



Anna Bligh MP

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Chair

Standing Committee on Education, Training and
Young People
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital
Territory
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**Queensland
Government**

Minister for Education and
Minister for the Arts



Dear Ms Porter

Mary

Thank you for your letter received on 26 April 2005 inquiring into Restorative Justice practices in schools and youth justice settings. I sincerely apologise for the delay in replying to you.

Restorative Justice and its underlying philosophy of restoration, reintegration and collaboration complement the creation of safe, tolerant and disciplined school environments, which is a major goal of our education system. I enclose a copy of the following Education Queensland policy *SM-06: Management of Behaviour in a Supportive School Environment Schools and Discipline* for your information.

Education Queensland allocates \$25m recurrently to behaviour management initiatives. This includes 300 behaviour support staff, grants to districts, support for five state school based alternative education programs and support for over 80 additional flexible learning services.

Education Queensland was at the forefront in introducing Restorative Justice practices (including Community Conferencing) during the 1990s. Following a successful trial of Community Conferencing in the Sunshine Coast and Metropolitan West Regions in 1995-96, a pilot was undertaken during 1997. Since 1995, numerous schools and school community members have been involved in training in Restorative Justice practices.

Over recent years, the Department of Education and the Arts has been involved in national and state initiatives to combat bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence and promote safe and supportive school environments which highlight restorative practices within the range of strategies. These include:

- the *Bullying. No way!* program and website available online at <http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au> launched in June 2002 and currently managed by Education Queensland on behalf of the Australian Education Authorities and
- *The National Safe Schools Framework* available online at <http://www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=17297> launched in 2004 as part of a national initiative for ensuring safe and supportive school environments where bullying, harassment and violence are minimised

As part of these initiatives, schools and school community members continue to have access to professional development on these issues, including Restorative Justice practices. Professional development on Restorative Justice is ongoing in 2005.

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In addition, Education Queensland has developed an internal mediator network consisting of more than 45 staff across the State who have been trained and accredited as mediators. Mediators are able to provide mediation services on a range of workplace issues and may be called upon from time to time to assist in student related issues.

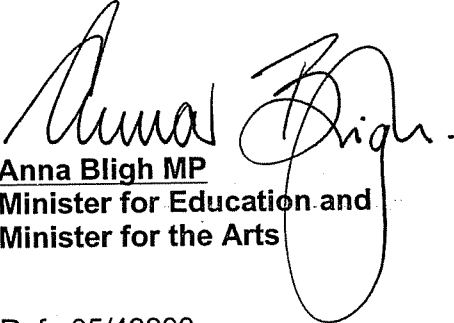
While Community Conferencing is part of the range of behaviour strategies, the extent to which it is currently used is dependent on district and school priorities as there is currently no centralised or systemic program coordination. Districts make decisions about the types of programs and support required to meet their specific school community needs.

I am aware that the Department of Communities also uses conferencing or restorative practices, called Youth Justice Conferencing, as an alternative to the Children's Court for young offenders. More information may be obtained from Mr Kyle Bassett or Mr Owen Jones at the Department of Communities on telephone (07) 3239 0765.

For further information about Education Queensland initiatives, I invite you to contact Ms Robyn Lloyd, Assistant Director, Inclusive Curriculum on telephone (07) 3237 0342.

I trust this information will assist your inquiry into Restorative Justice practices.

Yours sincerely



Anna Bligh MP
Minister for Education and
Minister for the Arts

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SM-06: Management of Behaviour in a Supportive School Environment Schools and Discipline

Procedures

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1. Definition

1.1 The supportive school environment is one where:

- (a) all members of the school community feel safe and are valued;
- (b) social and academic learning outcomes are maximised for all through quality practices in the areas of curriculum, interpersonal relationships and school organisation;
- (c) school practices which involve a planned continuum from the positive or preventive actions for all students to the responsive actions for specific individuals and groups;
- (d) non-violent, non-coercive and non-discriminatory language and practices are defined, modelled and reinforced by all members of the school community; and
- (e) suspension and exclusion procedures are considered only when all other approaches have been exhausted or rejected.

1.2 The philosophy of a supportive school environment is embedded within the school culture. It is reflected in a code of behaviour based on a set of principles that are understood, accepted and practised by all members of the school community.

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2. Requirements

Aims

2.1 Education Queensland is committed to providing school environments which maximise the educational opportunities and outcomes for all students to ensure that:

- (a) learning and teaching reflect the principles of equity, effectiveness, responsiveness, participation and accountability;
- (b) behaviour of all school members is socially responsible; and
- (c) schools continuously reflect on educational practices and work towards improving services within the school.

2.2 The aim of this policy is to establish the principles and a framework for the supportive school environment, within which each school community must plan strategies and implement practices for managing behaviour so that effective learning and teaching occur.

