentation states:

*All gifts and benefits must be declared to the delegate with the exception of:-*

- a) items received whilst attending a meeting, seminar or conference in the course of official public service duties such as stationery (e.g. pens and notepads), handouts, folders and light refreshments (e.g. tea, coffee, biscuits, pastries). Product samples received at presentations must be declared.*
- b) Gifts by students, parents or parent organisations to teachers where the value is less than \$150 in a year.*

The QTU has requested that parents and school community members are informed of the value limitations if they are considering gifting members in appreciation of their work this year.

It is good practice to maintain a register of gifts, however the QTU is clarifying with the department how to reduce the workload associated with these processes.

## Senior teacher applications

Teachers who become eligible for the senior teacher classification during 2021 will be notified by the Department of Education before the end of the 2020 school year. The QTU has pressed the department to provide this information to eligible teachers. This initial communication will contain information on accessing the senior teacher page on OnePortal, as well as instructions on how to complete the senior teacher undertaking and personal action plan and how to upload this document. This initial communication was also expected to contain the date of eligibility, however, the department has now confirmed that this will not happen and that a further email will be sent to eligible teachers in 2021 confirming their eligibility date. The QTU's position is that any teacher who is eligible in 2021 who is not provided this advice from the employer before their eligibility date, allowing sufficient time to complete the senior teacher undertaking and personal action plan and to meet with their principal, should be back-paid to the date of their eligibility.

Teachers whose eligibility date is early in 2021 and who wish to access the senior teacher undertaking and personal action plan document and additional information on the process can do so at any time by accessing the Oneportal senior teacher page.

Eligible teachers may also find this [link](#) explaining how to load their completed plan into myHR PCT useful.

Members with questions related to eligibility for the senior teacher classification should contact the teacher classification team directly via [tct@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:tct@qed.qld.gov.au).

The QTU brochure on the senior teacher classification can be found [here](#).

## **Workload Advisory Council**

The department and the QTU have been reviewing and carefully considering all submissions to the Workload Advisory Council (WAC).

The submission review process is taking longer than expected to complete, however, this is necessary if we are to build on the workload reduction measures achieved throughout 2020.

The WAC will meet early in Term 1 once this process is finalised.

## **Staying informed over the holidays**

In meeting our commitment to support you in having a meaningful break, the QTU will keep members informed of any necessary developments via the QTU website. If you have Facebook or Instagram, you can follow the QTU page, where you will also be kept up to date. We will only contact you directly if there is an urgent need to do so.

We hope you stay safe and find time to relax over this summer break.

Authorised by:

Graham Moloney  
**General Secretary**