



QUEENSLAND INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION

ABN 45 620 218 712

# Queensland Independent Education Union

*“The Organising Union in the Non-Government Sector”*

Friday, 15 November 2002

## ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ACT AMENDMENTS COMMENDED

The Queensland government is to be commended for introducing long overdue amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act and mandating a degree of transparency into the discriminatory practices of non-government schools according to General Secretary of the Queensland Independent Education Union (QIEU), Mr Terry Burke.

QIEU represents the industrial and professional interests of over 11,000 teachers, school officers and services staff in non-government schools throughout Queensland.

‘The existing Anti-Discrimination Act allows non-government employers to claim lawful discrimination on such things as marital status and parental status merely on the basis that to employ a certain person might offend some religious sensitivity’, Mr Burke said.

‘For too long non-government employers have been able to hide behind these provisions without any requirement to justify their position to the broader community.’

‘Non-government employers can’t claim the high moral ground on this issue in their opposition to the amendments’, Mr Burke said.

‘The current legislation has allowed these non-government employing authorities to intimidate employees into resignation on the basis of untested allegations.’

‘Teachers have been reluctant to put their career on the line by fighting even absolutely unfounded allegations because the law offers them no protection and in fact gives their employer unrestricted power over their continued employment.’

‘Teachers have been vulnerable to whispering campaigns of disgruntled members of a school community. Rather than fight the gossip and erroneous allegations and in the absence of legal protection, the teacher decides to resign.’

‘The proposed legislation would still allow non-government employers to discriminate in their employment practices.’

‘However, what would be different is that many discriminatory practices of non-government employers would be subject to the reasonable tests under the Act.’

‘That degree of accountability to the community is the hallmark of a healthy society committed to transparent processes’, Mr Burke said.

‘This is not an issue about whether persons who are homosexual or in de facto relationships should be employed in schools. That is a fact of life already.’

‘The real issue is that discriminatory practices must be subject to transparent processes with the onus on the employing authority to justify why it seeks to diminish the dignity of another human being in an ostensibly unfair action.’

**Contact: General Secretary, Mr Terry Burke on (07) 3839 7020 or 041 964 0078**

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