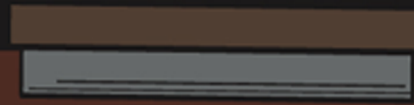


let's get "secular"
back in the
Qld Education Act



Let's get 'secular' back in the Queensland Education Act (BITA)

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The Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act & Regulation 2006, currently in force, states:

Chapter 5 Religious instruction (Act)

(76) Religious instruction in school hours

(1) Any minister of a religious denomination or society, or an accredited representative of a religious denomination or society, which representative has been approved by the Minister for the purpose, shall be entitled during school hours to give to the students in attendance at a State school who are members of the denomination or society of which the person is a minister or the accredited representative religious instruction in accordance with regulations prescribed in that behalf during a period not exceeding 1 hour in each week on such day as the principal of that school appoints.

Chapter 5 Religious instruction (Regulation)

(29) Students to attend religious instruction

(1) The principal of a State school must not allow a student to attend religious instruction given by a minister of religion or an accredited representative other than the denomination or society of which the student is a member, unless the student's parent has given written consent.

Queensland state school students are placed in Religious Instruction according to the faith or denomination provided, as an option, within their enrolment documentation.

It is a fact, acknowledged in 2007 by Education Queensland, that beyond 80% of parents across the State have chosen not to disclose a faith or denomination in the space provided on enrolment forms.

Since the vast majority of Queensland children in this category can not be positively identified as "members of a religious denomination or society", it follows, according to the Education Act, that the school principal must not allow them to attend Religious Instruction without parental "written consent"—these students are, by statute, required to opt-in to, rather than opt-out of, Religious Instruction.

Yet, throughout Queensland, more often than not the Education Act—the law—is being ignored. Children of undisclosed faith or lack of faith are being placed in Christian Religious Instruction—often nothing other than evangelical Christian worship—as the 'default option'.

While in 1875 the original Queensland Education Act guaranteed a free and secular education for all children, the Act was subsequently amended in 1910. So began the Religious Instruction arrangement which remains in legislation to this day—unchanged for 100 years, and in defiance of the vastly changed cultural, religious, and philosophical makeup of a 21st century State.

The amended act also gave State school teachers the right to provide Christian only [Bible lessons](#) to Queensland public school children as part of the [State curriculum](#). This also remains in legislation to this day. To accommodate this Christian privilege, in 1910, every occurrence of the word 'secular' was deleted from the Queensland Education Act as well as a vital clause which read:

~~Secular instruction only to be given in State schools and provisional schools.~~ 5. In State schools and provisional schools secular instruction only shall be given and no teacher shall give any other than secular instruction in any State school building.

The 1910 removal from the Queensland Education Act of this critical clause means that in 2010, Queensland Government staff school teachers are permitted to inject Christian beliefs and dogma including creationism and Intelligent Design into any lessons, on any subject matter, at any time and at any level from the Preparatory year upward.

Chaplaincy

The word 'chaplain' or any reference to 'chaplaincy' does not appear anywhere within Queensland Education law. However, state school chaplaincy is inextricably intertwined with 1910 legislated Religious Instruction (RI).

This includes all chaplaincy arrangements throughout Queensland funded by the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP).

Procrastination by the State

The 1989 Education Act provided the legal basis for the appointment of Chaplains in Queensland state schools. In this Act, school chaplaincy was permitted as an approved religious activity that takes place in a state school. The Education (General Provisions) Act, 1989, section 30, and its accompanying regulations (Part IV), made provisions for RE [sic] in terms of "right of entry" instruction by denominational representatives, selected Bible lessons by class teachers in primary and special schools, and alternative instruction for students withdrawn from these activities. These provisions were, in essence, the same as in the State Education Acts (Amendment Act) of 1910. The Department of Education Manual outlined policy and procedures for the implementation of the 1989 provisions as well as "other activities related to religion that may take place in state schools". These other activities included school chaplaincy.

Salecich, J., 2001. *Chaplaincy in Queensland State Schools: An Investigation*. Thesis, (PHD). University of Queensland

BITA campaign Stage 1

- The Government of Queensland must immediately enforce Education Act law relating to Religious Instruction by ministers of religion (and their representatives) and Bible lessons by Queensland Government employed staff school teachers.
- To uphold the basic human rights of the majority of Queensland State school children of undisclosed faith or lack of faith who are currently placed in Christian Religious Instruction in defiance of the Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act & Regulation 2006, Religious Instruction in all State schools within Queensland must be suspended, pending an intensive, honest and independent audit of the current system.
- Based upon information gathered during the audit, every child illegally placed in Christian Religious Instruction must be removed and provided with 'other instruction in a separate location' as required by the applicable Education Act law.
- The current practice at numerous Queensland State schools of placing children in the Preparatory year into Christian Religious Instruction must cease immediately, this being contrary to the Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act & Regulation 2006.

BITA campaign Stage 2

- Sections of the Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act & Regulation relating to Religious Instruction by ministers of religion and Bible lessons by government employed staff school teachers to be re-drafted to better reflect and fully represent the contemporary needs of our multi-cultural, multi-faith & no-faith, pluralist Australian society of the 21st century.
- Section 5 of the 1875 Queensland Education Act to be restored in full to the amended Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act & Regulation.
- The overall role of religion in public schools to be renegotiated to better reflect the contemporary globalised world within which Queensland and Australian citizens operate, accommodating both the multitude of faith positions and non-faith world perspectives and philosophies.

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