



## **CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENTS AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION**

**Senate Education and Employment Committee  
Inquiry into disruption in Australian school classrooms.**

**31 March 2023**

**Catholic School Parents Australia submission to the  
Senate Education and Employment Committee  
Inquiry into disruption in Australian school classrooms.**

Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the *Inquiry into disruption in Australian school classrooms* to the Senate Education and Employment Committee.

**About Catholic School Parents Australia**

Catholic School Parents Australia is recognised as the peak, national body representing and advocating for the parents\* of the 794,000 children and young people who attend the 1,759 Catholic schools across Australia. CSPA works in collaboration and consultation with the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and is recognised by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference through the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education.

Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) was formed in late 2013 by State and Territory Catholic school parent bodies. Members of CSPA consist of:

Catholic School Parents Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn.  
Council of Catholic School Parents NSW.  
Catholic School Parents Queensland.  
Catholic School Parents South Australia.  
Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents Council.  
Catholic School Parents Victoria.  
Catholic School Parents Western Australia

**Parent views on classroom disruption**

In March 2023, CSPA conducted a survey of parents with children in Australian Catholic schools. The survey, which ran from 10 – 25 March 2023, attracted responses from 1279 parents. Much of the content from the inquiry's terms of reference were used to generate the survey items. The structure of this CSPA submission has been organised around these survey items and generously draws upon parent responses to open ended questions.

The survey questions were:

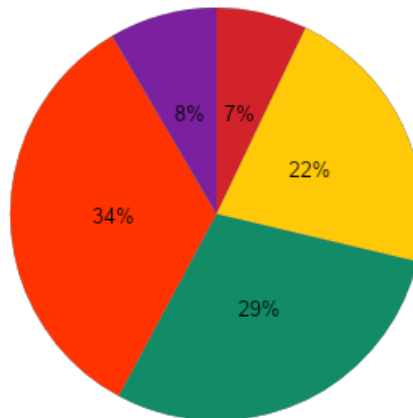
- 1) *Which of the following best describes the year level of your child?*
- 2) *In which state or territory is your child's school?*
- 3) *Have you heard of disruptions happening this year in any classroom(s) in your child's school?*
- 4) *Are you aware of any classroom disruption that has impacted your child this year?*
- 5) *Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's learning?*
- 6) *Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's wellbeing?*
- 7) *Select from the list below those things (you may select more than one) which you believe contribute to disruption in classrooms.*
- 8) *Select from the list below those ways (you may select more than one) in which you believe teachers/teaching have been negatively impacted because of increased classroom disruption in classrooms.*
- 9) *Select from the list below (you may select more than one), those that you believe have been majorly caused by student disruption in classrooms.*

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[\*Parent includes natural, adopted or foster parents, guardians or care givers of young people attending Catholic Schools.]

- 10) Select from the list below (you may select more than one), those things that you believe should be considered to help overcome classroom disruption in Australian schools.
- 11) In relation to your child's wellbeing and learning, how would you describe the benefits or challenges in relation to your communication with the school and/or the school's communication with you?
- 12) Australia is ranked among the worst in the world for the classroom discipline of students. Please discuss any experiences or knowledge you have of approaches to classroom discipline that work well either here in Australia or in other countries?

**1) Which of the following best describes the year level of your child?**



■ Pre Year 1 ■ Year 1 - Year 3 ■ Year 4 - Year 6 ■ Year 7 - Year 10 ■ Year 11 - Year 12

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Pre Year 1	7.11%	91
Year 1 - Year 3	21.58%	276
Year 4 - Year 6	29.16%	373
Year 7 - Year 10	33.70%	431
Year 11 - Year 12	8.44%	108
TOTAL		1279

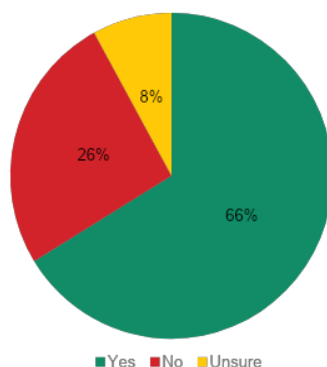
Parents with a child in the year level range of 7 – 10 made up a little under 34% of the survey responses. Years 4 – 10 made up over 60% of the parents who completed the survey. Appendix One outlines how the responses to questions one to six varied between the year level groupings.

**2) In which state or territory is your child's school?**

Australian Capital Territory	0.08%	1
New South Wales	6.25%	80
Northern Territory	0.16%	2
Queensland	85.85%	1098
South Australia	0%	0
Tasmania	1.25%	16
Victoria	0.47%	6
Western Australia	5.94%	76
TOTAL		1279

The survey completions were dominated by Queensland parents. While there was a reasonable response from New South Wales, Western Australia and arguably Tasmania, the opinions of Queensland parents dominate preliminary findings drawn from the survey evidence. It is noted that this does not imply there were more issues for Queensland parents, but more a result of how the survey was distributed to them.

### 3) Have you heard of disruptions happening this year in any classroom(s) in your child's school?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	66.22%	847
No	25.80%	330
Unsure	7.97%	102
TOTAL		1279

Perhaps there is bias in response to this question in that parents who were concerned about classroom disruption may have been more likely to complete the survey. In later questions, between 4% and 10% of parents indicated that they didn't believe that classroom disruption was a problem – the numbers of parents with this opinion varied dependent upon the context of the question. A little under 8% of parents were not sure if they had heard of disruption in their child's school.

### 4) Are you aware of any classroom disruption that has impacted your child this year?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	53.09%	679
No	37.22%	476
Unsure	9.70%	124
TOTAL		1279

A little over 53% of parents who responded felt that disruption had impacted their child during 2023. It is interesting that a little under 10% of parents were not sure if their child was impacted. Presumably a key source of evidence for parents would be personal observations of their child, or conversations with their child or with school staff. Other sources could include other parents or classmates of their child.

Appendix One shows a filtered analysis of parents by the year level of their child. Reference to these summaries shows that parent perceptions of classroom disruption is higher in secondary schools (71.6%) compared with primary year levels (65.3%). It was highest for the grouping Yrs 7 – 10 at 74%.

Following are some comments from parents that provide a general overview of parent reflections.

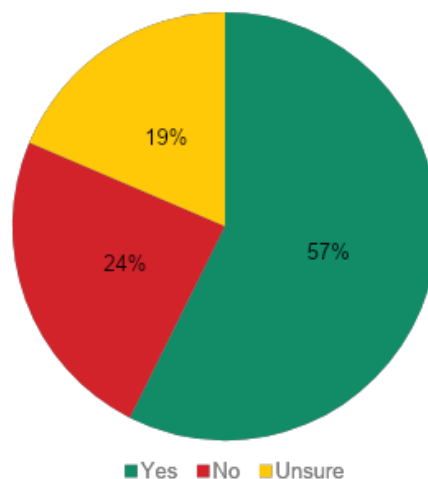
*The school communicates well in regards to my child's learning and they have touched base with Wellbeing in the past. I am a lucky parent whose child is engaged in learning. I do hear from my child about all the kids in his class that disrupt the class. The fact that the school communicates around learning it is good to know that the other students' behaviour does not appear to affect my sons results. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Each school has mixed ways of dealing with poor behaviour and disruption. Schools should also work better together to come up with unified strategies. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*From my perspective, I do not have a problem. For those children in my child's class that cause the disruption - it is these parents that do not believe that their children are disruptive, which makes it very hard for the teachers/school. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*I do not feel confident that my child is safe at school due to the disruptions of other students. I understand that students have diverse needs, but meeting these needs should not be detrimental to my child's wellbeing and learning. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

##### 5) Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's learning?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	57.39%	734
No	24.00%	307
Unsure	18.61%	238
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1279</b>

It is significant that a little over 57% of parents felt that their child's learning had been impacted by classroom disruption, while a further 18.6% were not sure and 24% of the parents felt that their child's learning was not impacted by classroom disruption.

