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In 1910, as the result of a State referendum, religious instruction and Bible lessons were introduced to the Queensland Education Act via an amendment. Reflecting the referendum's single-question; two-outcome proposal, the following was to be allowed:

- *Ministers of religion would be entitled, in school hours, to give the children of their own denomination an hour's religious instruction on such day or days as the school committee could arrange for.*
- *The State Schoolmaster, in school hours, would teach selected Bible lessons from a reading book provided for the purpose, but would not be allowed to give sectarian teaching.*

Within the amendments, to ratify Bible lessons by staff teachers, every instance of the word 'secular' was expunged from the original Queensland Education Act of 1875. A particular occurrence of 'secular' was deleted along with the entire clause below:

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.

One hundred years on, the religious activities occurring within the Queensland public education system bear no resemblance whatsoever to either the intention or the spirit of the 1910 legislation. Rarely are 'ministers of religion' involved in the conducting of RI, it being almost entirely provided by unqualified lay, mostly evangelical volunteers. What's more, without the constraints of the removed 'chapter 5' clause, Education Queensland staff can, and do, evangelise within a formal classroom environment. This includes creationism and 'intelligent design' being offered as an alternative to the theory of evolution in science classes.

The non-secular nature of the Queensland public education system has resulted in the current outrageous circumstances across the State. Unmentioned in Queensland education legislation, Federal and State funded chaplains of predominantly undisclosed 'denomination' provided exclusively by the evangelical Scripture Union are blatantly evangelising and proselytising to children of undisclosed, or non-Christian faith. SU chaplains invite hordes of predominantly Charismatic/Pentecostal 'volunteers' onto State school campuses to conduct programmes provided by Hillsong, Teen Challenge and several other Pentecostal churches and organisations. Unqualified Christian 'mentors', usually organised by SU chaplains and provided by Pentecostal churches, World Vision and Hillsong sponsors Gloria Jean's are being allowed free access to students for one hour per week.

'Unchurched' (Scripture Union term) children are 'targeted' (Scripture Union term) for on and off-campus evangelistic programmes, Christian worship and boot camps. SU chaplains are also overseeing RI arrangements at many schools.

While it almost certainly would not have been the case in 1910, in second-millennium Queensland, over 80% of parents choose to not provide a faith (or a Christian related faith) where optionally requested upon the standard Education Queensland State school enrolment form.

In 2007, then assistant Director General of Education Ken Rogers, confirmed that internal surveying revealed the above 80% figure to be conservative.

Under current legislation, there is absolutely no doubt that children of undisclosed faith must not be placed into religious instruction (RI) without signed parental consent. However, across Queensland, more often than not children are placed into religious instruction by default. Parents are incorrectly told that they must 'opt out'. The intentional, stealthy re-badging of RI (religious instruction) as RE (religious education) constantly leads parents to believe that some form of comparative religious education is being provided—which, of course, is certainly not the case.

Every instance of a child of undisclosed faith (or lack of faith) being placed in religious instruction without signed parental authorisation is in defiance of the Queensland Education Act and of the child's human right to freedom from religion.

Next year, 2010, will be the 100th anniversary of the deletion of 'secular' from the Queensland Education Act. ASL and our associated organisations believe that the State of Queensland can no longer endorse and promote a supernatural belief system by placing it within the State school curriculum while allowing staff teachers to give lessons in a particular supernatural doctrine: Christianity.

In the coming months, ASL and our associate organisations will begin campaigning to achieve the following by end of 2010:

1. The reinstatement of the word 'secular' within the Queensland Education Act.
2. The reinstatement of the deleted 'clause 5' from the 1875 Queensland Education Act.
3. A comprehensive State-wide audit of Queensland State school enrolment forms to result in religious instruction being provided only to eligible or parentally authorised children.
4. A comprehensive State-wide audit of mandatory chaplaincy consent forms to ascertain at each school:
 - If they exist.
 - If they have been circulated and returned.
 - If they are being adhered to.

(As an unreturned RI Form C2 means no RI by default, an unreturned chaplaincy consent form means no chaplaincy exposure by default. This requirement is usually either unknown or flouted.)

No child should be exposed to chaplaincy in any form without signed parental consent. The revelations of an audit in this regard would be stunning. As in the case of RI, the human rights of every Queensland State school student being exposed to a Christian chaplain without signed parental consent are being violated.

5. Provision of a meaningful RI alternative activity for the statistically overwhelming majority of ineligible children.
6. The reinstatement and circulation of, and strict adherence to, a recently removed EQ policy flowchart which clearly defines the legal path to religious instruction placement.
7. A public enquiry into the recent unlegislated, uncontrolled influx of evangelical/Pentecostal/fundamentalist Christian 'volunteers' into Queensland State schools.
8. A ban on all unqualified 'mentoring' in school hours by civilian volunteers subject to introduction of appropriate legislation.
9. A ban on all 'courses' and 'programmes' provided by volunteers in school hours subject to comprehensive scrutiny and approval of Education Queensland.
10. A public enquiry into the gross inadequacies evident in the administration and supply of Federal and State funded unlegislated chaplaincy in Queensland State schools. This should include the suitability of Scripture Union as the exclusive chaplaincy employing body as well as the requirement for a chaplaincy employing body.

Appendix 1

Placing students in religious instruction programs

Enrolment Information

- name of student
- religious denomination or society of which the student has membership or affiliation

Determines: Religious denominations or societies to be granted approval to enter the school to provide right-of-entry religious instruction

The religious denomination or society that the student is a member of or affiliated with does not offer a program at the school.

Parents have provided:

- no notification; or
- a very general response regarding the student's religious membership or affiliation.

The religious denomination or society that the student is a member of or affiliated with offers a program at the school.

Clarification from parents for placement of a student

Parents state that no religious instruction is to be received.

Withdrawal from religious instruction in school hours
In writing (Form C, Appendix H)

Placement of student

In writing (Form A, Appendix H)

Enrolling in a denominational program when the student is not a member

A parent may enrol a student in a denominational program already being provided by another denomination with right of entry.

Legislative requirement: Written parental permission

In writing (Form B, Appendix H)

Enrolling in a cooperative program when the student is not a member

A parent may enrol a student in a cooperative program already being provided by other denominations with right of entry.

Legislative requirement: Written parental permission

Education Queensland staff provide alternative instruction to the student.

Denominational program

If the denomination the student is a member of or affiliated with is offering a denominational program, the student is placed in it.

Cooperative program

If the denomination the child is a member of or affiliated with is offering a cooperative program, the student is placed in it.