



QUEENSLAND
TEACHERS' UNION
OF EMPLOYEES

QTU Policy
2023 - 2025

**Social and environmental
issues**

Booklet

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Queensland Teachers' Union Policy

QTU policy is adopted by the Union's Biennial Conference. Amendments to Union policy may be made at the intervening meetings of State Council.

Guidelines for changes to existing policy

Motions designed to change or create policy should be sent to Council. Under Rule 7.5 (Decisions of Conference), policy adopted by Conference remains in effect unless amended by Council, where a two-thirds majority decision is necessary. Thus, a proposal to contradict the sense of, or change the wording of existing policy, needs a two-thirds majority, ie 66.6 per cent, for such a proposal to be successful. A proposal to change existing policy should:

- be presented as an amendment to existing policy, and
- state its location in the existing policy.

If no policy exists on a matter, a simple majority decision, ie >50 per cent, is needed for such a proposal to be added to policy.

Implementation of existing policy

Motions to implement existing policy are usually directed to Executive for consideration. However, where the implementation would involve a significant allocation of QTU resources (eg a major campaign), or where a branch wishes a major emphasis to be put on an aspect of policy, it would then be appropriate to direct such a motion to Council. These guidelines are designed to facilitate debate on policy issues. If branch officials require explanation of these guidelines or assistance with the formulation of policy motions, they should contact the QTU office in Brisbane.

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QTU social and environmental issues policy

2023 - 2025

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1. Preamble

As a major trade union in Queensland and as the primary representative of educators in the public education system, the QTU recognises that there is a need for leadership and a position on a range of social issues which affect society broadly and public education in particular.

The QTU therefore affirms its commitment to progressive social and environmental policy and action on a range of social issues such as:

- peace
- environmental issues
- issues concerning First Nations peoples and cultures
- labour issues, including a focus on the significance of Labour Day
- governance, including Indigenous governances, active and transformational citizenship and social change
- cultural and linguistic diversity, including opposing racism
- civil liberties issues
- ethics, philosophies and belief systems
- diverse genders and sexualities
- health and wellbeing.

2. Education on social and environment issues

The QTU believes education plays an active role in developing students as transformative citizens, which allows for an effective, democratic and socially just society to operate. The QTU supports the development of syllabuses and curriculum materials which promote a critical understanding of a range of social issues and supports Human Rights. The QTU also encourages schools to promote an understanding of the development and role of trade unions and the labour movement. This can be done through incorporating labour education into their school curriculum planning recognising important events (e.g. Labour Day, NAIDOC week and International Women's Day and other special ceremonies), through guest speakers and focused studies in class programs.

3. Policy positions

3.1 *LGBTIQ+ matters*

The QTU is committed to protecting the industrial, professional and civil rights of its members and the rights of all lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, Intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people throughout the world. Discriminatory practices based on someone's sex, sexuality and/or gender identification, such as homophobia, biphobia, interphobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and monosexism, are infringements of members' human rights and as such are to be challenged and eliminated. Every person has the right to identify or not identify themselves in a chosen way regarding their own sex, sexual identity and gender. The QTU recognises that members who identify as LGBTIQ+ face additional challenges and issues that affect their wellbeing in the workplace and community.

The QTU acknowledges that members who identify as LGBTIQ+ may face unique physical, social and/or emotional isolation. The Union is committed to advocating for networks and programs that support LGBTIQ+ members.

3.1.1 The role of the QTU

The QTU is committed to ensuring that the concerns of LGBTIQ+ members are addressed.

