

# IEUA-QNT SUBMISSION

[11 November 2021]

## Submission: Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory – Quality Teaching Philosophy and Teacher Health and Wellbeing Policy

The Independent Education Union – Queensland and Northern Territory Branch (IEUA-QNT) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory’s policy documents – the *Quality Teaching Philosophy*[1] and the *Teacher Health and Wellbeing Policy*[2].

### About IEUA-QNT

IEUA-QNT represents ~17,000 teachers, support staff and ancillary staff in non-government education institutions in Queensland and the Northern Territory and consistently engages in industrial and education debate at both state and national levels through its Education and Industrial Committees and through its national counterpart, the Independent Education Union of Australia, which receives input from teachers in all States and Territories.

### Introductory Comments

1. While we acknowledge that both policy documents reflect legislative changes introduced from 1 January 2020[3], and that the unique vulnerability of many Northern Territory students necessitates measures to ensure that only those who are fit and proper persons are engaged as teachers, we have a general concern that the documents place an undue emphasis on negative actions taken in regard to teachers who may suffer from health impairments.
2. Further, we would argue that section 26 of the Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Act[4] makes the assertion that teachers are compelled to report details of “any physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder’ problematic in that medical information is considered information upon which unlawful discrimination might be based.

### Comments related to the Quality Teaching Philosophy

3. While we believe it is appropriate for the TRB to develop a clear policy in relation to the standard of teaching in Northern Territory schools, we believe the current draft policy does not convey a sense of teachers working in partnership with the TRB to meet the

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- policy objectives, but rather places disproportionate emphasis on the responsibilities of teachers, while de-emphasising the role of employers and government in providing working conditions that are conducive to quality teaching practice in the first instance.
4. While we recognise that the TRB cannot control the approach to working conditions that is adopted by the various employers, we believe a policy that outlines only the steps that teachers must take to ensure that they are meeting expectations of quality teaching and learning has limited utility.
  5. We note, for example, that paragraph two of the Quality Teaching Philosophy[1] indicates that it “promotes our intent to support teacher to achieve and maintain high quality teaching practice”, but the document does not achieve this aim. No mention is made of the role the TRB will take in providing teachers with opportunities to engage in quality practice, or to undertake quality professional development and no mention is made of how the TRB might work with other stakeholders to meet either the fundamental (e.g. safe working environments) or professional (e.g. access to relevant, quality professional development) needs of teachers.

### Comments related to the Teacher Health and Wellbeing Policy

6. Our union is in agreement that the safety of children in Northern Territory schools must be a primary consideration in any policy that seeks to clarify expectations of teachers, but we are concerned that the draft Teacher Health and Wellbeing Policy does not meet the declared purpose of conveying the TRB’s “commitment to promoting positive health and wellbeing outcomes among the Northern Territory teaching profession”.
7. In particular, we draw attention to the opening section of the policy document, which focusses solely on expectations and requirements of teachers and makes only passing reference to the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders.
8. We initially raised our concerns around changes to the definition of ‘personal details’ to include information about ‘any physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder, including substance abuse or dependence’, and the requirement to report changes in such details, during consultations in 2018 and our position remains the same.
9. Our advice to members will indicate that Section 26 of the Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Act 1992 supports their right to withhold information on which unlawful discrimination might be based.
10. Further, we would question whether the TRB is sufficiently resourced to follow-up on matters of compliance with reporting requirements.

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### Concluding Comments

IEUA-QNT thanks the Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory Department of Education for the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to its Quality Teaching Philosophy and Teacher Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

While we support the role of the TRB in developing policy documents that complement the legislation, and the assertion that child safety should be a primary consideration, we have significant concerns related to the punitive tone adopted in both documents, and in the Teacher Health and Wellbeing Policy in particular.



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**Branch Secretary**  
**Independent Education Union of Australia -Queensland and Northern Territory Branch**  
**11 November 2021**

### References

1. Teacher\_Registration\_Board\_of\_the\_Northern\_Territory, *Quality Teaching Philosophy*. 2021, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory: Darwin.
2. Teacher\_Registration\_Board\_of\_the\_Northern\_Territory, *Teacher Health and Wellbeing Policy*. 2021, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory: Darwin.
3. Northern\_Territory\_of\_Australia, *TEACHER REGISTRATION (NORTHERN TERRITORY) ACT 2004*. 2020.
4. Northern\_Territory\_of\_Australia, *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992*. 2018.