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My workplace is not like yours – Queensland Teachers' Union members reveal horror stories of occupational violence and aggression

The Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) is releasing a curated selection of member quotes, highlighting incidents of occupational violence and aggression experienced by state school teachers.

"My workplace is not like yours" reveals the abuse our educators endure daily hoping to raise awareness to protect our valued educators from violence and aggression.

Under current workplace agreements, Queensland Department of Education employees are unable to speak publicly. For this reason, the QTU is withholding the full identity of the teachers bravely speaking out.

QTU President Cresta Richardson says occupational violence is a core issue for the Union's 48-thousand members, causing major harm in our schools.

"The stories are true; they're shocking and it's understandable that our members are fed up and demanding action" Ms Richardson said.

"Schools truly are unique workplaces. Teachers can be assaulted and abused but have to continue working with the perpetrator moments later, often for years to come without any recourse or justice. No other worker or workplace endures this."

"It's the very essence of why we are saying 'My workplace is not like yours,'" Ms Richardson said.

The QTU has campaigned continually in recent years, with summits and roundtables raising awareness of increased occupational violence in schools and the need for teachers to speak up and report rather than suffer in silence.

Through this ongoing consultation and advocacy, the QTU has gained a greater understanding of the effects of occupational violence and increased pressure on the Queensland Department of Education to support members.

This today led to the state government launching its campaign to address occupational violence in school – "No Excuse For School Abuse".

"We've seen the statistics rise, but many cases are still unreported or unresolved satisfactorily, and teachers often decide to get back to work while suffering the consequences in silence," Ms Richardson said.

Calling for the same legal protections covering police, nurses and paramedics, Ms Richardson says that, unlike other frontline workers, teachers have always been expected to

be more accepting, simply because of the ages and potentially complex home lives of perpetrators.

"Human beings just aren't built that way. Anyone who has to endure abuse and then continue working like nothing happened is suffering two-fold".

"Our teachers and school leaders are also targeted and attacked by parents and caregivers, in person, on the phone and in social media. It's unacceptable behaviour and it's all too common" she said.

The QTU has made occupational violence a key priority over the past four years.

Queensland state schools are currently in the grip of workload pressure and a widespread teacher shortage. Occupational violence is blamed as a key contributor to educators leaving the profession.

"Frankly, we just can't lose any more teachers. It's a difficult sell to retain and attract professionals to a workplace where they are abused and assaulted without any genuine protection or recourse."

Ms Richardson added that well-behaved students are suffering as well.

"Learning can't happen when classroom tension is heightened, and students are frightened. Classrooms need to be calm places of respect. This needs to be something we all work towards as a society," Ms Richardson said.

"Everyone knows a teacher. Ask them their story. No other worker is expected to just move on after abuse trauma like our educators are," Ms Richardson added.

"We need to change the laws, community expectations and our perception of what our members should tolerate at work.

Until we properly protect, value, and respect our teachers and school leaders, we will continue to lose quality educators and our school communities will suffer as a result".

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