



# Robbie Katter MP

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## Member for Traeger

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REF: MO

23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2023

Kim Richards MP  
Chair, Education, Employment and Training Committee  
Via email: [eeetc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:eeetc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Chair,

**RE: Additional information sought by the Committee regarding the *Education (General Provisions) (Extension of Primary Schools in Remote Areas) Amendment Bill 2023***

Thank you for this opportunity to provide additional information with regards to the anticipated impact and operation of my *Education (General Provisions) (Extension of Primary Schools in Remote Areas) Amendment Bill 2023*.

I have endeavoured to answer the Committee's queries below:

**Query 1: The numbers of students and families in remote areas whom I anticipate would seek to access Year 7-10 education services from a remote primary school or learning facility, as proposed in the Bill, if available**

The Bill is designed to create and apply to a new category called a "remote primary school". A remote primary school is a State school that provides primary education and is in a town in a remote area of the State, and in which no school is established at which the State provides secondary education.

A remote area of the State is an area identified as remote Australia or very remote Australia in the document called 'Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3 Remoteness Structure', published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on its website.

Based on the best available data and research undertaken by my office, there are currently 104 schools in Queensland that fall under this definition.

They are: Alexandra Bay State School, Arcadia Valley State School, Anakie State School, Augathella State School, Bauhinia State School, Bedourie State School, Birdsville State School, Bollon State School, Boulia State School, Burketown State School, Begonia State School, Bloomfield River State School, Bungunya State School, Bymount East State School, Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy - Hopevale campus, Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy - Coen campus, Clarke Creek State School, Cameron Downs State School, Camooweal State School, Chillagoe State School, Croydon State School, Dajarra State School, Dingo State School, Dunkeld State School, Dunwich State School (including Special Education Program), Eulo State School, Eromanga State School, Forsyth State School, Gindie State School, Glenmorgan State School, Greenvale State School, Grosmont State School, Georgetown State School, Hebel State School, Homestead State School, Halifax State School, Hamilton Island State School, Hayman Island State School, Hannaford State School, Ilfracombe State School, Isisford State School, Jericho State School, Julia Creek State School, Jundah State School, Kennedy State School,



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Kilcummin State School, Kioma State School, Karumba State School, Laura State School, Lakeland State School, Lochington State School, Marlborough State School, Meandarra State School, Millaroo State School, Mistake Creek State School, Mount Fox State School, Mount Garnet State School, Morven State School, Mount Surprise State School, Mungallala State School, Muttaborra State School, Northern Peninsula Area College - Injinoo Junior, Orion State School, Pentland State School, Pormpuraaw State School (including Special Education Program), Prairie State School, Ravenswood State School, Rolleston State School, Rossville State School, Scottville State School, St Lawrence State School, Stonehenge State School, Thargomindah State School, Tagai State College - Stephen Island Campus, Tagai State College - Warraber Island Campus, Tagai State College - Badu Island Campus, Tagai State College - Malu Kiwai Campus, Tagai State College - Dauan Island Campus, Tagai State College - Darnley Island Campus, Tagai State College - Horn Island Campus, Tagai State College - Yam Island Campus, Tagai State College - Yorke Island Campus, Tagai State College - Mer Campus, Tagai State College - Kubin Campus, Tagai State College - St Pauls Campus, Tagai State College - Mabuiag Island Campus, Tagai State College - Poruma Campus, Tagai State College - Saibai Island Campus, Teelba State School, Thallon State School, The Gums State School, Tieri State School, Trebonne State School, Talwood State School, Tresswell State School, Urandangi State School, Valkyrie State School, Westmar State School, Western Cape College – Mapoon, Windorah State School, Wyandra State School and Yuleba State School.

There are 386 Year 6 students and 1,195 Year 4-6 students enrolled in the aforementioned schools as at 2023. It is impossible for my office to determine how many families are captured in these numbers but on the basis of Queensland's average fertility rate (1.73 babies per woman in 2022<sup>1</sup>), it would be reasonable to suggest the average number of children for a family is two (2). This means that in 2023, the Bill would have direct application on 386 students and around 193 families. If you are to assess the number of students who would be impacted by the expansion of a local State school upto Year 10 in the next three years (currently those enrolled in Years 4-6), this number is 1,195 individual students and approximately 598 families.

