



Ending Occupational Violence in Queensland schools

We want our workplaces to be Occupational Violence free

The Crisafulli Government must act and end occupational violence.

Our education system is broken. Larger class sizes, reductions in funding, and unmanageable workloads have contributed to an increase in occupational violence incidents in Queensland schools.

Other students are being disadvantaged and Teacher Aides and School Cleaners are being hurt as they deal with the fallout from record highs of occupational violence - dealing with multiple children with complex needs in overcrowded classroom settings on low wages.

A state-wide survey conducted by the United Workers Union of over 1200 Teacher Aides and School Cleaners revealed 81% of surveyed Teacher Aides and School Cleaners had experienced occupational violence, and 80% of those members had experienced occupational violence within the last school year. The vast majority reported "feeling unsafe returning to work".

The reports from Teacher Aides and School Cleaners are clear: occupational violence is not an issue impacting just one type of school or one region in Queensland; it is a systemic issue.

For the sake of students and those tasked with addressing their educational needs, we need Teacher Aides and School Cleaners' perspectives to be at the heart of educational reform to **end occupational violence.**

KEY FINDINGS

OCCUPATIONAL VIOLENCE IS A STATEWIDE ISSUE

Irrespective of school type, or school location, occupational violence is rife in our school system. A total of 81% of surveyed teacher aides and school cleaners reported experiencing occupational violence at some point during their career. Of those 80% reported experiencing physical or verbal abuse at work during the most recent school year.

WORKFORCE SHORTAGES AND RETENTION OF STAFF

The majority of respondents reported they did not feel safe returning to work after an occupational violence incident. If preventative measures and behavioral management systems are not improved, we risk losing valuable Teacher Aides from the sector, severely impacting students' educational outcomes.

LACK OF PROFESSIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Teacher Aides and School Cleaners report a lack of responsiveness and follow up on reports of occupational violence incidents coupled with inadequate workplace support measures. The net result is serious physical and psychological health issues for staff.

POOR BEHAVIOURAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

A lack of consistency in how schools administer behavioural management plans, and inaction or dismissal of reports of occupational violence, has eroded trust between staff and senior school officials that reports of occupational violence will be acted upon.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Overcrowded classrooms, cuts to the Resource Replacement Scheme funding levels, limited funding of food support program for kids from low socio-economic backgrounds and a lack of one-to-one support for students has created an untenable working and learning environment for students and Teacher Aides.

THE CHALLENGE

Occupational violence raises serious concerns about student welfare, staff safety and workforce retention. A majority of those surveyed said they do not feel safe returning to work after an occupational violence incident.

Of those surveyed:

81% said they had experienced occupational violence at work during their careers.

Of those **80%** said they had experienced occupational violence within the last school year.

What Teacher Aides and Cleaners say is happening inside Queensland schools:

“ There were about 80 incidents with a single student over 12 school weeks. I was going home with a new scratch or bruise most days. I was having stress migraines that were so bad it affected my vision at times.

QLD Teacher Aide

“ I had a student's desk end up on me and a chair thrown at me by a year 7 student, and the same student has **threatened** to “punch my f*cking head in.” Emotionally I have a pit in my stomach and **do not feel safe** when he is in proximity.

QLD Teacher Aide

How complaints of Occupational Violence are being handled by the Queensland Education Department:

“ So shaken by the **verbal abuse** by a year 11 male student while I was cleaning toilets, I told my superior and she advised me to “**lock myself in**” while cleaning toilets in future.

QLD School Cleaner

The incident I experienced impacted me psychologically, students were not given any consequences for their behaviour, nobody had my back or supported me. **The disrespect has never been this low with students** at our school; the school leaders are literally not doing anything to support Teacher Aides.

QLD Teacher Aide

“ We were instructed to fill out One School & One Portal reports but after that **there was no follow up.**

QLD Teacher Aide

Physically I am ok. Mentally, it is a different story. **Occupational Violence affects how you approach and interact** with these students. The attitude that we “move on” and accept that this is “ok” but every single incident is becoming exhausting. The incidents keep occurring. **The consequences are not enough to stop it.** And we repeat the process again and again.

QLD Teacher Aide

THE SOLUTION

Establish Rapid Response Teams: Deploy specialist teams in schools experiencing repeated serious incidents so untrained educators are not left to manage high-risk situations.

Reform Behaviour Management Frameworks: Shift from a reactive incident response to a prevention-focused behavioural planning system.

Expand Counselling and Psychology Services: Increase availability of mental health support for both school staff and students to support behavioural plans and early intervention.

Invest in Workforce Capability: Provide comprehensive, practical training focused on proactive behaviour strategies and de-escalation.

Strengthen Family and Community Engagement: Embed families and community partners in behavioural plans and ensure real consequences for deliberate dangerous behaviour.

Improve Staffing and Resourcing: Align staffing levels with classroom complexity to eliminate unsafe, isolated working conditions.

Address Regional Support Gaps: Assess and close the shortfall in programs and services available to regional educators and students.

It's time for the Crisafulli Government to end occupational violence in our schools

Every education worker has the right to a workplace free from violence. Occupational violence and aggression should never be considered just 'part of the job' for Teacher Aides and School Cleaners. Occupational violence is a serious breach of workplace safety laws and should be treated as such.

We need a school system here in Queensland where occupational violence incidents are taken seriously, reported transparently, and acted on decisively by school leadership and the Queensland Department of Education.

All Queensland students deserve a school system based on equity, ensuring funding and staffing allocation is provided so that every student can succeed, including those in regional and high-needs schools. We need a schooling system that shares the responsibility of fostering a safe school environment between families, communities, and school staff.

Our proposal to address occupational violence is grounded in safety, dignity, respect, accountability, and listening to the experts on the frontline.