Social Justice

2.3 Social justice is the process of ensuring that educational outcomes for all students are maximised, taking full account of factors such as their location, gender, sexual identity, socioeconomic circumstances, ability, cultural background, or any disability they may have.

2.4 Social justice involves identifying and eliminating barriers which hinder students' participation and achievement. Curriculum, interpersonal relationships and school organisational practices need to accommodate the diverse characteristics and experiences of students in a pluralistic society.

2.5 By providing a safe and supportive environment where non-violent, non-coercive and non-discriminatory language and behaviour are fostered, and where expectations for all students are high, schools communities reduce the educational impact of social disadvantage and empower participants to challenge inequity.

Responsibilities

2.6 School communities must model and practise fair, equitable, non-discriminatory language and behaviours and use safe and legal procedures.

2.7 School communities are responsible for:

- (a) providing a supportive school environment through planned activities and programs (refer to paragraphs 4.1 to 4.2);
- (b) developing a plan for effectively managing behaviour within the supportive school environment (refer to paragraphs 4.3 to 4.5); and
- (c) regularly monitoring and reviewing the plan and its implementation, and measuring specified outcomes (refer to paragraphs 4.6 to 4.7).

3. Principles

3.1 Successful management of behaviour in a supportive school environment incorporates the following principles.

Equity

3.2 The provision of an inclusive curriculum is an integral component of the supportive school environment. This involves recognising that curriculum design and delivery can exclude some groups through stereotyping, inappropriate expectations, racism and sexism, negative classroom interactions or failure to address barriers to participation and achievement.

3.3 In a supportive school environment specific educational issues are addressed to ensure equity for the following 'target groups':

- (a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- (b) female as well as male students;
- (c) geographically isolated students;

- (d) gifted and talented students;
- (e) itinerant students;
- (f) socio-economically disadvantaged students;
- (g) students from a non-English-speaking background;
- (h) students with disabilities or learning difficulties; and
- (i) students who may be at risk because of other social or personal circumstances.

Effectiveness

3.4 The quality of a school's curriculum, interpersonal relationships and organisation directly influences behaviours, opportunities and learning outcomes for students.

3.5 Effectively managing behaviours requires a range of provisions from positive preventive action for all students through to intensive intervention for disruptive, alienated or troubled individuals or groups.

3.6 School effectiveness research suggests common characteristics of successful schools. These include:

- (a) published agreed goals;
- (b) clear patterns of communication;
- (c) democratic decision making;
- (d) comprehensive student records;
- (e) parent and community involvement;
- (f) judicious use of resources;
- (g) students and teachers working to improve the school environment;
- (h) high expectations for student and teacher performance;
- (i) goal-focused curriculum;
- (j) effective leadership; and
- (k) support for teachers' professional development.

3.7 Such schools have maximum positive involvement of all members and low levels of irresponsible behaviour.

Responsiveness

3.8 A school's code of behaviour reflects the values of the local community within the context of the wider democratic, multicultural society.

3.9 A supportive school environment is responsive to the diverse needs of its students, encourages participation and positive contribution, and minimises negative behaviours.

3.10 In a supportive school environment teachers are professionally supported and are more able to help all students learn.

Participation

3.11 The school community must be involved in developing the guiding principles for the school's operation, including an agreed code of behaviour. Participation will increase shared understanding of, and commitment to implementing the code.

3.12 Participation has been formalised through the collaborative school development planning

and review processes. These accountability processes are intended to foster team approaches to school management through the authentic involvement of school administrators, staff, students, parents and members of the wider community.

3.13 Encouraging authentic participation includes addressing social, cultural, economic and physical barriers (which may preclude the involvement of some families), as well as valuing diverse perspectives and skills and providing clear, timely information.

Accountability

3.14 Schools are accountable to the community for:

- (a) maximising educational opportunities and outcomes;
- (b) modelling and fostering socially responsible behaviours; and
- (c) employing fair and just practices which comply with relevant legislation.

3.15 Schools are accountable for monitoring and evaluating their educational practices through the collaborative school development planning and review processes.

4. Implementation - School Communities

Provision of a Supportive School Environment

4.1 The school community must provide a supportive school environment which is characterised by non-violent, non-coercive and non-discriminatory practices and by quality:

- (a) commitment to identified goals;
- (b) community participation;
- (c) curriculum;
- (d) interpersonal relationships;
- (e) leadership;
- (f) organisation;
- (g) physical environment;
- (h) teaching and learning strategies; and
- (i) use of learning time.

4.2 The school community must use the school's collaborative planning and review processes and structures to:

- (a) identify and address particular aspects of those characteristics which help or hinder the school's development of a supportive environment;
- (b) analyse and respond to the diverse characteristics and circumstances of students through curriculum, interpersonal relationships and school organisation;
- (c) analyse and respond to specific problems such as truancy, harassment, bullying, vandalism, violence and suspected abuse or neglect through curriculum, interpersonal relationships and school organisation;
- (d) ensure that all members of the school community have opportunities to:
 - (i) enhance their knowledge of legislation and Education Queensland policy; and
 - (ii) develop skills and attitudes which will assist the development and enhancement of a supportive school environment; and
- (e) deploy human, financial and material resources to respond to the school community's identified needs and priorities.

