



QUEENSLAND
TEACHERS' UNION
OF EMPLOYEES

QTU Policy
2023 - 2025

Special education

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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1. Introduction

The QTU special education policy sets out the Union's position on major issues related to the education of students with special educational needs, consistent with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth).

2. Principles of inclusive education

The principles of inclusive education include:

- equitable access, participation, engagement and demonstrable outcomes for students
- the acknowledgement, valuing and respect of the diversity of students' knowledge, skills, strengths, abilities and experiences within an inclusive framework
- acknowledgement and elimination of inequitable outcomes of schooling for students
- empowerment of students by contestation and reduction of injustices and inequities
- it is broader than just students with disabilities
- it is the responsibility of the whole school community
- consultation regarding the model of inclusive education within schools should take into account student needs and must be negotiated through the Local Consultative Committee (LCC) process.

Consistent with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld), *Human Rights Act 2019* and The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration 2019, the QTU defines students with special educational needs (the target population for the delivery of special education services) as including those students whose needs are identified within the Queensland NCCD model.

In order to achieve quality learning outcomes, these students require reasonable adjustments to curriculum, support programs, services and/or other resources which are complementary and additional to those which are provided to students in general.

The QTU reaffirms its belief that the public education system needs to value, provide and maintain access to a range of services, curriculum programs and educational settings to ensure access by, and the inclusion of, all students. Inclusive service delivery models must be flexible, to allow for the movement of students and/or staff across a range of programs and be considerate of parental preferences.

3. Rights of teachers

A significant role of the QTU is to protect and enhance the working conditions and support the wellbeing of teachers and school leaders in Queensland. It is not acceptable for any school employee to face physical harm in the workplace or to expect they might be harmed during the course of their work. A risk assessment approach to identify and respond to student behaviours must be provided in schools to reduce the risk escalations that pose risk of restrictive practice and reduce risk of occupational violence to staff. In doing this, it also supports the industrial and professional rights of members to make evidence informed decisions aligned to relevant legislation about the curriculum, programs resources and behaviour support most appropriate for individual students with special educational needs. These decisions should be made in consultation with students, their families, support staff in schools and relevant service providers. This includes the right of members to acknowledge the challenges in the provision of appropriate programs for students with special educational needs. This is often a consequence of inadequate training and/or resource provision.

These rights are entirely compatible with, and essential to, the provision of the most equitable and accessible environment and culture for all students. .

The QTU supports members who choose not to provide or to withdraw instruction based on a collective determination by QTU members at the site. This support is in the form of a directive from the QTU at the request of members in relation to the inadequate level of resources and support at the site and/or the safety of the student, other students or staff. If this occurs, then it is the Department of Education's responsibility to provide an appropriate placement for any students affected, and to begin immediate negotiations towards a positive resolution.

4. Resourcing

Resourcing for students with special educational needs is by its very nature intensive. This resourcing must continue to ensure adherence to philosophies and evidence based practices of inclusive education and special education settings.

QTU advocates for the allocation of resources to ensure both the maintenance of workloads at a reasonable level and the delivery of a high-quality service. Students needs can change year to year and throughout the school year. In some circumstances, schools may need additional resources or support to build their capability to meet these changing needs.

Additional allocations may be needed by schools if for a range of reasons including:

- Extensive plus resourcing for students recorded as needing anticipated adjustments in the Extensive level as at Day 8 (Anticipated Extensive plus); and
- when students' needs change during the school year.

Where needed schools should be able to access an additional annual allocation of teachers and teacher aides through the RAR as Regional Capability Development (RCD) funding.

The QTU believes in and promotes the notion of a needs-based resourcing model implemented in a timely manner. This resource model should be based on a data set reflective of the needs of all students, and capture the specific needs of students identified in the Queensland NCCD model.

The QTU believes that access, participation, engagement and successful learning outcomes for students with special educational needs will be achieved with:

- the provision of staffing (both teaching and non-teaching) according to a needs-based model
- the provision of resources appropriate to the students' needs according to a needs-based model
- the provision of technology resources in recognition of teacher numbers working at schools as well as student needs
- facilities that are specifically designed, located, built and maintained to meet the needs of all students and staff
- access to a range of services and programs funded through a needs-based model
- full funding and resourcing of the recommendations of the DeLoites Disability Review

4.1 Staffing

Staffing models that are transparent, fully funded, flexible, and needs and context-based must be developed for students with special educational needs. QTU support decisions that take into account the work-life balance of teachers, heads of program and school leaders.