Every endeavour shall be made:

- to promote the general welfare, personal, civil, industrial and curriculum rights of LGBTIQ+ members
- to liaise with the various networks of LGBTIQ+ people to maximise unionisation of education workers within all groups, and foster a more positive and active role for them within the teacher unions
- to initiate and coordinate a staff development program so that all officers and staff of branches and associated bodies are better able to further the welfare and the rights of their LGBTIQ+ members
- to establish networks expressly to support the personal, civil, industrial, and workplace rights of LGBTIQ+ members, encourage closer relationships with the Union, and pursue the rights of all education workers to influence curricula in ways that will enhance understanding and acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people
- to jointly sponsor and encourage the development of a nationwide support network to further policy development on sexual orientation and preferred gender identity, and to develop strategies for the implementation of these policies
- to support workshops and discussion groups specifically for LGBTIQ+ members, to identify and clarify their needs, concerns and conditions
- to monitor and participate where possible in relevant research into LGBTIQ+ issues for members and students within all education sectors
- to ensure that all industrial agreements contain a positive clause on the rights of LGBTIQ+ members
- to ensure the QTU is a safe place for LGBTIQ+ people and provides appropriate networks, caucuses and representation
- to consider the effects on LGBTIQ+ people when formulating or amending QTU policies.

3.1.2 Definitions

Homophobia refers to fear or intolerance of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or same sex attracted. This can commonly be expressed through hostility, verbal and physical abuse, and/or discrimination. Homophobia can be expressed by individuals, groups and in institutional policy in a variety of education settings, as well as public and private spaces. It may affect education workers, students or parents.

Transphobia refers to fear or intolerance of people who identify as transgender, gender diverse or do not conform to traditional gender norms. This can commonly be expressed through hostility, verbal and physical abuse, and/or discrimination. Transphobia can be expressed by individuals, groups and in institutional policy in a variety of education settings, as well as public and private spaces. It may affect education workers, students or parents.

Heterosexism describes the assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual and that other types of sexuality or gender identity are unhealthy, unnatural or not as good as heterosexuality. Heterosexism can include homophobic and/or transphobic discrimination.

Intersex is a congenital variation of physical traits which originate from naturally occurring genetic, chromosomal or hormonal variations. Intersex people may be neither male nor female, a combination of male and female or where an individual may not be wholly male or female.

Interphobia refers to the discrimination intersex people face in healthcare, education, employment, and other services, often due to physical characteristics, developmental issues, or assumptions about their identities.

Biphobia refers to fear or intolerance of people who identify as bisexual. This can commonly be expressed through hostility, verbal and physical abuse, and/or discrimination.

Monosexism describes the belief that bisexuality does not exist and that all people love and are attracted to only one gender, taking for granted the sexual dichotomy inherent in modern western culture. Monosexism is exhibited by the pressure that bisexuals experience to identify as either heterosexual or homosexual.

3.1.3 Homophobia, biphobia, interphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and monosexism

The QTU will support strategies to counter the effects of homophobia, biphobia, interphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and monosexism at three levels:

3.1.3.1 Institutional

Governments

We call on the federal and state governments to ensure that their discrimination laws cover all aspects of law relating to LGBTIQ+ people. These must include laws on marriage, IVF, adoption, and age of consent. Because most states and territories have laws on age of consent which are different for same sex attracted men, the message being delivered to young LGBTIQ+ people is that they are not equal.

Departments

DoE must ensure that its policies recognise and support the needs of LGBTIQ+ employees and students.

The DoE must resource and actively support LGBTIQ+ initiatives (such as Rainbow Liaison Officers and Proud at Work workforce strategies) within workplaces.

All DoE staff must be in-serviced on homophobia, biphobia, interphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and monosexism.

The unacceptability of homophobia, biphobia, interphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and monosexism must be included in the codes of conduct of departments, schools and colleges.

All students must have the opportunity to maximise their learning potential, regardless of sexual orientation and/or preferred gender identity.

Homophobia, biphobia, interphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and monosexism must be included in the content of preservice training of all teachers.

Parents

Parents have the right to expect that neither they nor their children will be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The QTU will communicate with the appropriate federal and state parent organisations and PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).

Religious institutions and community groups

While some groups and their members are to be commended for their positive common sense and humanist approach to LGBTIQ+ issues, others are to be condemned for their discriminative attitudes and approaches.

Unions

The QTU will work closely with the ACTU, QCU and affiliated state bodies to ensure all unions have anti-discrimination policies on LGBTIQ+ issues.