However these numbers cannot be used to determine exactly what demand there would be for remote school expansion as, in many cases, the current educational options of boarding school or distance education would be deemed satisfactory. My Bill is designed, however, to open up the opportunity for families in these areas who the current Year 7-10 education options are not satisfactory to be empowered to request through their councils better local State educational access. It is envisioned that councils would play a key role in determining the significance of demand for better local educational access as they have done so in the cases of the McKinlay and Thargomindah learning facility centres, and would act as the arbitrator of what requests are made of the Queensland Government.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/births-australia/latest-release>



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**Query 2: The basis for my claim in the explanatory notes (p 4) that 'It is not anticipated that this Bill will significantly draw on any additional funds from the Queensland Government's consolidated revenue', given that the Bill would, if passed, provide local learning options for students in many electorates they may not currently have**

While it is reasonable to suggest that, if passed, my Bill would place a financial onus on the Department of Education to deliver more resources (namely staffing resources, but also possibly infrastructure and equipment-related resources) to remote primary schools, it is not reasonable to suggest this would require any significant increase the Department's annual operating budget.

The 2023-2024 Queensland Government Budget provides a record \$17.8 billion in education provisions, including infrastructure. A total \$867 million in recurrent funding has been budgeted for non-State schools, and \$12.8 billion has been budgeted in recurrent funding for State schools<sup>2</sup>. These numbers do not include infrastructure spending.

In relation to operational budget support, and based on the best available data, the Queensland Government is allocating \$22,445 per State school student and \$2,844 per non-State school student in 2023-24<sup>3</sup>. These numbers are obviously averages, but they paint a clear picture of the status quo when it comes to what the Queensland Government is investing in education for students across the State. There is no reason why this status quo cannot be manipulated to enable the application of my Bill and broadly more equitable access to State-funded educational services in rural and remote Queensland.

Variation in State spending per student of course exist – for example, consider the approved State-funded Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHAS) rates for eligible non-State boarding school secondary students in 2024, which will be \$10,276. This amount of financial support for eligible students has been, assumably, budgeted for by the Queensland Government meaning the financial allocation exists. Should my Bill be passed, there might hypothetically be one or two out of every 10 students boarding school students-in-waiting who would rather stay in their communities and with their families to study Year 7-10. In the cases of these students, all that would be required is a redirection of the amount already budgeted by the State in LAFHAS support to the State school sector and, more specifically, to the remote primary school in question. The same argument can be made in the case of Year 7-10 students who currently, upon graduating from a remote primary school, are enrolling in distance education. In the case of students who would prefer to continue their education on campus at their school, all that would be required is a redirection of already-committed funding away from distance education schools to remote primary schools dependent on specific resourcing needs. It is the same pool of funding simply being repurposed to ensure the spending is fit-for-purpose and is providing the best educational outcomes for students irrespective of their location.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget\\_2023-24\\_SDS\\_Department\\_of\\_Education.pdf](https://budget.qld.gov.au/files/Budget_2023-24_SDS_Department_of_Education.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> There are 570,259 students enrolled in Queensland state schools and 304,818 students enrolled in 548 Queensland non-state schools in 2023.



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The Minister and Department are likely to be able to provide more detail on the allocation of its resources across the State, however I would like to stress to the Committee to be sceptical of any suggestions the Bill is fatally flawed because it will “cost too much” – rural and remote communities have suffered for time immemorial as a result of the inequitable distribution of resources by the Queensland Government. It is an issue I dedicate a significant amount of time and focus to as a rural MP, and indeed is the premise that underpins this Bill. A refusal by governments to address this inequity, whether it's in relation to education or any other essential service provision, will continue to contribute to chronic and destructive population drift from the inner portions of the State to the coast and in particular to the south-east corner. Queensland is bigger than just its capital and coastal centres, and proactively addressing policy failures that contribute to rural decline is vital for any government committed to fairly servicing rural and regional Queensland.

It is also pertinent to note at this point that my Bill no way intends to undermine access to or support for the current secondary education options available to remote students, namely boarding school and school of distance education. In relation to boarding school students, the Bill has been designed not to affect the support provided to isolated families by governments to assist those who do choose to send their children to boarding schools and subsequently access the LAFHAS. In the case of the Year 7-10 expansion option, it is expected schools that are expanded under this scheme would be deemed “bypassable schools” as per the Queensland Government’s current criteria<sup>4</sup>. In the case of the Learning facility option, the same arrangement that exists in the cases of the Julia Creek and Thargomindah learning facilities would be honoured.

### **Query 3: Feedback I have received from local governments in remote areas on the scope of the Bill’s proposal that they be involved in providing year 7-10 educational services.**

Engagement with stakeholders, namely parents, local councillors (particularly in the case of the McKinlay community) and education professionals, has occurred over many years and on a primarily ad hoc basis. Communities closely consulted with include McKinlay/Julia Creek, