

21 July 2023

Ms Sarah Redden
A/g Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Via email eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Redden

RE: Inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters

On 27 June 2023 the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) received a request from you for further information in relation to the impact of school refusal on the educational attainment of students in the form of a number of questions on notice.

QCEC has prepared a response to each of the questions raised by the Committee, outlined below.

While detail has been provided where possible, as QCEC is a peak body and does not own or operate schools, QCEC does not have remit over operational matters in schools and also does not have the authority to mandate a consistent approach to the collection of reasons for absenteeism across the Queensland Catholic sector. Detail of individual schools' data collection processes and the detail captured is beyond the scope of feedback QCEC is able to provide at this time.

I trust that the information provided in our responses is of assistance to you and invite you to reach out with any further questions directly.

Yours sincerely


Steven Jeffery
A/Executive Director

Inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters

- **Please provide attendance data by year level**

The following table provides a high-level overview of attendance data in 2022 by year level in the Queensland Catholic sector:

School Year Level	Attendance Rate	Attendance Level
Year 1	89.4	56.9
Year 2	89.4	56.6
Year 3	89.0	55.0
Year 4	89.1	54.3
Year 5	88.9	53.4
Year 6	88.5	51.8
Year 7	88.8	53.5
Year 8	86.8	45.3
Year 9	86.1	43.6
Year 10	85.6	42.0

Note:

- Attendance rate: The number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Semester 1 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended in Semester 1.
- Attendance level: The proportion of full-time students whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90 per cent.

This information has been sourced from the Student Attendance (STATS) collection¹ and is publicly available on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) reporting website.² STATs collects student attendance rate data by grade, gender and Indigeneity from non-government schools. As data is provided in Semester 1 and Term 3 reporting periods, 2023 data is yet to be reported.

- **Do you collect data on reasons for absenteeism?**
 - **If so, please provide the categories you collect data against**
 - **Please provide the absenteeism data by year level and by category you collect this data under.**

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) does not collect data from Catholic schools on reasons for absenteeism.

¹ Further information on the Student Attendance (STATS) collection can be found on the [Australian Government department of Education Data College website](#).

² ACARA Student attendance reporting website, ACARA, 2022.

- **What is your attendance target level for students? Is this consistent across all year groups?**
 - **If this varies by year level, please provide the target for each year level.**

QCEC does not have attendance targets for Catholic school students.

- **Have you done any analysis work on the linkage between student attendance and student academic performance?**

No.

- **How much of a gap are we seeing between the academic outcomes of children engaged in school refusal, and other students?**

QCEC does not collect data on school refusal.

- **How many children are enrolled in a form of education, other than mainstream school, including:**
 - **Home school** – N/A
 - **Virtual school** – 126 enrolments
 - **Distance education** – N/A
 - **Other (please define categories and provide student data against each category)**

N/A

- **Is data collected on the reason a student is not attending mainstream school and why an exemption has been provided?**
 - **Please provide data by category of exemption for how many students are enrolled in alternative methods of schooling**

No, QCEC does not collect this data.

- **Is data collected on student academic performance for students enrolled in alternative forms of schooling (as above).**

No.

- **How much of a gap are we seeing between the academic outcomes of children engaged in school refusal, and other students?**

Unable to comment, QCEC does not collect or hold data that could inform a response.

- **Do schools with higher rates of school refusal also have poorer academic performance among the rest of the student body?**

QCEC's submission to the Committee's Inquiry indicated that reduced attendance impacts students academically and socially. This comment references a report ([Attendance Matters](#)) prepared by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

- **What is the academic performance like of schools that are specifically geared towards reaching students who engage in school refusal? (e.g. Virtual Schools Victoria is one such school the committee is aware of)**

Unable to comment, QCEC does not collect or hold data that could inform a response.

- **What academic outcomes do we see among students who have previously engaged in school refusal, but have since returned to school?**

Unable to comment, QCEC does not collect or hold data that could inform a response.

- **What data is there on the effect of school refusal on students' employment opportunities later in life?**

Unable to comment, QCEC does not collect or hold data that could inform a response.

- **What work has been done to understand the complex factors that influence student absenteeism?**

Unable to comment, QCEC does not collect or hold data that could inform a response.

- **What policies do you have that support students and their families re-engage in school when experiencing school refusal?**

QCEC has a position statement on [Student Wellbeing](#).

- **Has any work been done to identify students who may be at risk of school refusal?**
 - **What intervention strategies are in place to support these students and families?**

QCEC refers the Committee back to QCEC's original submission to the Inquiry point 3a) and b).