3.1.3.2 Educational settings

Educational institutions must implement strategies to counter homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and monosexism. The use of language is important when teaching. Gender neutral terms and preferred names and pronouns are best practice and respectful.

The QTU encourages schools and TAFE settings to adopt events such as “Wear it Purple Day” and Pride to highlight inclusivity and promote belonging.

Educational institutions should affirm diversity. As with sexism and racism, homophobic, biphobic, interphobic and transphobic remarks or actions should never pass without comment.

Educational institutions have an obligation to maximise learning potential, regardless of sexual orientation and/or preferred gender identity.

3.1.3.3 Curriculum

All curriculum should be written in inclusive language. Sexuality should be included in all curriculum relating to health and personal development. Diverse sex, sexuality and genders need to be normalised and all states and territories need to develop material which will help to combat homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. It is also an important health issue, recognising that most sex education practice is binary and heteronormative. Material must be developed for students who are LGBTIQ+ and also First Nations peoples or from a non-English speaking background.

Respectful relationships curriculum and sex education should be inclusive of all sexualities and not be heteronormative. This will require either specialist itinerant teachers, or additional training for existing staff, which should be fully funded.

3.1.4 Sex education

The QTU believes that comprehensive sex education should be available on an ongoing basis to all primary, secondary and tertiary students, and considers that:

- comprehensive sex education programs must be part of a broad health education curricula (which includes areas such as safety, environmental, consumer and mental health)
- Adequate teacher training for diverse sex education scenarios
- Nonbinary and gender non-conforming students must have the ability to self-select the most appropriate form of sex education.
- sex education programs must be non-sexist and non-racist
- sex education programs should be conducted in class settings reflective of the cultural and socio-emotional needs of the students. sex education programs should be age and developmentally appropriate and also address the needs of LGBTIQ+ students as well as heteronormative students
- presentation or discussion of LGBTIQ+ issues in a class situation should be positive in approach

- sex education programs must be developed in a manner that encourages critical thinking and considered decision-making by students
- sex education programs should reflect the interests and concerns of students and other members of the school and local community
- The sexual orientation and/or preferred gender identity of individual teachers must not be a factor in determining which teachers are able to teach sex, health or human biology education
- Acknowledges and supports teachers using their professional autonomy to adapting programs and materials to meet the diverse needs of the students in front of them.

The QTU endorses the development of curriculum on sex education within the teaching service and among school communities.

The QTU should seek adequate yearly allocations of in-service education dealing with health education, including sex education.

The QTU believes that where LGBTIQ+ issues are relevant to programs that fall outside the health education area, relevance should be acknowledged in a positive manner.

3.1.5 Vocational and careers education

The QTU urges the Queensland Government to commit to centrally and recurrently funding and managing a statewide program dedicated to making schools safer and more inclusive for same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and community members. A fully funded department-led program is essential to create the change needed to ensure that every student, teacher and community members in every school has access to a safe and inclusive learning environment, free from discrimination and persecution.

The QTU stresses the need for teachers and others involved in advisory or support roles to be fully familiar with the rights and support mechanisms for LGBTIQ+ students, staff and community members.

3.1.6 Employment issues

3.1.6.1 Elimination of discrimination in employment

The QTU asserts that the employment rights and conditions of its members should in no way be jeopardised on account of their sexual orientation and/or preferred gender identity.

The QTU stresses the need to ensure that LGTBIQ+ members are supported professionally and personally to the same extent as any other member.

3.1.6.2 Leave entitlements

The QTU recognises that LGTBIQ+ members have family responsibilities and as such must have access to all leave and conditions applicable to heteronormative workers with family responsibilities.

Gender Affirmation Leave

Gender Affirmation means that your gender identity does not match your gender assigned at birth and you wish to adopt a gender identity that is different to your gender assigned at birth.

Individuals will have access to up to twenty days paid Gender Affirmation Leave and up to 12 months' unpaid Gender Affirmation Leave. Employees may request additional paid Gender Affirmation Leave, which may be granted on a discretionary and case by case basis in exceptional circumstances.