Special schools should be entitled to classified officer positions as follows:

Level of school	Classified officers
7&8	Principal + 3 DPs + 4 HODs + 4 HODCs (0.5 teaching load) + coach
6	Principal + 2 DPs + 4 HODs + 4 HODCs (0.5 teaching load) + coach
4&5	Principal (non-teaching) + 2 DPs + 2 HODs + 2 HODCs (0.5 teaching load)
3	Principal (non-teaching) + 1 DP + 2 HODs + 2 HODCs (0.5 teaching load)

All schools which have a special education program (SEPs) should be entitled to classified officer positions as follows:

HOSES Level	Classified Officers
Above ST2 - DP1	1 DP Inclusion + 1 FTE HOSES (non-teaching) + FTE HODC
ST2 – DP1	1 DP Inclusion + 1 FTE HOSES (1.0 non-teaching) + 0.8 FTE HODC
ST2 – HOP (Level 2)	1 FTE HOSES (1.0 non-teaching) + 0.8 FTE HODC
ST2 (Level 1) cluster SEP	1 FTE HOSES (non-teaching)
ST2 (Level 1) single location	1 FTE HOSES (non-teaching)

Special schools and all schools who have a SEP should be entitled to guidance officer support services as follows:

Level of school	Classified officers
7&8	2.0 FTE guidance officer
6	1.6 FTE guidance officer
5	1.2 FTE guidance officer
P4 and under	1.0 FTE guidance officer

HOSES Level	Classified officers
Above ST2 – DP1	1.0 FTE guidance officer
ST2 – DP1	0.8 FTE guidance officer
ST2 – HOP (Level 2)	0.6 FTE guidance officer
ST2 (Level 1) – cluster SEP	1.0 FTE guidance officer
ST2 (Level 1) – single location	0.6 FTE guidance officer

These classified positions must also access non-contact time commensurate with their teaching load, and in addition to their administration time. HOSES working in clusters or hubs require additional non-teaching time, reflecting both the workload and the travel required in these settings.

These models should be applied consistently across the state and in line with other sectors' staffing allocations. Schools should be advised of their indicative staffing allocation and provided with

relevant staff by the middle of November of the previous year, however staffing needs to be adjusted accordingly with increased enrolments during the year.

The Teacher Relief Scheme (TRS) in special schools should equate to the allocation currently afforded to primary schools. This takes into consideration the specific nature of working with students with special educational needs, including:

- increased exposure to communicable diseases
- the importance of protecting vulnerable students
- the lack of flexibility to make alternative supervisory arrangements, such as the inability to merge classes.

Due to the complex nature of, and difficulty in, sourcing suitable relief staff, special schools should have access to suitably qualified district and local relief teachers, and these positions should not be funded through the TRS or school staffing budget.

The QTU supports an enhanced allocative model for the deployment of teacher-aides in special schools, to ensure quality outcomes for students with special needs. The QTU recommends a minimum teacher-aide allocation in special schools, SEPs and SECs of 30 hours per week per each one (1) FTE teacher.

4.2 Infrastructure

Infrastructure and buildings must be of the highest standard and incorporate design specifications and additional equipment appropriate to the needs of students and staff. Additionally, separate area(s) need to be identified for students with special educational needs to be safe, feel safe, and continue their learning, recreation, play or other interests.

Funding, resources and processes must be put in place to ensure that current infrastructure across the state, in all settings, is brought up to standard, in accordance with the Disability Standard (2010) and maintained at this standard by the Department of Education. Future infrastructure must incorporate universal design principles. This infrastructure should be located, built and maintained throughout the state in line with demographic information of growth areas to meet the needs of all students and staff. This should be done proactively and in a planned manner to cater for growth within current special schools. The QTU supports the building of new special schools to ease the pressure on existing schools and to cater for the diverse needs of the growing population and expansion of suburban areas.