Except for Yrs 11-12, parent perceptions on classroom disruption impacting their child's learning generally increased with the year level groupings, these were: Pre Year 1 (38.5%); Yrs 1-3 (51.4%); Yrs 4-6 (59.2%); Yrs 7-10 (63.3%) and Yrs 11-12 (58.3%). Significantly, well over half the parents felt that their child's learning had been impacted by classroom disruption, nearly 40% in PreYear 1 (refer to Appendix One).

Some typical parent comments in relation to classroom disruption impacting learning include:

*I am currently communicating with my Sons Pastoral Leader and a particular Teacher to seek support for my son who has struggled last year and again this year. My son has been struggling in classes with constant behavioural disruptions. He describes the class as a group of naughty kids who don't have respect for the teacher. My son and I both appreciate the difficulties the teacher faces however my sons grades have been impacted greatly showing a rapid decline. I am currently requesting a class transfer so that he doesn't continue to become affected by the classroom disruptions that he faces. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*I am lucky that my child is student who is well behaved, however there has been times he has come home upset about losing major class learning time due to another student behaving poorly. I do believe that the school he attends try their best within their scope of practice to minimise these disruptions. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*A lot! Last year there were a lot of challenging behaviours in class and disruption to learning which impacted my children. There was no communication from school regarding these issues, aside from brief conversations I had with classroom teacher about impacts on my kids. Communication from school in general was limited to newsletters and general information. There was never specific information in relation to behavioural challenges or children's wellbeing and learning unless initiated by parent. This year at the Catholic high school we attend there is fantastic communication from the teachers and to date my children have not mentioned major behavioural issues in class. However, given the fantastic communication from the school so far, should issues arise that impact my children I anticipate it will be easy to talk to school about it. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*My child is a disruptive student at times. He is a bright and kind child, and with experienced teachers we have no trouble. With less experienced teachers there are constant problems. More training on diverse learners is clearly needed. His disruption leads to low self esteem and poor engagement with learning, creating a snowball effect. A higher ratio of teachers and teacher assistants to children would also benefit children like him. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*I only know of these classroom disruptions due to my child telling me, no communication from school. However I'm not sure how the school could communicate the issues without it turning into a 'witch hunt'. Its a complex problem, especially if the child's parents are not willing to take active steps to manage or curb behaviour. However, now my child feels he is becoming disinterested and disengaged with the classroom because he feels there is no point because there will be constant interruptions to his learning which is annoying and disjointed for him. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Too many special needs students in mainstream class, this is causing constant disruption and they then get the teachers attention. Other students who don't get the teachers attention due to the time taken up by special needs then turn to disruption themselves as they see that s how they get attention. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

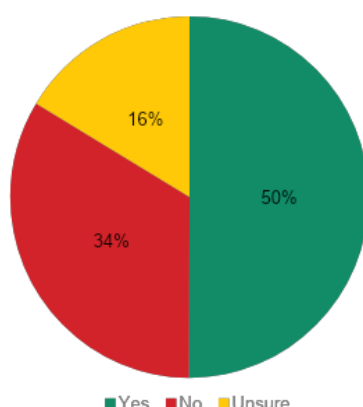
*Teachers need time and support in-order to build better relationships with each of their students & their family. Only then can they differentiate their teaching to cater for the unique learning of children*

*with diverse special needs - all the while having adequate support every day in the classroom by Teacher Assistants. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Most of the feedback comes from my child. I know there are a lot of interruptions in the day relating to managing poor, disrespectful and rude behaviour. The teachers generally do a very good job of ensuring the learning of others doesn't suffer whilst managing disruptions. However, tolerance can only spread so far. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*My child's learning is being impacted due to too many disruptions in the classroom and the teachers having to deal with these children instead of spending that time teaching. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

**6) Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's wellbeing?**



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	50.04%	640
No	33.62%	430
Unsure	16.34%	209
TOTAL		1279

More parents felt that their child's learning (57.4%) than wellbeing (50%) was impacted by classroom disruption. A little under 34% felt that the wellbeing of their child was not impacted, while 24% of parents felt their child's learning was not impacted. Some parents believe that schools communicate better about learning progress than wellbeing. And as noted earlier, parent opinion would be largely drawn from observations of their child, or conversations with their child or their child's teacher(s).

Except for Yrs 11-12, parent perceptions on classroom disruption impacting their child's wellbeing generally increased with the year level groupings, these were: Pre Year 1 (37.4%); Yrs 1-3 (47.1%); Yrs 4-6 (53.1%); Yrs 7-10 (53.4%) and Yrs 11-12 (44.4%). Significantly, well over half the parents felt that their child's learning had been impacted by classroom disruption (refer to Appendix One).

Some typical parent comments in relation to classroom disruption impacting wellbeing include:

*It has been quite poor with little or no response from the school so my child struggles mentally everyday about being scared in the classroom. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*



*The school would have no idea about my child's actual wellbeing. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Where I have raised issues in the past of bad behaviour affecting my child's wellbeing, the teacher's approach has been to place the onus on the victim to do (sic) on other students or to remove themselves from the situation. Well behaved children also observe the lack of proper consequences for bad behaviour and this reduces their morale. I also don't feel like schools really want to take steps early on to deal with problems. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*I do not feel confident that my child is safe at school due to the disruptions of other students. I understand that students have diverse needs, but meeting these needs should not be detrimental to my child's wellbeing and learning. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

