



Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations

11 JUL 2019

Mr Neil Laurie
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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to Petition 3146–19, tabled on 11 June 2019 in the Legislative Assembly, requesting a restructure of the School Catchment Zones and school transport arrangements affecting the Howard, Torbanlea, Pacific Haven and Burrum Town communities, to ensure an equitable arrangement can be achieved.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to providing a quality education to all Queensland children. All Queensland families are entitled to enrol their children at their local state school.

Each state school has a catchment area, which is the geographical area from which a state school is to have its core intake of students. State school catchment areas are generally determined by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office using the shortest direct trafficable route between individual land parcels and the main entrance point of each surrounding school. This ensures each residence is located within the catchment area for its closest school.

In some cases, schools may have negotiated the catchment boundaries in place to account for unique local circumstances. These arrangements are agreed to by the school principals of the neighbouring schools and with approval from the relevant Regional Director within the Department of Education.

In the case of the catchment areas for the local and neighbouring schools listed in the petition, I can advise there is a negotiated catchment between Hervey Bay State High School, Isis District State High School and Aldridge State High School. This negotiated catchment has been in place since 2014 to align school catchment boundaries and the designated school bus services in this area.

Government-funded school bus services are provided through the School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS) for which the Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) is the responsible agency.

I am advised by DTMR that, to be eligible to receive assistance under STAS, students must travel on the designated school bus service for their area. The designated service will be the service nearest to the student's residential property, which provides transport to a school with the required year level. This eligibility cannot be transferred to other services or modes of transport.

DTMR has also advised that a bus network of this size requires careful management to ensure students can access a school at their required year level and that viability of services is maintained for the operators. Designated services are essential to ensuring that appropriate fiscal responsibility is consistently applied to the provision of STAS-funded school transport activities across the State.

DTMR further advised that the following bus services operate in the areas noted by the petitioners:

- S819 and S844: operated by Wide Bay Transit from Hervey Bay State High School to Torbanlea and Burrum Town;
- S434: operated by Threkeld Pty Ltd from Isis State High School to Pacific Haven, Howard and Burrum Town; and
- Urban Bus Service Route 7: operates between Howard and Maryborough for fare paying passengers and students from the area choosing travel on a non-designated bus service to a school for which they do not reside within catchment.

Government-funded school bus services are provided for STAS-eligible students in these areas (depending on the student's residence), and these services align with the negotiated school catchment areas for the schools.

If you require further information or assistance, please contact Mr Kevin Mara, Assistant Director-General, Infrastructure Services, Department of Education, by email at kevin.mara@qed.qld.gov.au or on (07) 3034 4520.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising this matter with me and I trust that this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



GRACE GRACE MP
Minister for Education and
Minister for Industrial Relations

Ref: 19/321156