It should be recognised that students with special educational needs may require the provision of disability specific equipment eg hoists, change tables and infrastructure not found in all schools if they are to have equitable access to educational programs. The infrastructure and additional ongoing costs should be fully funded by the Department of Education, not funded from school budgets.

Specialists require infrastructure that provides a confidential environment and suitable furniture/equipment at their base and at each school supported.

QTU believes that everyone in our community has the right to use public transport. The Transport Standards (2002) recognise that access to public transport enables people with disability, their families and their carers to fully participate in community life and also benefits many older Australians and parents with infants in prams. QTU calls on the department to provide sufficient and adequate access to public transport for the students.

5. Teaching and learning

All students in Queensland schools in Prep to year 10 access the Australian Curriculum. All students in Year 11 and Year 12 access their curriculum through the Applied Senior Syllabus, Guide to Individualised Learning or Vocational Education and Training.

Curriculum implementation, assessment and reporting needs to be designed to maximise all students' access, participation and engagement.. The learning needs of all students should be incorporated into the three levels of planning through consultation at a school level. Decisions around meeting individual student needs should be made in consultation with parents and students wherever possible.

The QTU will ensure that the Department of Education implements the the commitment outlines in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration 2019 to support all Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens. The development of robust and flexible teaching programs allow educators the opportunity to ensure that students access learning that provide a broad range of experiences based on The Australian Curriculum which curriculum and curriculum resources to meet the educational needs of all students should continue.

At school, class or individual curriculum level, there needs to be special emphasis on processes to identify and plan for the high expectations for each individual learner. Pedagogical practices should be planned and implemented to meet the individual learning needs of all students. These practices should be supported through access to assistive technology eg eye gaze technology, AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication).

Assessment procedures should be designed and implemented in a variety of modes consistent with curriculum documentation that give students an equitable opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do, as opposed to assessing for the sole purpose of data collection. Reporting should directly reflect the year level curriculum and commensurate A to E reporting descriptors the student is accessing, rather than their chronological age.

For many students with special educational needs, the QTU strongly supports the rationalisation of plans, where appropriate (i.e. health plans, behaviour plans and individual curriculum plans).

6. Service delivery

The Department of Education must provide a full array of settings, series and programs for students with special educational needs. In recognition of the inclusive education policy, the QTU believes that the current range of educational settings must be maintained so that parents and carers have access to the full choice of educational options.

The QTU strongly opposes any reorganisation of services and resources that would eliminate facilities with a specific identity, rationale, status and role in providing special education services to students in schools.

A clarification of the roles of special educators should be accompanied by the updating or development of role statements and position descriptions for all special educators.

The Queensland Government must establish and maintain the following within its public education system.

- Special schools –that provide specialised support for students with disabilities and a diverse curriculum based on the individual needs of students and aligned with systemic frameworks.

- Special education programs in mainstream schools –that provide support to students with special educational needs in primary and secondary schools by delivering services directly to students and/or supporting these students in curriculum classes. The prep year should be available in all schools that cater for primary age students, including special schools.
- Early childhood development programs (ECDPs) –that provide early intervention for children with disabilities, or suspicion of a disability, from birth to five years.
- Advisory visiting teachers (early intervention) –that provide early intervention for children with disabilities, or suspicion of a disability, from birth to five years across an array of settings.
- Advisory visiting teacher services – students identified as having special educational needs arising from their disabilities, or who have special behavioural needs, or who require assistance transitioning from school to post-school and their teachers, should have access to advisory visiting teacher support.
- Special programs in hospital settings – these provide an important service in the array of options for students who are hospitalised and/or whose parents, carers or siblings are hospitalised or having treatment. Resourcing should be provided to support the particular needs of students with medical and mental health issues and to support the liaison role necessary for transition to and from the school in which they are enrolled.
- Special service provided to students with special educational needs at home – students with medically diagnosed conditions or severe and challenging behaviours that prevent them from attending schools should be provided with educational and other relevant services at home (e.g. visiting teachers and therapists, flexible arrangements, dual enrolment procedures).
- Learning support services –to be provided to students with learning difficulties/disabilities and their teachers. The number of learning support teachers in primary and secondary schools should be proportionate to the number of students with learning difficulties/disabilities in each school.
- Special service provisions – are for students with medical or mental health conditions or severe social/emotional difficulties. The treatment of medical/mental health conditions is the primary responsibility of a relevant health professional. Where a student has been diagnosed with a medical or mental health condition, severe social/emotional difficulties or a conduct disorder, the QTU supports the provision of additional resources determined by the development of a support plan. Where the student's needs are beyond the school's capacity, the QTU will support the school's right to suspend and/or seek temporary/permanent placement in an appropriate setting for the student.
- Nursing services –be fully funded by DoE according to need and provided to identified students regardless of age, setting or socio-economic status. Nurses must be available for all students with specialised medical support needs, especially when these students have life threatening medical conditions. Medical intervention should be provided in a timely manner by expert staff. All nursing staff employed in schools should work in a consultative model and under the direction of the principal. The QTU supports the continued professional learning of nursing staff in schools.
- Therapy services – to be commensurate with school needs and be fully funded by DoE and provided to identified students regardless of age, setting or socio-economic status. Therapists should not be influenced by external providers or expected to deliver external programs. Therapy services should be provided in a timely manner by expert staff. All therapy staff employed in schools should work in a consultative model and under the direction of the principal. The QTU supports the continued professional learning of therapy staff in schools.