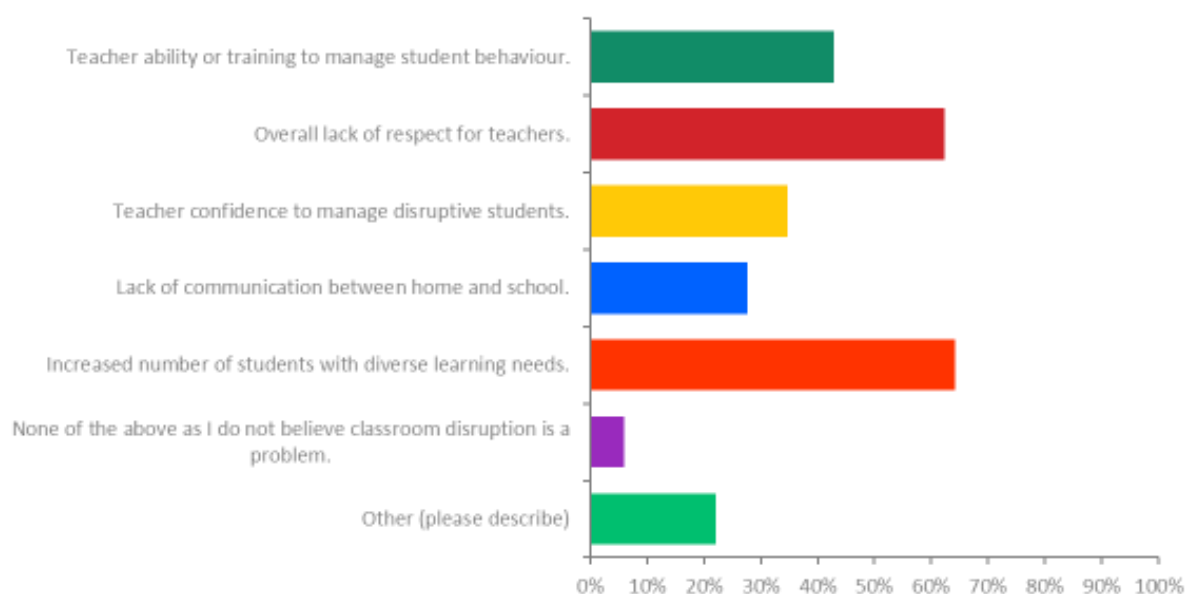
*If a disruption issue happens at school we as parents only find out if our child talks about it. This normally only occurs when they are upset or anxious. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*My child's was directly attacked by an aggressive child in her classroom and we were not made aware at all. She was emotionally traumatised and had a huge disruption to her learning. This child has had several suspensions in the first term and is still disruptive. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*My child's wellbeing and learning have been supported by communication with the school regarding her needs. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*The school communicates very well. They have mentioned that our children have started to withdraw due to the ongoing disruption that impacted their well-being and ability to learn. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

**7) Select from the list below those things (you may select more than one) which you believe contribute to disruption in classrooms.**





Parents believe that the most dominant contributors to classroom disruption impacting teachers or teaching are the lack of respect for teachers (62.3%) and the number of students with diverse learning needs (64.2%). *Teacher ability or training to manage student behaviour* (42.9%), *Teacher confidence to manage disruptive students* (34.6%) and *Lack of communication between home and school* (27.7%) were in order the next selected contributors to disruption.

An analysis of parent comments in relation to the year level of their child revealed the following top two for each age grouping:

- Pre Year 1: 58% - *Increased number of students with diverse learning needs.*  
37% - *Overall lack of respect for teachers.*  
37% - *Teacher ability or training to manage student behaviour.*
- Yrs 1-3: 70% - *Increased number of students with diverse learning needs.*  
52% - *Overall lack of respect for teachers.*
- Yrs 4-6: 74% - *Increased number of students with diverse learning needs.*  
59% - *Overall lack of respect for teachers.*
- Yrs 7-10: 74% - *Overall lack of respect for teachers.*  
56% - *Increased number of students with diverse learning needs.*
- Yrs 11-12: 74% - *Overall lack of respect for teachers.*  
55% - *Increased number of students with diverse learning needs.*

There were 282 *Other* comments which will require closer analysis – many were further comments in relation to the contributors listed.

Many parents commented on an inappropriate lack of respect for teachers and the increased number of children with learning needs; a sample of these comments is below.

*Power has been taken away from teachers and given to children. Children used to respect teachers but now they have a sense of entitlement and believe they cannot be touched. The government needs to take a harder stance on youth crime etc. before children will behave at school.* (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).

*Respect for adults/teachers was a lived expectation when I was at school. This seems to be lost today and needs to be reinforced. Spot checks of classrooms and disruptors removed worked in my years.* (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).

*Parents need to respect teachers first then their children will too and respect other children's right to learn so if they wish to disrupt the class they obviously need to learn respect for other humans.* (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).

*Respect for teachers has disappeared. This comes from home, from the media, from outside the school. This needs to change in order to see some improvement.* (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).

*I do not feel confident that my child is safe at school due to the disruptions of other students. I understand that students have diverse needs, but meeting these needs should not be detrimental to my child's wellbeing and learning.* (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).

*Set up clear expectations, collaborate with parents to teach children to respect. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*I hear often about classroom disruption from my child first and it's always the same high needs students that are integrated into normal classroom learning but have significant behaviour management needs that are not supported with additional teaching resources in the classroom. One acts up the whole class is on hold for the other 29 students. Resource the number of teachers appropriately and stop asking them to be behaviour management specialists in addition to teachers. We just keep wanting them to do more with less support resources and it has to stop or declining academic results in (name of place) will continue. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*That is because Teachers are given no respect. Federal governments and the media have made sure of this through teacher bashing over many years. Teachers have very limited useful and successful means of controlling students who do not want to learn or behave appropriately. Yet this all comes back to poor parenting and an agenda of busy double income families. If we want change we need to value families and good parenting over economic success, big homes, new cars and overseas holidays. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*The culture in Australia is responsible for the decline in teacher authority and respect. There is no single classroom management tool or strategy that will help in situations where parents don't enforce consequences at home or where teachers are challenged when correcting student behaviour. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

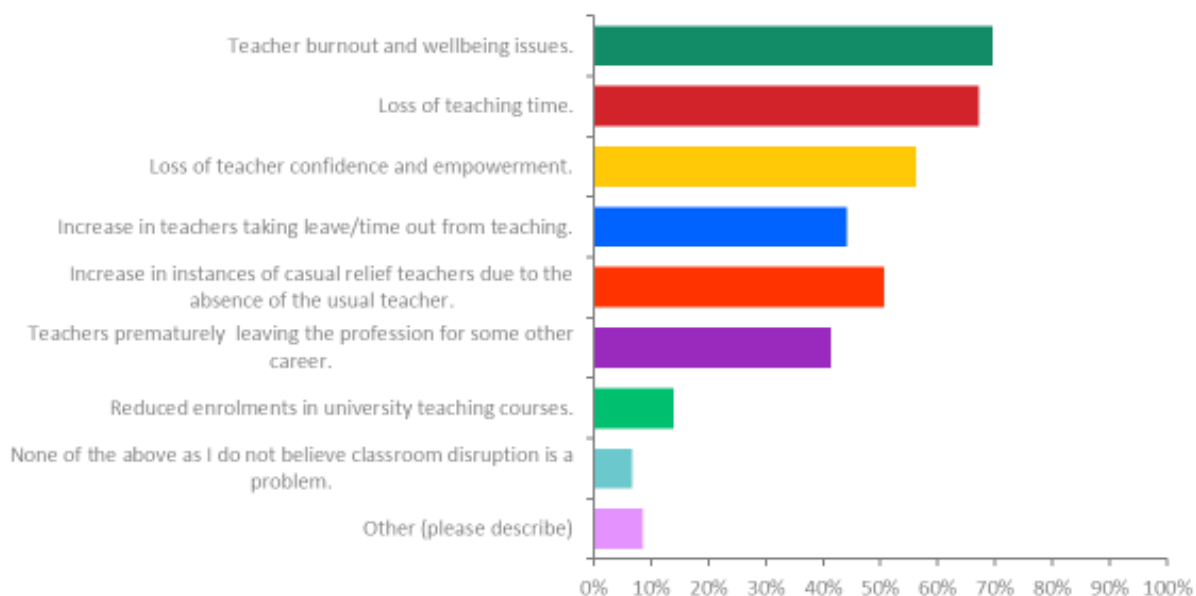
*The problem with the increasing number of children that cannot cope with the schooling system and the ever increasing responsibilities thrown at teachers to teach children social norms has resulted in an unworkable scenario. The schools and parents expect too much from our teachers. Parents and the community lack respect and understanding towards teachers. Schools need to be better resources (sic) to ensure children today can become functioning adults of the future. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*This is a country wide issue where children don't have any respect for authority figures and needs to be address (sic) at a government and whole of community level. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Lack of classroom resources for children with high needs. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Some students don't want to be in school. They make it near impossible for teachers to get on with teaching those students who want to be present and wish to learn because most of the lesson, the teacher is in damage control to contain the misbehaving student(s) so valuable teaching time is lost. If the lessons are appropriate for the misbehaving student(s) (considerate of their learning level and styles) and they continually disrupt each lesson regularly, they should be removed from the classroom. They should be made to do the class in their own time. Lunchtime, after or before school. They are being disrespectful to the teacher and their fellow class mates and it's unfair that the students who want to learn and the teachers who want to teach, are being disadvantaged by a student's or students' rudeness. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

