

# Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021

September 2021

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## Introduction

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 (the Bill).

QCEC is the peak strategic body with state-wide responsibilities for Catholic schooling in Queensland. This submission is provided on behalf of the five Diocesan Catholic school authorities and 17 Religious Institutes and other incorporated bodies which, between them, operate a total of 309 Catholic schools that educate more than 156,000 students in Queensland.

In the timeframe available, QCEC has not been able to consult widely with its stakeholders about this Bill. However, it provides the following comments offering in-principle support for aspects of the Bill relevant to schools.

Queensland Catholic schools are committed to ensuring the safety of students as their highest priority. School staff undertake training in child protection matters on an annual basis and procedures are in place to ensure all mandatory reporting and other compliance requirements are met.

The Bill will introduce changes to the Blue Card arrangements under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening Act) 2000*. Blue Card requirements play an important role in assisting schools manage the employment of relevant non-teaching staff, and the changes being made by the Bill will strengthen this role.

Of particular importance will be the ability for adverse decisions and information from other jurisdictions to be taken into account in Blue Card assessments. This will include Queensland participating in the Working with Children Check National Reference System - a national database enabling jurisdictions to identify persons who have been deemed ineligible to work with children in another State or Territory. QCEC supports these changes, as they have the potential to make children safer through the strengthening of the Blue Card system.

It is noted that the Bill will also allow for a request to be made to Police for domestic violence information as part of a Blue Card assessment. It is acknowledged that using such information can be complex but that it may improve current approaches to risk assessment.

The aspects of the Bill dealing with Blue Cards are those that are most relevant to schools and these aspects of the Bill are supported in-principle by QCEC.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission. Should you wish to discuss further any aspect of the submission, please contact Mr Chris Woolley, Chief Operating Officer, QCEC.

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Executive Director