- Teacher-aides – the QTU supports the continued professional learning and capacity building of teacher-aides who support the teaching, learning, and general educational growth of students with special educational needs.
- Behaviour support – a range of programs designed to prevent and manage work related occupational violence should be provided and fully funded by DoE when schools are dealing with students who display extreme and challenging behaviours, regardless of age and across all sectors and settings. The safety and wellbeing of staff and other students should be paramount and in accordance with the WHS Act 2011. This should include provision of, and universal access to, appropriate alternative settings and programs, staffed by personnel with appropriate qualifications, experience and expertise.
- Collaborative practices – to support an inclusive education model, the QTU supports the provision of fully funded additional NCT for collaborative planning between all stakeholders eg specialised school personnel, parents/carers and allied health practitioners.

Queensland state schools provide education for the majority of students with disabilities. In 2021 Queensland state schools through the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) identified approximately 20% of students as students with an impairment consistent with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and who required adjustments to their education program .

Of growing concern is the increase of identified students with autism spectrum disorder) and the number of students presenting with complex mental health issues and trauma.

The QTU recognises that a significant percentage of students with special educational needs undertake the majority of their schooling in a mainstream classroom. Many of these students access their schooling in rural and remote locations, in a multi-age approach. Teachers in these settings should be provided with additional fully funded additional NCT to develop their capabilities through participating in professional learning when needed.

School staffing methodologies should ensure schools are staffed such that class sizes can be reduced to reflect the number of students with special educational needs in a class. In order to meet the needs of all students, additional qualified/trained staff must be employed.

The QTU recognises that with the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), teachers should not be expected to significantly increase their workload through the provision of additional information for the purposes of NDIS service provisions and liaising with NDIS service providers

7. Qualifications and professional development

The pre-service training of all teachers must include mandatory components related to the education of students with special educational needs, exposure to and understanding of the philosophies and evidence based practice of inclusive schooling policies and at least one practicum in a setting providing education to students with special educational needs. The QTU supports tertiary institutions providing undergraduate and post-graduate programs with a focus on the education of students with special educational needs.

All students with special educational needs, in all settings, should have access to a teacher who has an appropriate qualification and training and experience.

The Department of Education must facilitate the provision of training for specialist teachers as one means of ensuring an adequate supply of specialist teachers. The QTU supports the provision of scholarships for teachers and/or school leaders to pursue additional studies specifically dedicated to the education of students with special educational needs.

All teachers must be offered and have access to and receive professional development, provided by the Department of Education, to foster positive attitudes and equip them with the skills needed to deliver appropriate educational outcomes for students with special educational needs. All teachers and school leaders should be able to access Department of Education funded professional development opportunities regardless of the timing and location of these opportunities.

Guidance services must be provided by guidance officers who possess appropriate and comprehensive guidance training, teaching qualifications and experience. The training must be undertaken prior to commencing the role and should be supported by the Department of Education.