**8) Select from the list below those ways (you may select more than one) in which you believe teachers/teaching have been negatively impacted because of increased classroom disruption in classrooms.**



While there was some negative comment, there was overwhelmingly strong support for teachers with 69.6% of parents feeling that classroom disruption was a cause of *Teacher burnout and wellbeing issues*. Classroom disruption was also seen as a cause of a *Loss of teaching time* (by 67.2% of parents); and a *Loss of teacher confidence and empowerment* (56.2%). Increased absences of the usual class teacher was also seen as a cause for heightened classroom disruption.

There has been much in the media about teacher burnout and teachers leaving the profession prematurely. An analysis of parent comments in relation to the year level of their child revealed the following top two for each age grouping:

- Pre Year 1: 64% - *Teacher burnout and wellbeing issues*.  
53% - *Loss of teaching time*.
- Yrs 1-3: 71% - *Loss of teaching time*.  
70% - *Teacher burnout and wellbeing issues*.
- Yrs 4-6: 71% - *Teacher burnout and wellbeing issues*.  
69% - *Loss of teaching time*.
- Yrs 7-10: 70% - *Teacher burnout and wellbeing issues*.  
68% - *Loss of teaching time*.
- Yrs 11-12: 66% - *Teacher burnout and wellbeing issues*.  
63% - *Loss of teacher confidence and empowerment*.

Some parent comments in relation to the above include:

*I have found the school communication fairly good. Instances where communication has been poor were usually the result of a teacher being overwhelmed by the issues they faced every day in the classroom. My understanding is that these have (sic) Instances have also come just before a teacher*

*leaves the profession due to burnout. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Little Social and emotional well-being training for teachers. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Most teachers do not have the skills or confidence to handle disruptive students do (sic) to the fear of repercussions from parents or lack of knowledge of alternative ways to handle the situation successfully. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Not enough support in classroom for teachers with the amount of kids with problems. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Our teachers do an amazing job given the difficulties they face every day because parents won't parent their children. Parents are responsibly first and foremost for the behaviour of their children due to lack of responsibility for bad behaviour management at home. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Teachers are being let down by the educational system, they should not be preoccupied with social welfare issues. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Teachers are not being supported by schools management, parents are not supporting teachers who want to discipline their child. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Teachers are required to do too much. There is an obsessions (sic) with bringing children into mainstream classrooms that shouldn't be there. Over bearing parents who don't parent properly and then blame the school for their children's inability to be educated. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

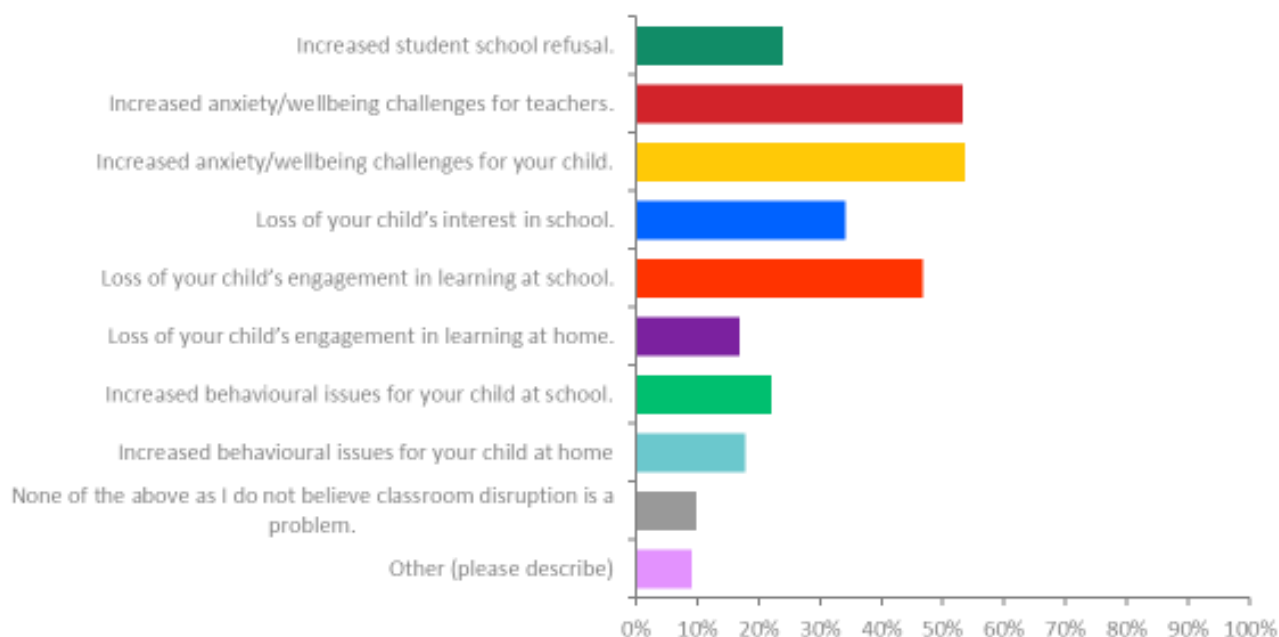
*Teachers have limited options for discipline, so often just take the disruption as a normal interference. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Teachers not being supported or educated in neuro diverse students needs and additional supports in place to assist teachers. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Teachers not understanding children's needs ie mental health. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*This is not about the teachers abilities to manage and cope within the classroom with high learning needs children. This is about the expectation not being realistic. My classroom was always managed with calmness, joy and extremely well. I handled disruptions professionally and kindly. There is no need for more training. Teachers for the most part are brilliant at their jobs. The time however it is always going to take to manage these disruptions can only be better supported by more aids always assisting the classroom teacher so that the rest of the class keeps working and engaging. Or a serious rethink on how inclusive education can look with in a school not the classroom. I know parent of children with high learning needs will support this as they know the mainstream classroom is not the best learning environment for their child too. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

**9) Select from the list below (you may select more than one), those that you believe have been majorly caused by student disruption in classrooms.**



The most dominant parent response regarding the impact of classroom disruption were increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for their child (53.7%) and teachers (53.2%). Next was the impact on their child's learning which was selected by 46.8% of the parents.

A number of parents also indicated that classroom disruption was impacting their child's interest in school (34.1%), their increase in behavioural issues at school (22.1%) and increase in behavioural issues at home (17.8%).

Many parents clearly see classroom disruption as a problem and the impact on other non-disruptive students is becoming increasingly difficult to tolerate. An analysis of parent comments in relation to the year level of their child revealed the following top two for each age grouping:

- Pre Year 1: 47% - *Increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for your child.*  
46% - *Increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for teachers.*
- Yrs 1-3: 54% - *Increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for teachers.*  
50% - *Increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for your child.*
- Yrs 4-6: 57% - *Increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for your child.*  
52% - *Increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for teachers.*
- Yrs 7-10: 57% - *Increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for teachers.*  
56% - *Increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for your child.*
- Yrs 11-12: 53% - *Loss of your child's engagement in learning at school.*  
52% - *Increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges for your child.*

A sample of parent comments on these matters include:

*Very happy with communication from the school. Very unhappy with children's learning and teacher wellbeing being so badly impacted by the result of poor parenting and lack of consequences for these parents and children. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

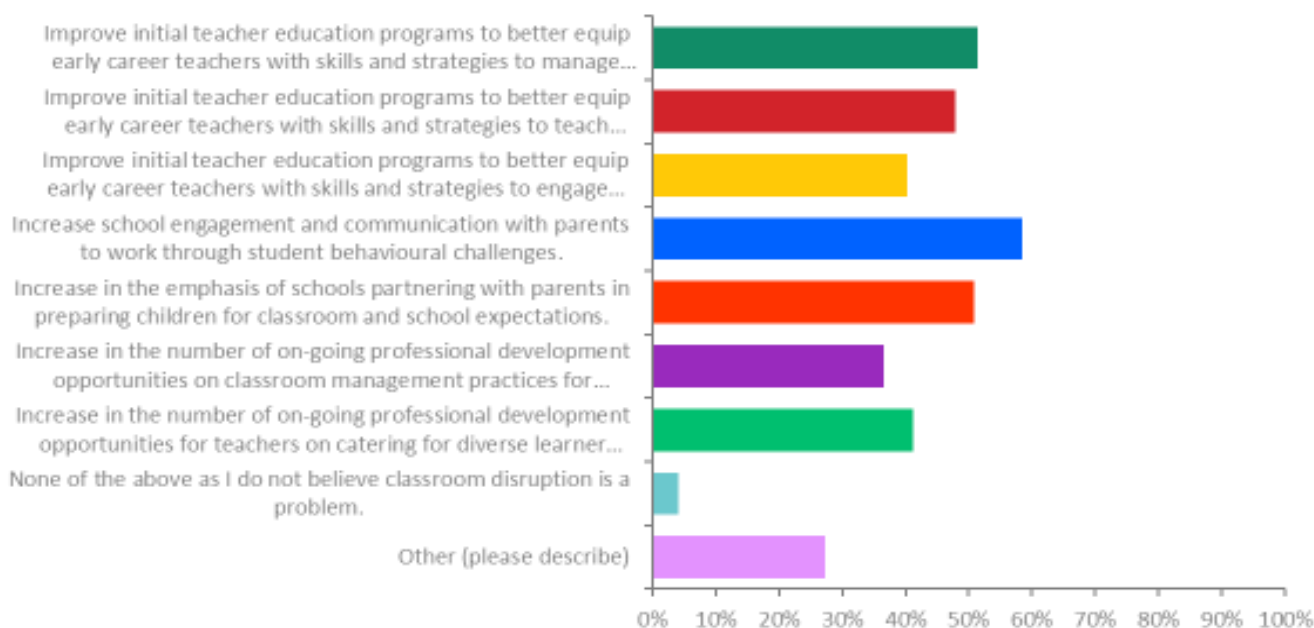
*None of these apply to my child, but they do to some of his classmates who have experienced school refusal, anxiety/wellbeing challenges, loss of interest and engagement with learning, due to disruption in the classroom. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Student disruption tends to be caused by teacher stress and workload issues which in turn causes more disruptive behaviour leading to a cycle of deteriorating behaviour. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Schools need to more aware of the affects of the 'other children' in a disruptive classroom when an inexperienced teacher is left to 'teach' a class with challenging students. Anxiety levels go through the roof. A strong, confident, in control, regulated teacher is VITAL to provide a safe, supported classroom where all children can be regulated and able to learn. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Absolutely insufficient resources for special needs children. Not enough consequences for serial misbehaving children who are NOT special needs. Teachers gain a 'Teaching' degree NOT Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Psychiatry, Speech Pathology degrees and they should NOT be expected to have all of those qualifications. Make parents more accountable for the ill-disciplined, disrespectful, non-resilient children they unleash on the schools. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

**10) Select from the list below (you may select more than one), those things that you believe should be considered to help overcome classroom disruption in Australian schools.**



An increase in *communication and engagement with parents to work through student behaviour challenges* was most highly ranked and selected by 58.5% of parents as an action to help overcome classroom disruption. Other proposed actions, in order of popularity, included: Improving initial teacher education programs to better skill early career teachers in classroom management strategies (51.4%); *increase in the emphasis of schools partnering with parents in preparing children for classroom and school expectations* (50.8%) and 47.8% of parents suggested to *Improve initial teacher education programs to better*



*equip early career teachers with skills and strategies to teach students with diverse learning needs.*

Increasing on-going professional development opportunities for teachers on catering for diverse learner needs and better skilling early career teachers to engage with parents about student wellbeing and learning, each attracted agreement by at least 4 out of every ten parents.

An analysis of parent comments in relation to the year level of their child revealed the following top two for each age grouping:

- Pre Year 1:   58% - *Increase communication and engagement with parents to work through student behaviour challenges.*  
                  58% - *Increase in the emphasis of schools partnering with parents in preparing children for classroom and school expectations.*
- Yrs 1-3:       59% - *Increase communication and engagement with parents to work through student behaviour challenges.*  
                  52% - *Increase in the emphasis of schools partnering with parents in preparing children for classroom and school expectations.*
- Yrs 4-6:       62% - *Increase communication and engagement with parents to work through student behaviour challenges.*  
                  50% - *Improve initial teacher education programs to better equip early career teachers with skills and strategies to teach students with diverse learning needs.*
- Yrs 7-10:      56% - *Increase communication and engagement with parents to work through student behaviour challenges.*  
                  56% - *Improve initial teacher education programs to better equip early career teachers with skills and strategies to manage classrooms.*
- Yrs 11-12:     63% - *Improve initial teacher education programs to better equip early career teachers with skills and strategies to manage classrooms.*  
                  55% - *Increase communication and engagement with parents to work through student behaviour challenges.*

These results speak for themselves and there was much parent comment to support these opinions. There were also 350 comments made by parents under *Other*. Unfortunately, to date, time has not allowed a thorough analysis of these comments.

For more comment in relation to these responses please refer to the Final Discussion.



**11) In relation to your child's wellbeing and learning, how would you describe the benefits or challenges in relation to your communication with the school and/or the school's communication with you?**

Over 1000 parents provided feedback in response to this question and while a more detailed analysis will be conducted over time, below is a sample of parent comments.

