



Minister for Education
Minister for Industrial Relations and
Minister for Racing

14 DEC 2022

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Senator Matt O'Sullivan
Chair
The Senate Education and Employment References Committee
Email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator *Matt,*

Thank you for your letter dated 7 November 2022 regarding the Senate Education and Employment References Committee's Inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters.

While the Queensland Government will not be making a formal submission to the Inquiry, I am providing you with information regarding Queensland state schools to support the Committee's consideration of this matter.

I note the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry include how state and territory departments are working to monitor school refusal. The most up-to-date statistics regarding student attendance in Queensland state schools are published on the Department of Education's website at <https://qed.qld.gov.au/publications/reports/statistics/schooling/students>.

The department also publishes data on reasons for non-attendance captured under broad categories, however, the department does not collect data specifically about school refusal (as distinct from school absence). Absences due to school refusal may be included under the category 'Illness and medical appointments', which captures absences related to any aspect of a student's health, including their mental health.

The department recognises that maximising attendance at school is vital to improving students' educational outcomes, general wellbeing, as well as their future employment options and earning capacity. Students, parents, schools, local communities and government services all play a role in improving school attendance.

Schools employ a range of strategies to sustain and improve attendance including providing positive and welcoming school environments, with engaging curriculum and extracurricular activities. They actively engage with parents and students to identify and address barriers that prevent attendance, and provide access to support services for students and families.

Supporting students' wellbeing is a priority of the department. The department is delivering on the Queensland Government's \$106.7 million Student Wellbeing Package that commenced in July 2021 and will provide up to an additional 464 full-time equivalent (FTE) wellbeing professionals, such as psychologists, to Queensland state schools. This will ensure every Queensland state school student has access to a wellbeing professional at school by June 2024.

Wellbeing professionals employed through the Student Wellbeing Package complement the support already available to students at school through the state's extensive guidance officer network comprising more than 810 FTE guidance officers and more than 80 FTE senior guidance officers.

If a child demonstrates a reluctance to go to school, parents are encouraged to work closely with the staff at the school to identify possible causes and strategies to address concerns.

Specific information for parents about anxiety, school refusal and how to help their children can be found online as part of the department's *Every day counts* resources at www.education.qld.gov.au/initiativesstrategies/Documents/anxiety-about-going-school.pdf.

The department has also established Regional Youth Engagement Services to specifically support young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from education. These services help coordinate support to assist young people who have become disengaged to reconnect them with a meaningful pathway to learning. More information about these services is available at www.advancingeducation.qld.gov.au/youthEngagement/Documents/youth-engagement-services-information-sheet.pdf

I trust this information is of assistance. I look forward to the outcomes of this Inquiry, which I anticipate will inform how students can best be supported to regularly attend school.

If your officers require further information or assistance, I invite them to contact Ms Amanda O'Hara, Acting Assistant Director-General, Strategic Policy and Intergovernmental Relations, on _____ or by email at _____

If you would like to discuss this matter, please contact me directly or alternatively your staff can contact _____

Yours sincerely

GRACE GRACE MP
Minister for Education
Minister for Industrial Relations and
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