**Michael De’Ath, Director- General Department of Education:** I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands, seas and waterways across Queensland, and extend my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

Today, I am joined by Christopher Mountford, CEO of Independent Schools Queensland, and Allan Blagaich, Executive Director of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, to talk to you about something very important to all Queensland schools.

2024 is a key collection year for the Australian Early Development Census.

**Allan Blagaich, Executive Director of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission**: The Census is a nationwide population measure that gives a complete picture of how our children have developed by the time they start school. When we all complete the Census, it provides a rich source of information that can be used by schools, communities, and governments.

**Christopher Mountford, Chief Executive Officer Independent Schools Queensland**: The Australian Early Development Census helps shape the future wellbeing of our children. It provides the critical evidence needed to support the future education, health and community policy. It is the most comprehensive data collection of its kind in the world. That is why we are asking all Queensland schools to participate in the next Census data collection in Term 2, 2024.

**Michael De’Ath**: The Australian Early Development Census data has strong links to Australian policies and frameworks, guiding schools programming and planning. Schools can use the data to inform and strengthen strategic and improvement planning, ensuring that their decision making is evidence based. The data can also support decisions around transition to school strategies and pedagogical practices that promote continuity of learning.

**Allan Blagaich**: While Census data is not reported on individual children, completing the Census is a time for teachers to think holistically about each learner within their classroom, reflecting on their capabilities and background. This gives us the opportunity to celebrate each student’s strengths and ensure that we give children the best possible start to life long learning.

**Christopher Mountford**: It’s important to remember that the data is reported on where children live, so it is vital to understand the communities in which the children in your school are growing up. The more we understand about our students the better we can reflect on whether our programs and policies are responsive to Queensland families.

The Australian Early Development Census provides a common language that enables us to engage and collaborate with early childhood services and other key partners. This is to ensure that children are entering our schools with everything they need to learn and thrive.

The next Census data collection is taking place in Term 2, 2024, between the 1st of May and the 21st of June.

**Allan Blagaich**: Be on the lookout for your school’s unique and confidential activation code, which will arrive by mail in mid-March (2024).

**Christopher Mountford**: We are striving to increase our connection with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural consultants throughout the 2024 data collection. This role is extremely important in bringing a rich understanding of First Nations children’s way of learning and belonging. This will help us build a more culturally informed picture of their development.

**Michael De’Ath**: Queensland is once again offering Prep teachers across all schooling sectors the opportunity to complete optional professional learning around Unconscious Bias ahead of the census. The training module aims to increase awareness about unconscious biases and promotes self-reflection and self-awareness amongst teachers. We encourage Queensland Prep teachers to engage in this professional learning opportunity which will be available in Term 1, 2024.

We want to thank you for your continued support of the Australian Early Development Census. Queensland consistently prioritises this important data collection and are aiming for 100 per cent participation of schools in the 2024 Census.

Your participation will ensure that schools, communities and governments continue to have the information they need to work together to make a difference in the lives of young children and their families.