*We have some communication in regards to learning, but nothing about wellbeing. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey). (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*We have very good communication with the school regarding my child's wellbeing as he is on learning support plan. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*It is beneficial to communicate with the school direct to be on top of my children and their wellbeing. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*My child's school has been excellent in their level of communication with our family. They are as invested in our child's education & wellbeing as we are. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*The school does not communicate frequently enough with me about my neuro-divergent son's behaviour. This means I can't help him 'translate' what has happened or help him understand the social situation. This negatively affects his wellbeing, mental health and therefore his learning. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*The school communicates very well. They have mentioned that our children have started to withdraw due to the ongoing disruption that impacted their well-being and ability to learn. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*We are very lucky that our daughter goes to a school where class disruptions don't seem to happen and the communication is very good. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*I have not had any issues with the schools communication re the disruption and have not experienced any challenges in that regard. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

**12) Australia is ranked among the worst in the world for the classroom discipline of students. Please discuss any experiences or knowledge you have of approaches to classroom discipline that work well either here in Australia or in other countries?**

A little under 900 parents provided feedback in response to this question and while a more detailed analysis will be conducted over time, below is a sample of parent comments.

*Teachers need to get the kids respect before they can come down really hard on them. The teachers that seem to be able to control classes are the ones that are relatable to the kids, show interest in them but also know how to come down hard when they need to. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*The culturally accepted stereotype of the larrikin in Australia acts as a gateway to poor and attention seeking behaviour. The classroom can be a feeding ground for this, as easy laughs can be on offer from peers. I have experienced that the best way to correct behaviour of the few, is to apply repercussions to the many. Soon enough, the many start to influence and correct the behaviour of the few. Those easy laughs from the peers tend to dry up and the poor behaviour becomes old very quickly. Ultimately the class 'hero' becomes the class 'villain'. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*The implementation of a behaviour management/modification plan that requires the parents and teachers to work collaboratively and in support of each other. Only when behaviour is managed can teaching and learning be the focus of the classroom. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*The problem is not the school or teachers. The problem is lack of parenting and entitled children. We have some amazing teachers who are leaving the profession because of this and the lack of support from there leadership. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*The schools and parents expect too much from our teachers. Parents and the community lack respect and understanding towards teachers. Schools need to be better resourced to ensure children today can become functioning adults of the future. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*With many friends and family who are teachers, I believe that many parents have no respect for teachers. They - blame the school and teachers for bad behaviour - don't think that their child is wrong - berate and abuse teachers and their child follows suit - expect teachers and schools to raise their children - don't show any respect and don't teach respect - have no interest in their child's learning or development Teachers are also massively under resourced in time and tools to deal with parents and students whether it's disruptive behaviours or trying to help students who are struggling with learning. Teachers need more time to deal with parent communication, engage parents in their children's development and more support/training. Australian's needs an attitude adjustment. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

## FINAL DISCUSSION

The inquiry into disruption in Australian school classrooms is very timely as many believe that classroom disruption has reached unprecedented levels. At relatively short notice, 1279 parents shared their reflections on classroom disruption through a CSPA survey. This submission has drawn heavily upon this parent voice.

Parents were generous in their sharing and their responses generated much evidence. To date a preliminary analysis of these comments has been undertaken and key information has been shared throughout this submission. There are however, a few points that CSPA wishes to emphasise as part of this final discussion, these include:

- a) Respect for teachers and the teaching profession;
- b) Resourcing for the inclusion of diverse learners in mainstream classrooms in Catholic schools; and
- c) The importance of appropriate parent engagement and communication between home and school.

### a) Respect for teachers and the teaching profession.

There has been mounting evidence of the unacceptable way in which school staff have been abused. A little under 70% of parents felt that classroom disruption was causing *teacher burnout and wellbeing issues*.

Evidence in the media such as in the extract below is not unusual – ask any principal or teacher.

*“WE are in trouble as a nation,” according to the author of an Australian Catholic University survey that reveals one in three Australian school principals have been attacked and half have experienced violent threats at work.*

*“This is a reflection of our society, it is much bigger than schools,” the survey’s chief investigator associate professor Philip Riley, from ACU’s Institute of Positive Psychology and Education, said.*

*“Police are reporting higher levels of violence, other frontline services too, and clearly domestic violence is up.*

*“It’s time to draw a line in the sand and say ‘this has got to stop’.”*

*In a worrying trend, almost half of school principals (45 per cent) were threatened with violence last year, compared with 38 per cent when Dr Riley conducted his first Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey in 2011.*

Extracted from the report *‘This has to stop’ – school principals attacked and threatened at record levels, report finds* by Mark Bowling (updated 1 April 2021). Available at: <https://catholicleader.com.au/news/australia/this-has-to-stop-school-principals-attacked-and-threatened-at-record-levels-report-finds/>

From the CSPA survey (March 2023), over half the parents see the increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges of their child (53.7%) alongside the increased anxiety/wellbeing challenges of teachers (53.2%) as a consequence of classroom disruption. In question 9, these were selected by parents from Pre Yr 1 to Yr 10 as the top two consequences of classroom disruption.

Many parents shared sentiments such as those outlined in the quotes below.

*This isn't just a classroom problem - the decline in discipline in children is across the board and in every aspect of society. Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

*Time poor teachers and loss of experienced and dedicated teachers who feel unsupported by parents and their leaders. I am not a teacher, but I feel so much empathy for them - I really don't know how they do their jobs in today's modern age. It is challenging enough for parents in terms of technology and social media. Teachers need more support in all aspects of their profession and less children in a class. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

National agencies need to come together as part of a thinktank towards putting multifaceted strategies in place to, as quoted from above, *draw a line in the sand and say ‘this has got to stop’*. Teachers, parents and students need to be heard as part of this undertaking.

b) Resourcing for the inclusion of diverse learners in mainstream classrooms in Catholic schools.

Many parents made comment about students with diverse learning needs impacting the wellbeing and learning of their child. The ability to provide adequate/appropriate support for students with learning and/or wellbeing needs is reaching challenging levels for teachers. The survey found that 64.2% of the 1,279 parent responders agreed that an *increased number of students with diverse learning needs* was contributing to disruption in the classroom.

CSPA understands that Catholic education has a duty to the poor and marginalised and agrees with that outlined below by the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC).

*NCEC supports Catholic education to provide a supportive Catholic community which promotes the dignity and sacredness of every student. We understand that such communities are built upon respectful, collaborative relationships with families as first educators, with students, teachers and the community supporting learners* (Extracted from <https://ncec.catholic.edu.au/students-families/inclusive-education-disability/>).

For parents with children in Catholic schools, many common challenges continue to turn up through the numerous reviews in relation to education – these include the following for students with diverse needs.

i. The need for adequate resourcing of schools to provide learning support to students with diverse needs.