Paid leave may be taken for:

- a) psychological support;

- b) hormone replacement therapy and other types of medical intervention;
- c) appointments to alter the employee's legal status or amend the employee's gender on legal documentation;
- d) do their similar appointments or procedures to give effect to the employee's transition

3.2 Environmental issues

Australia's natural resources are limited. As a consequence of past and present human activity, these resources have been depleted. There is keen competition for the use of the remaining resources, and this is likely to intensify in the future.

The QTU recognises that pollution is a by-product of intensified consumption and opposes its acceptance and commodification in the economy.

The QTU supports strategies to reduce reliance on fossil fuels by expanding use of alternate energy sources, including solar, wind, geothermal and hydro power generation.

The QTU supports strategies to increase recycling of resources to reduce consumption and the impact on the earth.

The QTU supports the safe removal, disposal and storage of non-recyclable waste.

The QTU does not support the use of helium balloons for community events and celebrations, recognising the determinantal environmental impact of helium balloons on the environment.

Queensland is still generously endowed with unique bio-diversity and natural features which need careful protection. These resources include the Great Barrier Reef, the coastal zone with its beaches and estuaries, the great sand masses, rainforests, unique fauna and river systems and national parks. Such a rich heritage deserves protection. The QTU supports strategies that preserve these resources for future generations to enjoy.

3.2.1 Legislation

The QTU supports:

- the enactment of legislation to ensure proper environmental impact assessment and the protection of both our cultural and natural heritage
- the enactment of the Environmental Protection Act, with provision for ongoing public consultation and involvement
- provision for adequate public participation in the administrative procedures provided for under such legislation.
- adoption of national and international treaties that promote sustainable use of natural resources and protection from harm/degradation.

3.2.2 Administration

The QTU supports:

- close liaison between the departments responsible for the environment and natural resources
- the implementation of sound land-use planning in the state
- promotion of best practice techniques by local government
- increased funding for both government and non-government environmental protection agencies

- the introduction of improved procedures for consultation between the public and government agencies.

3.2.3 Biodiversity, forest and farming

The QTU supports the preservation of Queensland's hardwood forests and the protection of biodiversity. The QTU supports sustainable farming and forestry practices.

3.2.4 Resources and energy

The QTU supports:

- the promotion of wise, efficient and sustainable use of all resources
- the declaration of a nuclear-free state
- the encouragement of employment in areas which have a beneficial rather than an adverse effect on the environment
- the construction and conversion of school buildings and grounds and other DoE workplaces to be energy efficient and water wise
- the establishment of an active soil conservation program
- any legislation that regulates land clearing
- the introduction of incentives to encourage re-forestation and conservation of native flora and fauna on private lands
- sustainable farming practices that do not degrade the environment
- large scale production of hemp and by-products as an alternative to traditional crops such as sugar cane, tobacco and cotton
- sustainable urban developments and environments
- The responsible development of the green hydrogen industry for sustainable use in appropriate sectors.

The QTU calls on governments to provide financial incentives to meet sustainable practices in the home and workplace.

The QTU will endeavour to implement practices to reduce energy usage within its own organisation.

The QTU encourages the development of recycling industries that convert dwindling resources into functional commodities.

The QTU will take reasonable measures to reduce carbon footprint where possible when travelling for QTU events.

3.2.5 Climate emergency

The QTU recognises that:

"In Australia and around the world, the signs of climate emergency are dramatic and disturbing. There can no longer be any question that climate change is happening, that it can be traced to human activity and that we need to respond urgently if we are to prevent catastrophic changes to global systems." (Lowe, 2005)

The climate crisis affects all aspects of modern life and the impacts will disrupt human societies through sea level rise, extreme weather events, desertification and changing weather patterns, as well as threatening food security, water, the economy, social cohesion and the wellbeing of humans and other living things. The impact of the climate crisis will escalate in the future and there must be an immediate mobilisation to restore a safe climate. The climate crisis is union business and there

must be a just transition to a low carbon economy that shares the costs equally without negative impacts on those whose livelihoods are directly impacted by the transition.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in October 2018 reported that we are on track for a 3 degree Celsius (above pre-industrial levels) rise in temperature and that urgent and immediate action is required to limit the rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius and reduce some of the extreme impacts of the climate crisis.

The QTU commends the action of students in collectively organising and participating in climate strike activities to build pressure on governments to enact laws and policy that place Australia at the international forefront on proper action to tackle climate change.

The QTU supports the democratic right of students to take direct action, giving voice to their real concerns about the impacts of climate change, and protesting the inaction by the current federal government.

The QTU supports and commends the action of union members, individuals and students collectively organising and participating in climate strike activities to build pressure on governments to enact laws and policy that place Australia at the international forefront on proper action to tackle climate change.

The QTU supports the democratic right of union members, individuals and students to take direct action, giving voice to their real concerns about the impacts of climate change, and protesting where appropriate, the inaction by the current federal and Queensland state government.

3.3 *Peace and international issues*

3.3.1 Peace

The QTU supports peaceful rather than military solutions to conflicts. As a union of teachers, the QTU has a special role to play in the trade union movement's drive for world peace, in seeking the introduction in Queensland schools of education for a culture of peace within a model of cooperation. Harmony in a peaceful world requires moves towards cooperation rather than domination.

Teachers have a responsibility to provide reliable, carefully prepared and honest educational information which will help young people address their sense of helplessness and their anxiety about their future by introducing them to the issues of violence, global confrontation and the avenues for the peaceful resolution of conflict.

The QTU:

- coordinates the Peace and Equity Awards as an annual QTU art competition for students in state schools
- establishes a peace pledge, whereby QTU members may sign an authorisation to have two dollars or a nominated amount deducted from each QTU expenses claim form, with one dollar being donated to APHEDA and one dollar paid into a peace pledge account, and empowers Executive to make donations from this account to appropriate organisations on recommendation
- will respond to any social issues as they arise
- recognises that, in order for peace education to be a successful educational initiative, it must be resourced adequately, and supports the implementation of a peace education curriculum on the assumption that it will be resourced and supported by the department.

3.3.2 International issues

We support the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the creation of indigenous democratic structures rather than the attempt to impose a governmental structure on a sovereign people.

3.3.2.1 Countering terrorism

Curriculum should be developed to provide a balanced view of all perspectives and should be resourced across existing educational programs, supported by appropriate professional development to ensure every educator can actively carry out this responsibility.

The QTU strongly condemns all attacks in any country which result in a tragic loss of life as crimes against humanity.

The QTU expresses its sympathies to all those who have suffered, particularly educators and their families and children everywhere who have directly or indirectly had their lives irrevocably changed as a result of these violent events.

3.3.2.2 Globalisation

The QTU recognises that one of the biggest impacts of global economic restructuring is the changing nature of the labour market. These changes include high rates of unemployment in certain industries, the creation of new jobs in “new economy” industries, the growth of the services sector and consequent social changes to family structures, lifestyles and identities. The QTU therefore supports, and will need to be proactive in supporting, curriculum which equips students to deal with future working and social life.

The QTU will continue to argue for high levels of government investment in education and to resist the commodification and corporatisation of educational services.

3.3.2.3 Overseas aid

The QTU continues to recognise that it has an active role to play in influencing the education policies of developing countries and in monitoring conditions for students and teachers in these countries. This is primarily done through the support and promotion of APHEDA.

The QTU supports:

- the provision of aid to developing countries, to assist in the abolition of poverty, child labour, unfair working conditions and other abuses of basic human rights
- special appeals for countries in times of crisis, such as war and natural disaster.

The QTU calls on the federal government not to become a signatory to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

3.3.2.4 World debt

The QTU believes that the Australian Government should support measures which help eliminate debt poverty and sub-standard living conditions in countries.

3.3.2.5 Displaced people

The QTU acknowledges that there are more than 65 million forcibly displaced people due to war and civil strife throughout the world. It supports Australian Government programs for resettlement of displaced people and the provision of education and support services to maximise settlement and productivity within the Australian community. It calls on the Australian Government to continue to increase its responsiveness to displaced peoples by increasing the annual number of humanitarian entrants to Australia.

