



Queensland Independent Education Union

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Criminal Checks Not Enough - School Employers Must Accept Responsibility for Protecting Children

“The focus on retrospective criminal checks on teachers overlooks the fundamental need for employing authorities to be held accountable for past failures to investigate allegations of abuse and take action to report offenders,” Mr Terry Burke, General Secretary of the Queensland Independent Education Union (QIEU) said today.

Describing the proposed retrospective checks as misdirected policy, Mr Burke said more attention needed to be given to the past inaction of employers regarding allegations of sexual abuse by employees.

“The far more relevant check would be on employing authorities who failed in the past to properly deal with allegations of sexual offences and merely handed on the problem to another employer,” Mr Burke said.

“The Anglican Schools inquiry highlighted how allegations against Kevin Lynch were not dealt with by two employing authorities at the time”.

“Kevin Lynch continued to abuse children in two schools despite reports to school authorities of his predatory behaviour”.

“Criminal checks would not have found out Kevin Lynch but a requirement on the employing authorities to report the allegations would have,” he said.

Mr Burke said the proposed requirements on employers to report such allegations were a far more significant legislative initiative than the retrospective criminal checks.

“The decision to run the retrospective criminal checks will not provide the degree of security that its proponents seem to be asserting,” Mr Burke said.

“The real issue is catching those offenders who may have been moved from school to school because the allegations were not taken seriously enough by their employing authorities”.

“Those are the teachers we need to remove from schools and universal criminal checks will not reveal those people,” Mr Burke said.

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