A snapshot from 2020 – 2022 of Australian Catholic schools reveals that students with disability averaged a little under 22% of annual enrolments. In order that the aims of The National Disability Strategy 2021 -2031 are fully embraced and implemented, adequate funding must be provided. There are implications for school staff, school counsellors, psychologists, parents and of course students. The better these challenges are understood, the more likely that effective, multifaceted solutions will be introduced. Whatever costs are required now to address these challenges will be preferred over the potential life-time of welfare dependence and poor wellbeing that could result for many of these children and young people, if this is not addressed.

ii. The Student Wellbeing Hub (<https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/news/coping-with-anxiety-at-primary-school-and-high-school/>) notes that *anxiety and anxiety disorders are on the rise among students in Australia. The past three years have been characterised by unprecedented upheaval and some students have struggled to cope. It's imperative that parents, teachers and school communities be equipped to support students experiencing anxiety.*

A 2022 CSPA parent views survey and reference group forums revealed some harrowing accounts of student anxiety and mental health, including suicide. Adequate funding must facilitate the availability of health professionals in schools to provide empathetic, confidential and effective support to students. This also implies the professional training of sufficient numbers of health professionals (e.g. school counsellors) to be able to facilitate this.

For classroom teachers to appropriately provide for all students under their care, adequate funding/resourcing needs to be provided such that the education and welfare of all in any school setting is not compromised. In hand with this, it is important that all in the community are working/interacting under the umbrella of a Catholic ethos that respects inclusion.

In relation to this one parent stated:

*I find it very offensive that as a National Catholic organisation representing parents you are doing a survey on the 'disruptions' in classrooms. I feel the way you have worded your survey places so much negative connotation on those families whose children experience difficulties in the classroom for whatever reason. There are so many factors to take into account and I don't think terming the issues as 'disruptions to learning' is very helpful. In fact there is a negative and almost blaming attitude to those poor kids who are struggling in classrooms. I feel it's a very exclusive approach and shows such a lack of empathy and understanding to families who are struggling every day to even get their child to school. Please research the support that should be in place to help these 'disruptions' as you term them. (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).*

c) The importance of appropriate parent engagement & communication between home and school.

It was significant that in response to question 10, that an increase in *communication and engagement with parents to work through student behaviour challenges* was most highly ranked and selected by 58.5% of parents as an action to help overcome classroom disruption.

CSPA has conducted extensive work on raising the profile of parent engagement with schools in relation to the wellness and learning of children and young people. In many forums, CSPA has also

discussed the need for parent engagement studies to be part of pre-service teacher education programs.

Over the past fifty years, research on parent engagement has produced a bank of evidence that no longer can be left underutilised. Willis and Exley (2020)<sup>1</sup> outline this research, noting the positive outcomes for students, which include:

- higher academic outcomes;
- enhanced wellbeing;
- increased confidence, motivation, and engagement in learning;
- improved school attendance;
- more positive attitudes about school and improved behaviour; and
- continued school enrolment and higher likelihood of graduation.

In relation to this inquiry, the reality that research continues to show that among the impressive list of positive outcomes for students resulting from parent engagement, *more positive attitudes about school and improved behaviour* is of major significance.

CSPA's closing comments for this submission are provided by parents.

*Good communication with the school encourages a good relationship all round between staff/teachers/parents and students. The school have a better understanding of a child and their needs/wellbeing if they have knowledge of a child and their family background.* (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).

*I found it that the more communication between teachers school office and parents the better to manage wellbeing and learning of my child.* (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).

*We clearly understand the behaviour expectations of the school. My son is self-disciplined enough to ignore these disruptions and complete his classwork, but not all kids are.* (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).

*My child's school has been excellent in their level of communication with our family. They are as invested in our child's education & wellbeing as we are.* (Parent of a child/young person in a Catholic school, 2023 CSPA Survey).

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<sup>1</sup>Engaging parents in their child's learning and wellbeing – change, continuity and COVID 19. Our School Our Future Issues Paper. October 2020 Prepared by Dr Linda-Dianne Willis & Professor Beryl Exley for Independent Schools Queensland. Available at [https://www.isq.qld.edu.au/media/5ojng045/engaging\\_parents\\_issues\\_paper.pdf](https://www.isq.qld.edu.au/media/5ojng045/engaging_parents_issues_paper.pdf)



# APPENDIX ONE

## Parent / Carer Survey on Classroom Disruption

Results may be filtered by Q1 and Q2 drop boxes below



1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child... (1) ▾

2. In which state or territory is your child's school? ▾

**1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child?**

Pre Year 1	91
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Grand total	91
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**2. In which state or territory is your child's school?**

Queensland	79
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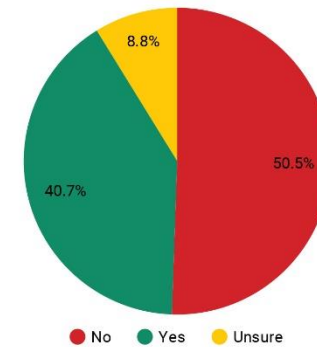
New South Wales	10
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Western Australia	1
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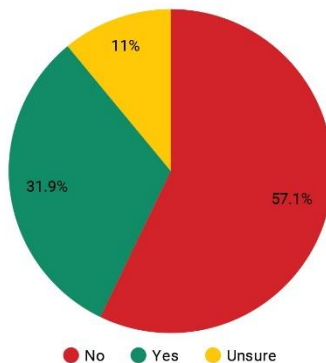
Victoria	1
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Grand total	91
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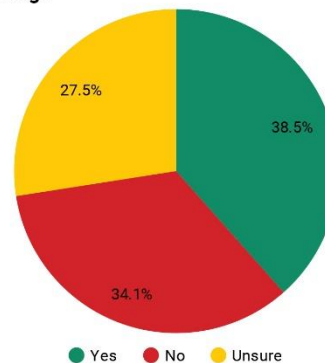
**3. Have you heard of disruptions happening this year in any classroom(s) in your child's school?**



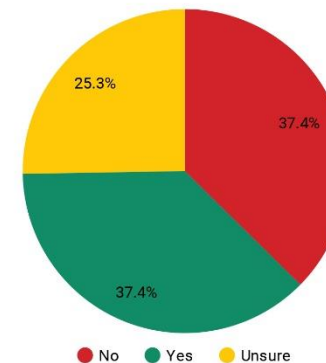
**4. Are you aware of any classroom disruption that has impacted your child this year?**



**5. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's learning?**



**6. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's wellbeing?**



# Parent / Carer Survey on Classroom Disruption

Results may be filtered by Q1 and Q2 drop boxes below



1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child... (1) ▾

2. In which state or territory is your child's school? ▾

**1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child?**

Year 1 - Year 3 276

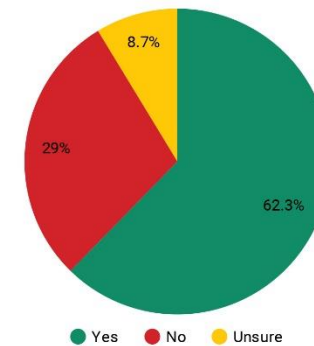
Grand total 276

**2. In which state or territory is your child's school?**

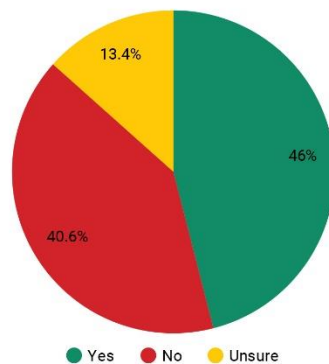
Queensland	227
New South Wales	26
Western Australia	20
Tasmania	2
Victoria	1