3.4 Social justice issues

3.4.1 Government

3.4.1.1 The Australian Constitution

The QTU supports substantial amendments to the Australian Constitution, primarily:

- educational and industrial guarantees being set and endorsed by a federal government
- educational initiatives that promote a greater understanding of Australia's constitutional system of government, its origins, its functions and need for reform.
- educational programs and curriculum offerings should be developed in a manner that highlights effective pedagogy, a range of learning styles and settings, and encourages active rather than passive citizenship.
- A Voice to Parliament – a **body enshrined in the Constitution** would enable First Nation people to provide advice to the Parliament on policies and projects that impact their lives.

3.4.1.2 An Australian republic

The QTU supports the democratic creation of an Australian republic.

Australia must have a just republic which includes citizenship rights and constitutional guarantees in relation to economic, social, political, educational and industrial rights.

The QTU believes:

- an amended constitution should have an entrenched guarantee of basic rights
- The Australian head of state must be an Australian citizen.

3.4.1.3 The Australian flag

The QTU believes Australia should select a new flag to symbolise an Australian republic.

3.4.1.4 Recognition of traditional owners

The QTU ensures that at the beginning of all official public meetings, events and performances, appropriate recognition is given to the traditional owners of the land. The QTU encourages recognition of the land in which individual members were born, raised, live and work.

3.4.2 The public sector

The QTU notes that a vigorous public sector helps provide a workable strategy for the future social and economic wellbeing of Queensland and Australia. The QTU and the trade union movement as a whole must vigorously oppose all attempts to privatise aspects of the public sector.

3.4.2.1 Public sector funding

The QTU believes that an active public sector should meet the basic needs of all citizens, regardless of status.

3.4.2.2 Corporatisation of schools

The QTU believes that there is a need to extend the functions and operations of the public sector. It opposes the incremental introduction of free market approaches in the public sector and the increasing reliance of schools and universities on corporate funding to supplement their meagre government grants.

3.4.2.3 Corporate responsibility

The QTU supports the rights of workers to seek compensation from companies that, due to negligence, have contributed to workers serious illness or death.

3.4.3. Economic issues

3.4.3.1 Family income support

The QTU supports a system of family income support based on an assessment of need, which takes into account the needs of all individuals, no matter what their circumstances, and which is indexed quarterly to the CPI.

3.4.3.2 Housing

The QTU believes that every Australian resident, regardless of their circumstances, has a right to adequate and appropriate accommodation at a price within their means.

The public housing sector should be developed as a viable and positive housing sector for the community. It should not be a residual or stigmatised form of housing.

Adequate assistance must be provided to families on low and moderate incomes to help them achieve home ownership or to help meet the cost of public, co-operative or private rental accommodation.

3.4.3.3 Taxation

The QTU believes that our taxation system should be sufficient to enable the government of the day to provide a high level of services in such areas as education, health, job creation, aged care and all the other programs and services that the government has a responsibility to provide.

The QTU further believes that a tax system should not unfairly target those with the least ability to contribute to the tax system.

3.4.3.4 Poverty, social welfare and the social wage

Poverty remains an important issue in Australia, threatening the nation's social fabric. Both state and federal governments must embrace a dynamic social agenda before the divisions along socio-economic lines become even more pronounced.

The QTU agrees that enterprise bargaining is an inappropriate mechanism for the establishment of salaries and conditions of working people.

The QTU believes it is paramount that society provides a welfare safety net for people in our community.

The QTU recognises that a civilised democratic society has an obligation to provide an adequate standard of living for all.

Australian Governments must not step away from the provision of a decent social wage for all Australians and necessary welfare assistance for those people who are disadvantaged, no matter what the circumstances.

3.4.3.5 Provision of public education

The QTU advocates an educational system which ensures that public education is free and not dependent on levels of parental income.

The QTU must remain proactive in its defence of public education, in spite of attempts of government at state and federal levels to under-fund public schools. The QTU is opposed to any funding model that is inequitable and not socially responsible.

