**Strengthening discipline in Queensland state schools**

**Why do we need to strengthen discipline in Queensland state schools?**

School discipline is an important component of a high quality education system. Children and young people need to learn self-discipline as part of their social development and to achieve their academic and personal goals. Furthermore, students need safe, supportive and focused environments in which to learn.

**How does the Education (Strengthening Discipline in State Schools) Amendment Bill 2013 (the Bill) strengthen discipline in Queensland state schools?**

The Bill strengthens discipline in Queensland state schools in three ways by:

- providing principals with stronger disciplinary powers and more flexibility and autonomy around discipline decisions
- bolstering the grounds for suspension and exclusion
- reducing administrative burdens to enable firm and timely responses to problem behaviour.

**How has the Queensland Government reduced red tape and given principals more power and flexibility to discipline students?**

The Education (Strengthening Discipline in State Schools) Amendment Bill 2013 has cut red tape and reduced the administrative burden on principals. It has streamlined processes to give principals the flexibility they need to establish a strong approach to discipline at their school. Schools know what works best at a local level and principals in consultation with school communities can determine the best range of consequences for inappropriate behaviour.

**What are the proposed new disciplinary strategies and does a school need to use them?**

Schools already use a range of strategies to manage student behaviour, including suspensions and exclusions. From 2014, schools will be given greater flexibility to choose additional options such as:

- **Discipline Improvement Plans** which are developed by schools with students and their parents to set out the expectations for behaviour, the consequences for inappropriate behaviour, the strategies to support the student to change their behaviour and the support the school will provide
- **Community Service Interventions** which require students to perform tasks out of school hours that are beneficial to the community.

The new strategies are not mandatory. They are optional strategies that may be suitable for a principal to use in their school community, with particular students and in specific circumstances.

**What are the major changes made to detentions, suspensions, exclusions and cancellations of enrolment?**

Major changes include:

- removing prescription so that detentions can occur outside of school hours and on weekends
- shifting the suspension period for short suspensions from 1–5 school days to 1–10 school days
- removing written submission provisions against proposed exclusions
- removing the show-cause process prior to cancelling an enrolment
- expanding the grounds for suspensions and exclusions
- expanding the grounds in relation to conduct to include conduct occurring outside school.

**What are discipline audits?**

Discipline audits are being conducted in all state schools from July 2013 to November 2014. The audit tool and the audits are based on the model currently used for the Teaching and Learning Audits. Experienced principals from high performing schools will conduct the audits. They will assist schools to benchmark their progress in strengthening discipline and provide an independent view highlighting where there is room for improvement.

**Will there be additional resources allocated to schools to support these initiatives?**

These initiatives will be implemented within existing resources. However, in line with the goal of Great Teachers = Great Results, principals will have the power and flexibility to direct school resources to implement these initiatives if they choose to.

**Have principals provided input into the development of the initiatives?**

A principal’s reference group was established to provide input into the development of the Bill and departmental policy and procedures.