Grand total 276

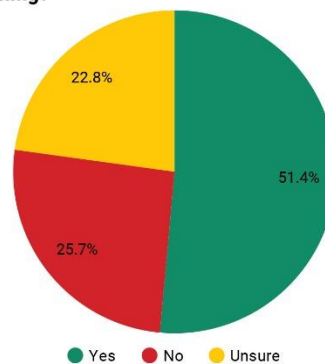
**3. Have you heard of disruptions happening this year in any classroom(s) in your child's school?**



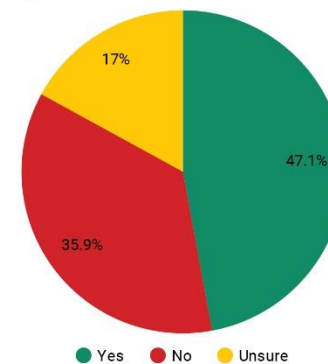
**4. Are you aware of any classroom disruption that has impacted your child this year?**



**5. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's learning?**



**6. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's wellbeing?**





# Parent / Carer Survey on Classroom Disruption

Results may be filtered by Q1 and Q2 drop boxes below



1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child... (1) ▾

2. In which state or territory is your child's school? ▾

**1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child?**

Year 4 - Year 6 373

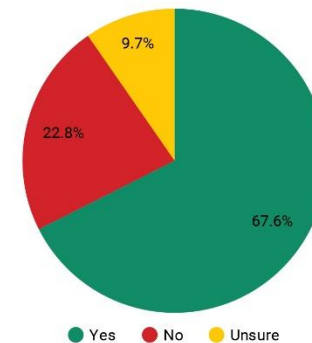
**Grand total 373**

**2. In which state or territory is your child's school?**

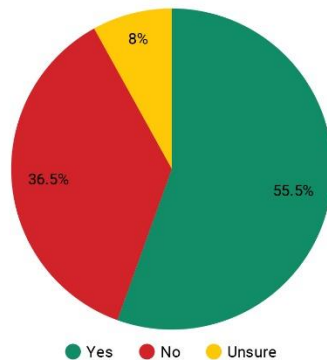
Queensland	309
Western Australia	33
New South Wales	25
Victoria	3
Tasmania	2
Northern Territory	1

**Grand total 373**

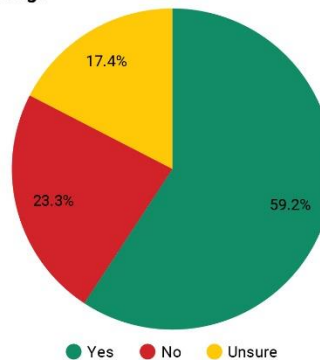
**3. Have you heard of disruptions happening this year in any classroom(s) in your child's school?**



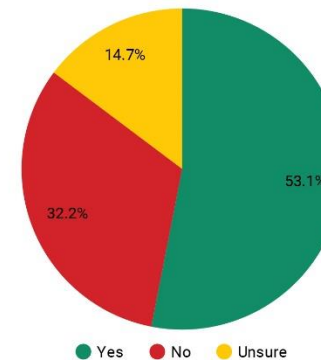
**4. Are you aware of any classroom disruption that has impacted your child this year?**



**5. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's learning?**



**6. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's wellbeing?**



# Parent / Carer Survey on Classroom Disruption

Results may be filtered by Q1 and Q2 drop boxes below



1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child... (1) ▾

2. In which state or territory is your child's school? ▾

**1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child?**

Year 7 - Year 10 431

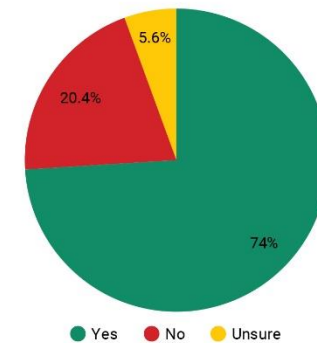
Grand total 431

**2. In which state or territory is your child's school?**

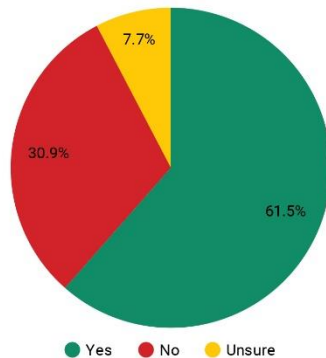
Queensland	383
Western Australia	20
New South Wales	15
Tasmania	12
Victoria	1

Grand total 431

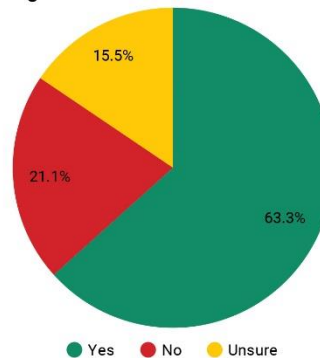
**3. Have you heard of disruptions happening this year in any classroom(s) in your child's school?**



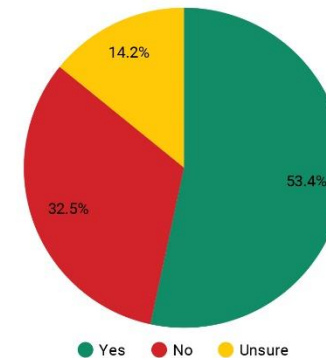
**4. Are you aware of any classroom disruption that has impacted your child this year?**



**5. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's learning?**



**6. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's wellbeing?**



# Parent / Carer Survey on Classroom Disruption

Results may be filtered by Q1 and Q2 drop boxes below



1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child... (1) ▾

2. In which state or territory is your child's school? ▾

**1. Which of the following best describes the year level of your child?**

Year 11 - Year 12 108

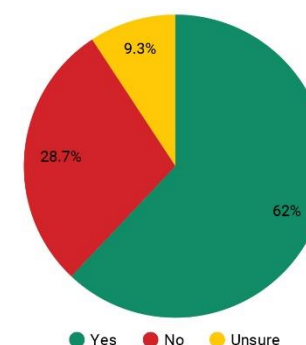
**Grand total** 108

**2. In which state or territory is your child's school?**

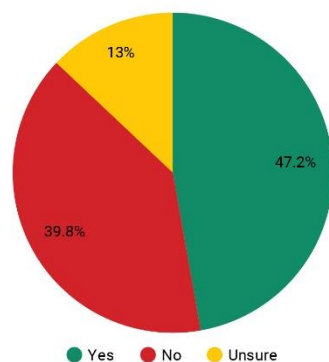
Queensland	100
New South Wales	4
Western Australia	2
Northern Territory	1
Australian Capital Territory	1

**Grand total** 108

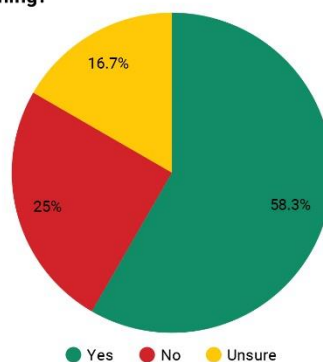
**3. Have you heard of disruptions happening this year in any classroom(s) in your child's school?**



**4. Are you aware of any classroom disruption that has impacted your child this year?**



**5. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's learning?**



**6. Do you believe that an increase in classroom disruption is causing a decline in your child's wellbeing?**

