



**Queensland Association of Special Education Leaders
Leading Linking Learning**

QASEL POSITION BRIEF: NOVEMBER 2021

Subject: Impact of Teacher Aide Maximisation

The Queensland Association of Special Education Leaders (QASEL) is the peak professional association for special education leaders across Queensland. QASEL members are Principals, Deputy Principals, Heads of Special Education Services, Heads of Curriculum/Department and other leaders and aspirants, who support students with disability, across all sectors of education in Queensland. Some members are based in special schools, many support students with disability and diverse learners in primary, secondary and early childhood settings.

This brief seeks to clarify QASEL's position in relation to the impact of the maximisation of Teacher Aide (TA) hours in special education settings in Queensland State Schools.

Background:

- The *Department of Education Teacher Aides' Certified Agreement 2015, 6.1, (b) (i)* stipulated for the first time that schools must provide for mandatory maximisation of TA hours to existing permanent Teacher Aides when hours become available at the school level up to 6 hours per day or 30 hours per week (excluding ADO) and wherever possible consideration of maximisation beyond 6 hours a day
- The *Department of Education Teacher Aides' Certified Agreement 2018, Part 6.1 (b) (i) and (iv)* reinforced that schools will provide for mandatory maximisation of TA hours to existing permanent Teacher Aides when hours become available at the school level up to 6 hours per day or 30 hours per week (excluding ADO) and wherever possible consideration of maximisation beyond 6 hours a day; and employ Teacher Aides regardless of funding source subject to the maximisation process.
- The current and previous students with disability staffing allocative models states that TAs are allocated on the basis of 28 hours per classroom Full Time Equivalent (FTE) in Special Schools and a similar allocation in primary/secondary programs/locations.¹
- No change in the allocation of TA hours was made to schools or special education programs as a result of these Enterprise Bargain changes introduced in 2015 and 2018.
- The result of a lack of alignment between the students with disability staffing allocative models and the Enterprise Bargain agreements is that some classes are unable to be allocated a teacher aide during school time because of the cumulative impact of 2 hours/week variance between allocation and Enterprise Bargain agreement.

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<https://intranet.qed.qld.gov.au/Services/HumanResources/payrollhr/careers/workforcemanagement/Pages/staffingallocationsforQueenslandstateschools.aspx>

- Most special schools have between 20-40 teachers which leaves a shortfall of 40-80 hours/week of TA time. Many special school classes require more than one TA to be with a class for part or all of the day to ensure workplace health and safety is maintained and manual handling can be completed safely. 28 hours of teacher aide time/week per teacher FTE no longer supports student and staff safety and wellbeing.
- Special school principal members report that at times they have the teacher allocation and classroom space to form additional classes but are unable to do so due to a lack of TA time.
- Many Special Schools, Special Education Programs and Early Childhood Development Programs (ECDP) report that they have TAs working a significant number of hours outside of student contact time. A number of QASEL members were recently surveyed to establish how many teacher aide hours were being utilised outside of student contact time each week. A summary of the results is below:
 - Claremont Special School - 50 hours
 - Hervey Bay Special School - 45 hours
 - Bundaberg Special School – 30 hours
 - Burdekin (Special) School (very small school) - 18 hours and 2 hours ECDP
 - Runcorn State High School - 111 hours
 - Grand Avenue State School - 57 hours
 - Ferny Grove State High School - 156 hours (106 SEP hours alone)
 - Forrest Lake State High School - 130 hours
 - Loganholme State School – 21 hours
 - Pine Rivers ECDP – 15 hours
- A fully maximised TA at 36.25 hours/week will spend almost 32% of their total working hours employed outside of student learning time, while a TA maximised to 30 hours/week spends around 17% of their total working hours employed outside of student learning time.

Position:

- QASEL values the critical role TAs play in providing support to all students in schools, and believes they play a particularly vital role within special education contexts.
- QASEL supports the notion that TAs need to be recognised and valued through the provision of employment conditions and wages that reflect their high levels of skill and the positive contribution they make to our schools.
- QASEL believes that the current system of maximising TA hours to 30 hours/week without a corresponding change to the students with disability staffing allocative models has led to:
 - a substantial reduction in TAs being available to support students during learning time.
 - a direct negative impact on student learning.
 - decreased student and staff safety and increased exposure to occupational violence.
 - increased workload for school leaders managing and supervising TAs outside of regular school hours.
 - a decrease in the flexible use of TA time to support students learning and wellbeing.
- QASEL believes that the current system of maximising TA hours to 30 hours/week has had a negative impact on staff morale in schools. Negotiations often increase tensions between TAs, other staff and school leaders. Increasingly school leaders also report that there is a growing divide within TAs themselves, between those who choose to maximise and those that do not.

- QASEL believes that due to the sessional based nature of their programs, our ECDPs are particularly disadvantaged by TA maximisation. TAs are often split across multiple groups running at the same time, and some groups have to operate without TA support, despite the complex nature of the children attending. This impacts on learning and increases the risk for staff and children.
- QASEL understands that many schools utilise their general grant and I4S funding to overcome the shortfall created by TA maximisation. However, as all TA hours, *regardless of funding source, are subject to the maximisation process* this only serves to create an ever-spiralling problem. The legal requirement that eligible temporary and casual TAs with two years' or more of service must be offered conversion to permanent employment (unless there are genuine operational reasons not to do so) further compounds this problem.
- QASEL believes the allocation of TA hours to all schools should factor in the increased hours expended by schools to meet maximisation expectations (i.e. each time a TA maximises outside of student contact time the allocation of funding to that school should increase to meet that additional cost).
- QASEL believes that TA allocation should also reflect and enable workplace health and safety to be maintained and manual handling completed safely to ensure student and staff wellbeing.

Summary:

- QASEL believes that the maximisation of hours and ADO accrual outside student contact time is an ineffective use of valuable school resources, without additional allocation targeted to student contact hours. It impacts on the capacity of schools to deliver quality teaching and learning programs and ensure safe school environments for students and staff members.
- QASEL acknowledges that there have been some positives to come from TA maximisation. Many TAs have had opportunities for professional learning and upskilling while others have taken on tasks that reduce the workload of teachers and school leaders and overall TAs also have an increased take home wage. However, the current TA allocations to special schools and special education programs is inadequate to meet the growing demand of hours to support TA maximisation. We just haven't got the balance right.
- QASEL calls on DoE to either:
 - Review the allocative model that provides TA funding to schools to compensate for additional hours accessed through maximisation outside of school contact times, OR
 - Reach a new agreement through enterprise bargaining that ensures that TA hours are best utilised during student contact time.



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