The QTU calls on all levels of government to fund and support the recommendations of the Gonski review.

3.4.3.6 Work choice

The QTU believes that it is the right of every worker to be in a situation where they can prosper and improve their quality of life throughout their work career.

3.4.4. Health and wellbeing

The QTU views health and wellbeing as incorporating an individual, community and society's physical, psychological, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing. It affirms the holistic nature of health and wellbeing and supports individual, community and government measures to proactively maintain and enhance health and wellbeing, rather than narrow models which only focus on restoration of one aspect of health.

The QTU believes that all stake holders have a critical role to play in the promotion, maintenance and enhancement of the health and wellbeing of citizens.

3.4.4.1 Organisational health

Refer to QTU working conditions policy.

3.4.4.2 Child health and welfare

The QTU believes that all stake holders should be involved in ensuring that children have the best possible mental and physical health.

3.4.4.3 Teacher health and welfare

The QTU acknowledges that the profession has a unique set of welfare and health issues and asserts that employers are responsible for:

- taking preventative measures to avoid health or welfare problems
- developing a range of options for dealing with matters of health and welfare.

The QTU believes that the department, as an employer, should provide employee advisory services, at no cost to all teachers and departmental employees.

3.4.4.4 HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases

The QTU recognises that it has significant roles and responsibilities that are directly related to the major challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). These diseases have created urgent global problems which have broad social, cultural, economic, political, ethical and legal consequences.

3.4.4.5 Mental health

The QTU recognises the varying degrees of mental illness and the impact they can have on people. It is concerning that mental health continues to be one of the largest health issues confronting Australians.

Schools have a responsibility to show compassion, understanding and support to people with mental health issues, especially those at risk of suicide, their families and carers.

3.4.4.6 Drug use

The QTU has a responsibility through schools to ensure that appropriate education is given on irresponsible legal and illegal drug use, based on sound harm minimisation principles.

The QTU calls on the state government to introduce pill testing. The focus of a pill testing program should be on harm minimisation. Pill testing does not condone or promote illicit substance use, but directly seeks to reduce harm, injury and fatalities.

3.4.5 Media

The QTU recognises the powerful role that the media plays in informing society. With this comes great responsibility, and the QTU believes that government has its part to play in ensuring that the different arms of the media provide this service to the Australian public in an accountable and transparent manner. The students that we teach may be more likely to turn to media sources for information than to us as teachers, so the QTU believes that it is important to educate students in the proper use and critical evaluation of media services.

For schools to remain relevant to their students, they must be capable of providing up to date media and information services to them. Traditionally, schools have provided access to new media for students who may not have had the opportunity to use it. However, successive cuts in government funding and regressive changes to access to new media have created a situation where many students have better access to new media at home than at school. Therefore, the QTU calls on all levels of government to provide schools with adequate funding to maintain their technological relevance and to train teachers in the use of new media.

The QTU supports the role of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) as the principle provider of unbiased information and locally-made media content free from commercial influence. The QTU believes the ABC should:

- be an independent body to inform political debate and cultural development, as should its school broadcasting service
- be at the forefront of a technologically changing media environment
- operate as an independent national broadcaster.

The QTU believes Australian television broadcasting (public and commercial) should:

- ensure that new digital and high definition technologies are made available to all Australians, regardless of income and geographic location
- finance quality and worthwhile Australian-made children's programs that address current issues
- be encouraged to be more selective in buying imported material
- exercise extreme care with advertising directed at children, to prevent exploitation
- pay more attention to the needs of primary and early secondary school age children in programming
- have a responsibility to cover issues relating to education
- cover the education industry with objectivity.

The QTU recognises that the internet is a powerful tool for information provision which is already overwhelming traditional forms of media. As such, use of the internet is a vital component in modern educational practices. The QTU calls on all levels of government to:

- provide adequate funding for provision of computer resources and support in all state schools, as well as training for teachers in the proper use of such technology
- ensure that people in urban, rural and remote areas have free and open access to information through a high-speed internet service
- ensure that mechanisms for limiting students' access to damaging and socially unacceptable material are transparent, accountable and do not result in the blocking of legitimate educational resources
- reverse its policy of the provision of a "clean" internet feed, which will result in a poorer level of internet service for Australians with no guaranteed safety dividends for children.

