



Minister for Education
Minister for Industrial Relations and
Minister for Racing

8 DEC 2022

Mr Neil Laurie
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Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 10 November 2022 regarding Petition No. 3807-22, requesting the Department of Education cease the disciplinary action taken against relevant employees who failed to comply with the direction to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

The health and wellbeing of students and workers in schools is a priority for the Palaszczuk Government. The Government and the department continue to follow the advice of Queensland's Chief Health Officer (CHO) in responding to the COVID-19 health pandemic.

On 11 December 2021, Queensland's CHO made a decision under section 362B of the *Public Health Act 2005* in the context of the declared health emergency that required all workers in high-risk settings to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The decision was made to assist in containing, or to respond to, the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

The *COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements for Workers in a high-risk setting Direction* came into effect on 11 December 2021, with schools and early childhood settings included in this Direction. The department was responsible for ensuring that these requirements were implemented in Queensland state schools.

Employees of the department were issued with a lawful and reasonable direction to comply with the requirements of the CHO's Direction. Employees were given ample opportunity to follow the Direction, or provide evidence as to why they should be exempt (e.g. medical contraindication).

Those who did not comply with the Direction faced a consequence in the form of an employment disciplinary penalty, as per the provisions of the *Public Service Act 2008*.

The disciplinary penalty imposed on relevant employees was carefully considered in the context of each individual's circumstances, and generally involved a small-scale temporary reduction of one increment of pay for a period of 18 weeks (approximately \$25 to \$90 per week gross, proportionate to the normal pay that a staff member receives).

This is not an uncommon penalty to result from a disciplinary process, and was appropriate in the circumstances.

I would like to thank you, the principal petitioner, and every person who signed the petition for their interest in the Queensland state education system.

Yours sincerely

GRACE GRACE MP
Minister for Education
Minister for Industrial Relations and
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