



Education and Innovation Committee

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MEDIA RELEASE

Parliamentary inquiry into school attendance completed

Queensland Parliament's Education and Innovation Committee has completed a review of school attendance rates in Queensland state schools. This follows a 2012 Auditor-General's report which highlighted that school attendance rates at Queensland schools had not improved over the preceding four years, despite strategies being introduced which aimed to improve them.

Mrs Rosemary Menkens MP, Committee Chair, said state-wide school attendance rates had improved in 2014. "The committee was very pleased to see a small improvement in state school attendance rates state-wide, from 90.8 percent in semester one 2013 to 91.1 percent in 2014. The most encouraging finding was that the increase was more significant for Indigenous students, with their attendance rate up one whole percentage point. But there's still a way to go: the overall state-wide attendance rate for Indigenous students is 84 per cent, while the rate for non-Indigenous students is 92 per cent". The committee report notes that there are a number of initiatives underway to try to reduce that gap.

While overall student attendance has improved, the improvement is not consistent everywhere, or for all groups of students. "Year 7 student attendance rates are down on 2013 rates, while Year 9 rates have improved since 2013, against the usual trend," said Mrs Menkens. Attendance at some schools has declined while at others, it has improved. In general, attendance rates are higher at smaller schools than at larger schools.

"The lack of an evaluation strategy means we can't be certain what it is that is working in some schools, or why others are not having success in improving attendance rates," said Mrs Menkens. "The lack of solid evidence about what strategies work can make it hard for a school to know how to best direct its limited resources".

The Department of Education, Training and Employment has improved policies, procedures and systems to support schools managing attendance rates, since the 2012 report. "A big positive is the department has made significant improvements to its data collection capacity, and schools are using that capacity to set targets, monitor, and develop strategies to improve attendance. We hope that in time, the data will support comprehensive evaluations of those strategies," Mrs Menkens said.

The committee's report is available at www.parliament.qld.gov.au/eic.

Ends – 20 November 2014