The QTU opposes the current concentration of media ownership in Australia and the continuing trend of more concentration in both electronic and print media.

The QTU condemns actions by the media which isolate, demonise or otherwise defame already marginalised groups in society.

3.5 Anti-Discrimination

The QTU supports the extension of civil liberties to all people, including freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly.

The QTU states its belief that all people shall have the right to be free from any form of discrimination including but not limited to race, colour, gender, age, physical appearance, marital status, pregnancy, child rearing/nursing, religion, political opinion, trade union activity, national or social origin, status or economic condition, sexual orientation or gender preferred identity, or on the basis of HIV/AIDS or association with, or relation to, a person identified on the basis of any of the above attributes.

3.5.1 Teachers

A worker or potential worker, if discriminated against by the department or any other employee of the department on the grounds covered by the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 or the Queensland Human Rights Act (2019) is supported by the QTU in pursuing remedies through the appropriate channels.

The QTU rejects all recruitment practices which discriminate either directly or indirectly against any group of members.

3.5.2 Students

Students should have the right to be free from any form of discrimination on grounds of race, colour, gender, age, physical appearance, marital status, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, status or economic condition, sexual orientation or gender preferred identity.

Pregnant students should have the right to continue their schooling, and be encouraged to do so, and should be protected from discrimination, with appropriate support provided to ensure that the school or college environment does not endanger their health and that the continuity of their studies is not adversely affected.

Students should be entitled to education on fundamental human rights, which advocates acceptance of the principles incorporated in the Queensland Human Rights Commission, United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and in UN and International Labour Organisation charters or conventions addressing the issue of anti-discrimination.

3.5.3 First Nations peoples

(see QTU First Nations education and training policy)

3.5.4 Refugees

The QTU condemns the policy of off-shore processing and further condemns government policy and practices which deny refugees access to a range of government support services, in particular the provision of educational services to refugee children and the mandatory reporting of physical and sexual abuse. The QTU is opposed to children being placed in detention and denied access to schooling.

Public services should be adequately funded to provide the necessary services.

3.5.5 Teachers, students, parents and all school staff living with a disability or HIV

The rights of individual members or groups of members perceived to be “at risk” of contracting the HIV virus are to be protected from any form of victimisation or discrimination arising out of pressures from media, political, social or other sources.

The QTU supports the right to paid work for all who want it, irrespective of disability, and is opposed to any restrictions placed upon the employment, or continued employment of workers with HIV or with HIV antibodies.

Workers with disabilities are entitled to fully participate in the labour market, in jobs which offer fair wages, security, are safe and healthy, free from exploitation, harassment and discrimination, have prospects for advancement and offer training and skill development to maximise individual potential. The QTU will stand together with workers and their advocacy groups to achieve justice.

The QTU accepts that employment plus access to social security payments are important to individuals with a disability and that our actions should enhance, not reduce, these entitlements, in accordance with the Anti-Discrimination Act (1991).

Any moves to exclude students attending schools or colleges, or to exclude any other persons employed in schools or colleges, on grounds that they have HIV or HIV antibodies, that they are perceived as being at high risk of contracting the HIV virus, or that they have a disability, will be opposed by the QTU.

The establishment of any register of those persons who are HIV antibody positive is opposed by the QTU.

3.5.6 The need for resources for the elimination of discrimination in education

If substantial gains are to be achieved in the elimination of discrimination in education, resources will be required from the state and federal governments. The QTU therefore calls for the Commonwealth and state governments to cooperate to ensure that all staff have extensive preservice and ongoing professional development on the elimination of discrimination in schools, TAFES and universities.

To this end, the QTU also calls on DoE, Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Human Rights Commission to promote materials, programs and resources to support school curriculum.

3.5.7 Affirmative action

The QTU supports affirmative action as one strategy in countering various forms of discrimination against, and structural under-representation of, various groups in the workplace.