Development of Behaviour Management Plan

4.3 Each school community must develop a plan and implement procedures for a whole-school approach to managing behaviour in a supportive school environment, involving all groups in the school community.

4.4 The behaviour management plan is to be consistent with the values and directions contained with the school planning overview and associated school documents. School planning documents must reflect the shared values and expectations which will guide the school's approach to managing behaviour and maintaining the supportive school environment.

4.5 The plan:

- (a) incorporates a profile of the school community;
- (b) clearly articulates an agreed code of behaviour based on the democratic values of respect, equality and concern for the welfare, rights and dignity of all members of the school community;
- (c) delineates procedures for applying fair and non-violent consequences for infringement of the code, ranging from the least intrusive sanctions to the most stringent step of exclusion which is only considered when all other approaches have been exhausted or rejected;
- (d) outlines the roles, rights and responsibilities of all school community members;
- (e) outlines procedures for documenting and managing instances of truancy, harassment, violence, suspected abuse or neglect and drug-related matters, in compliance with relevant legislation and departmental policies; and
- (f) should be published and be available to all members of the school community.

Monitoring and Review

4.6 For information on monitoring and reviewing, refer to Behaviour Management Plans (paragraphs 5.1 to 5.4) in SM-16: School Disciplinary Absences.

4.7 The levels of truancy, absenteeism, violence, harassment, suspensions and exclusions should be monitored and documented, while taking particular note of gender and target groups (refer to paragraph 3.3) in this documentation (refer also to SM-16: School Disciplinary Absence).

5. Responsibilities

Principals

5.1 The principal has a responsibility to:

- (a) foster the development and enhancement of a supportive school environment;
- (b) establish structures which provide access to specialist skills, information and support for the welfare of staff and students;
- (c) communicate the school plan for managing behaviour in a supportive school environment to all members of the school community including new staff, students and their families;
- (d) manage the deployment of human, financial and material resources to respond to the school community's identified needs and priorities;
- (e) monitor classroom management practices and student records to ensure that they are appropriate, consistent and fair;
- (f) use Education Queensland procedures and inter-agency support services for students who require more serious interventions;
- (g) ensure that levels of truancy absenteeism, violence, harassment, suspensions and exclusions are documented; and

(h) take a leadership role in modelling and supporting the implementation of Education Queensland policies aimed at the elimination of unfair discrimination and harassment.

District Directors

5.2 Each District Director has a responsibility to:

- (a) provide leadership, advocacy and support to facilitate shared understanding of and commitment to this policy throughout the district;
- (b) assist principals with the coordination of departmental and interagency support services and programs responsive to local school needs;
- (c) monitor procedures and outcomes for suspending and excluding students across schools and groups of students with particular attention to gender, culture and non-English-speaking backgrounds, in accordance with departmental regulations; and
- (d) take a leadership role in supporting the implementation of policies aimed at the elimination of unfair discrimination and harassment.

Central Office

5.3 Central office has a responsibility to:

- (a) support districts, schools and networks of schools with resources and services;
- (b) develop and implement systemwide reviews of school implementation of the policy;
- (c) monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy (refer to paragraphs 6.1 to 6.3); and
- (d) take a leadership role in developing systemwide policies which aim to eliminate unfair discrimination and harassment from school environments.

6. Policy Review and Evaluation

6.1 This policy must be evaluated and reviewed at a system level. Effectiveness of the policy must be evaluated in terms of:

- (a) the quality of the schooling experience for the full range of students; and
- (b) improved access, participation and educational outcomes for the least advantaged groups.

6.2 Data must be collected to demonstrate the effectiveness of the policy. Such data include the levels of truancy, absenteeism, violence, harassment, suspensions and exclusions. It may be appropriate for particular school communities to document additional information, for example vandalism, in order to plan responses.

6.3 As schooling is a major influence on all types of behaviours, systematic monitoring and reporting on trends is a responsibility of schools and the education system generally.

See also

National and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

CS-01: Gender Equity in Education

CS-02: Human Relationships Education for Queensland State Schools

CS-03: Gender Equity in School Sport

HR-04-2: Sexual Harassment

CS-05: Educational Provision for Students with Disabilities

SM-05: Physical Restraint and Time Out Procedures - Students with Disabilities

HS-12: Manual Handling of Students

CS-15: Principles of Inclusive Curriculum

[CS-16: Cultural and Language Diversity](#)

[CS-17: Anti-Racism](#)

[SM-16: School Disciplinary Absences](#)

Principles of Effective Learning and Teaching

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