

Telephone: 07 3900 6000

Reference:

Committee Secretary
Education, Arts and Communities Committee

Via email:

Dear Committee Secretary

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (the Commission) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Education, Arts and Communities Committee regarding the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 (the Bill).

The Bill introduces a range of administrative and governance reforms, including measures to support continuity of education through recognition of alternative education pathways, strengthen information sharing to facilitate student re-engagement, and improve oversight across Queensland's education and related sectors.

This submission focuses on elements of the Bill that directly impact children and young people experiencing vulnerability, particularly those disengaged from education or in contact with the youth justice system.

Education as a protective factor

Engagement with education is widely recognised as a critical protective factor for children and young people. Maintaining connection to education through flexible, supportive and trauma-informed approaches can act as a stabilising force, providing routine, access to supportive adults, and pathways to future employment and community participation.¹ In this context, reforms that strengthen continuity of education and provide realistic pathways for re-engagement are critical components of early intervention and harm prevention.

In the Child Death Review Board's (the Board) latest annual report², there was recurring evidence of children and young people experiencing complex or challenging behaviours, often in the context of trauma, grief, loss and disconnection and the lasting impacts of intergenerational trauma across their families.

These experiences often compound over time, contributing to trajectories of disengagement, risk-taking behaviours and contact with the youth justice system.

¹ Queensland Family and Child Commission. 2023. *Lessons from the life-story timelines of 30 Queensland children who have died*. [Lessons from the life-story timelines of 30 Queensland children who have died](#)

² Child Death Review Board. 2025, *Annual Report 2024-25*

The Board considered 98 child death cases reviewed between July 2020 and December 2024 which involved school disengagement and high-risk behaviours. In this group, the Board found:

- nearly one-third (23 out of 71) of the compulsory school age children were disengaged from education
- two-thirds (18 out of 27) of the older compulsory participation phase children were disengaged from education
- children who were disengaged from education were more likely to have died from suicide or transport-related causes (7%) than children who were engaged (3%).

These findings reinforce the importance of sustained engagement with education and timely, coordinated support.

The Board also noted substantial Queensland Government investment in re-engagement initiatives, including Regional Youth Engagement Services and alternative education models. While these reforms reflect a coordinated effort to strengthen education as a protective factor, risks escalate where young people remain disengaged without effective, multi-agency support.

Consistent with this evidence, insights from *Exiting Detention*³ highlight that many young people in custody have experienced significant disadvantage, including poverty, family instability, violence and homelessness, often alongside near-complete disengagement from education. These intersecting challenges underscore the need for flexible, tailored education pathways.

In *Exiting Detention*, young people described how disengagement from school often occurred alongside unmet basic needs and escalating risk behaviours, contributing to repeated contact with the justice system.

These findings highlight the importance of flexible education responses that can re-engage young people before risks escalate.

Supporting continuity through Education and Training Centres and re-engagement programs

The Commission supports amendments within the Bill that recognise Education and Training Centres (ETCs) within youth detention facilities, and approved re-engagement programs, as valid options for the continuation of compulsory education.

Children and young people in youth detention, or those who have disengaged from mainstream schooling, often face complex and intersecting barriers to participation in education. For many, a direct return to mainstream schooling is not immediately feasible.

Recognising ETCs and re-engagement programs within the legislative framework provides a more flexible and realistic approach. It acknowledges that educational pathways are not linear and that some young people require staged, tailored supports to reconnect with learning.

³ Queensland Family and Child Commission. 2025, *Exiting Youth Detention: Preventing crime by improving post-release support*

For many young people, these programs provide a critical bridge between disengagement and re-entry into education, training or employment.

The Commission also acknowledges that in response to the recommendation made in *Exiting Detention* for sustained post-detention support, the Queensland Government introduced the *Staying on Track* initiative. This initiative provides up to 12 months of post-detention support, including at least 6 months of intensive support after custody, to support reintegration to the community and reduce reoffending.

Information sharing to support re-engagement and safeguarding

The Commission supports the Bill's provisions to establish and clarify information sharing arrangements between the Department of Education and approved non-government providers delivering re-engagement programs.

Effective information sharing is essential to both educational continuity and safeguarding. For children and young people with complex needs, service responses are often fragmented across multiple systems, including education, child protection, and youth justice. Without appropriate information sharing, critical risks may go unidentified, and opportunities for timely intervention may be missed.

With the Reportable Conduct Scheme commencing on 1 July 2026, strengthened information sharing within education settings will further support safeguarding by improving agencies' ability to identify, respond to, and prevent risks to children. Ensuring that staff across both government and non-government providers are supported to identify and respond to risks is a critical component of a safe and effective system.

Extending information sharing to home education

While supporting the proposed information sharing arrangements for re-engagement programs, the Commission notes the absence of equivalent mechanisms for home education.

Consistent with its *Regulation of Home Education*⁴ Insights Paper, the Commission continues to advocate for strengthened information sharing between the Department of Education, the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, and the Queensland Police Service to address potential safeguarding risks associated with reduced visibility of children outside formal school settings.

Appropriate and proportionate information sharing is necessary to ensure all children are visible within safeguarding systems. These reforms present an important opportunity to promote consistent protections across all education contexts, including home education.

⁴ Queensland Family and Child Commission. 2024, *Regulation of Home Education*

The Commission supports the Bill's intent to improve continuity of education and strengthen system coordination.

In particular, recognising Education and Training Centres and re-engagement programs as valid options for compulsory education represents an important step toward a more inclusive and responsive system that reflects the realities faced by children and young people experiencing vulnerability.

These reforms acknowledge that educational pathways are not linear and provide practical, flexible options to maintain or re-establish connection to education—an essential protective factor against offending, social disconnection and suicide.

The Commission also supports strengthened information sharing arrangements to facilitate re-engagement and improve safeguarding and reiterates the importance of extending similar approaches across all education contexts, including home education.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please don't hesitate to contact me directly on or via email at

Yours sincerely

Luke Twyford

Principal Commissioner

Queensland Family and Child Commission

May 2026