

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Services
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter received on 12 August 2005 concerning the petition received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly No.465-05 relating to the allocation of Teacher Aide hours for the Prep Year in 2007.

As I announced on 23 August 2005, Education Queensland has recently reached agreement with the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (LHMU) and the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) on a new teacher aide allocation model to support the full implementation of the Prep Year.

This agreement has secured the allocation of approximately 10 000 additional hours of teacher aide time in support of the Prep Year. This equates to approximately 260 full-time equivalent teacher aides.

This agreed teacher aide allocation model is based on an enrolment driven formulae that allocates hours to prep classes on a sliding scale. The model also allocates hours to many schools for the early years (Prep to Year 3) in a manner that will allow teacher aides to be flexibly used to support prep students particularly during the early part of the school year. The Prep to Year 3 hours are weighted on the basis of socio-economic factors to ensure the hours go to where they are needed most and will provide additional support for both teachers and students.

This teacher aide model will take account of the many configurations of prep year classes that will occur in schools across the state with full implementation. These allocations will be in addition to the current primary teacher aide allocation methodology that remains unchanged.

The model for developing the allocation of 15 hours per class of 25 is based on the Prep Year being a very different program – it is an on-school site program with a new curriculum, for a new age group, operating under the direct management of the school principal. Prep students will be involved in whole-school programs and will have access to specialist teacher lessons just as other early years students. The teacher works with one class of 25 children without administrative responsibilities whereas the preschool program has generally been an off-site unit or at least separate from the school with one preschool teacher responsible for 50 children and for the administrative functions of the preschool.

With regard to the notion of a 30 hour allocation to prep classes in order to mirror the current preschool allocations, the Government's policy position has remained at 15 hours on the basis that half of the prep students will be of equivalent age to the current Year 1 student age group and the other half represents the older half of the current preschool age group, making the students older and more independent.

A 15 hour prep teacher aide model has been in place for the past three years and is presently being used in the 77 schools currently offering prep. Throughout the trials, the Government has stated that the final allocation of teacher aide hours available to support prep was subject to on going consideration and was to be informed by feedback from the prep trials.

The agreement reached with the key stakeholder unions acknowledges the 15 hour allocation but also responds to feedback that included the need for increased flexibility at specific times in the year. The supplementation model that forms part of the agreement will provide additional hours to schools to support the needs of prep classes throughout the year, but particularly early in the year.

I invite you to contact Mr Jeff Hunt, Director, Performance Monitoring and Reporting Branch, on telephone (07) 3237 0602, should you wish to obtain further details in relation to this matter.

Thank you for forwarding a copy of the petition received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly regarding the allocation of teacher aide hours for the prep implementation in 2007. I am pleased to provide details of the prep teacher aide agreement to the House, as this agreement provides a significant level of support for the implementation of the Prep Year in 2007.

Yours sincerely

Rod Welford MP

Ref: 05/87316