



Minister for Education  
Minister for Industrial Relations and  
Minister for Racing

7 JUN 2023

Mr Neil Laurie  
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Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 11 May 2023 regarding Petition No. 3857-23, keep our rural kids at home, received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 9 May 2023.

I understand the challenges faced by families whose children board away from home to attend school and I thank the petitioners for raising this matter.

For isolated communities where there is no local secondary school, families may choose to enrol at a School of Distance Education (SDE). The Department of Education operates seven SDEs across Queensland, which were established to provide a schooling service to geographically isolated and other home-based students with limited educational choice. The current model of distance education does not include opportunities for secondary school students who are enrolled in SDEs to make use of primary school campuses.

If primary schools were to be expanded to accommodate students in Years 7 to 10, there are a range of factors that would need to be considered. These include the current and future school-age population, the existing school network, and any impacts of a new school or year-level offering on the existing schools within the surrounding communities.

Families are encouraged to contact the principal of an SDE to discuss the learning and wellbeing needs of their children when considering enrolment in distance education. Contact details for SDEs are available at <https://schoolsdirectory.eq.edu.au/>.

In addition to SDEs, the department operates three state school residential boarding facilities in Queensland, located at Dalby, Mount Isa and Weipa. While I understand that this still means children have to leave their home to attend these facilities, many students attend during the week and return home on weekends. Families who access boarding facilities may also be eligible to access support through the *Living Away From Home Allowance Scheme*. Further information is available at [www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/financial/ruralremote/lafhas](http://www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/financial/ruralremote/lafhas).

I would like to thank you, the principal petitioner and every person who signed the petition for their advocacy for students in rural and remote locations across Queensland.

Yours sincerely

**GRACE GRACE MP**  
**Minister for Education**  
**Minister for Industrial Relations and**  
**Minister for Racing**

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