

2024 QTU State Election Asks: A vision for safer, stronger state schools

The Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) is using the opportunity of the forthcoming election to call for a focus on prioritising and delivering for state education.

The QTU has released its "2024 State Election Asks", a list of solutions to serious issues addressing key areas of need around security, staffing and efficiency.

Acting President Leah Olsson says this list is about investment in state schooling to meet the needs of 21st Century learning.

"From our members' perspective, this is a 'common sense' list: security fencing for schools, removing teachers from bus and playground duty to focus on classroom preparation, and actual incentives that will help attract and retain staff," Ms Olsson said.

The QTU is also holding firm on its advocacy for teachers and school leaders to be protected as "public officers" under the criminal code to help address and curb the increasing incidents of occupational violence and aggression in our schools.

"Our members are fed up with the occupational violence and aggression they're subjected to, and we know the community supports us as well. This is a non-negotiable through our eyes."

The list of election asks is derived from member-focussed consultation and collaboration between the QTU's 48,000 members and its democratic structures.

With teacher shortages widespread and well-reported, the QTU is also promoting its "Regional Education Plan" to address them.

"This plan showcases a package for attracting and retaining teachers where we need them most, in regional and hard to staff communities. Incentives like housing, utilities support, and sign-on payments are genuine, long-term solutions," Ms Olsson added.

"HELP Debt relief and travel allowances in First Nations communities are not so much items on a wish list as a clear 'how to' guide to support our members and improve staffing in our schools," Ms Olsson said.

"We know what teachers need. We know this is a difficult and stressful career. Teachers deserve recognition for the sacrifices they make when moving to new, smaller communities. We've seen similar incentives in health and it's time education is recognised as well," she said.

As part of the attraction component of solving the teacher shortage crisis, the QTU is also calling for a shortening of the teacher salary scale, so teachers who stay in the profession will reach senior teacher salaries within seven years.

“Retention is such a key component of fixing the teacher shortage crisis. Keeping senior and experienced teachers in our schools and in our classrooms longer is a win for everyone. We need to make sure teachers see a financial future and a manageable workload to achieve this”.

Inequity of federal funding remains a national shame. The QTU is also calling for equity for state schoolteachers to collaborate and plan with additional student free days at the end of each term. Currently, this work is largely done outside work hours.

“Like those in many private schools, our state schoolteachers need additional student free days to plan lessons, review curriculum and ensure students have what they need in their classrooms. It’s not a big ask, but a pretty sensible one.”

Acting President Leah Olsson says this election is a chance for all Queenslanders to pay attention to education and ask themselves how important strong, fully funded and staffed TAFEs are to our community.

“Ensuring young people have meaningful career pathways and most of all, hope, is something only our TAFEs can do. TAFE needs to be protected, returned to the public service and most of all respected for the role it plays in our community.

“We all remember what happened to TAFE under the previous LNP government. Stripped, sold off and outsourced, it was a disaster that can’t happen again. Our TAFEs and TAFE teachers are too important to the future of young Queenslanders, especially in regional and remote areas,” Ms Olsson said.

“Clearly, in the campaign ahead we all need to see focussed and considered policy and a vision to elevate state schools and TAFE. I can assure you that the 48,000 QTU members will be looking for value for their vote this election.

“It’s time to pay attention to state schools and TAFE – every Queenslanders is watching this space and making their mind up.”

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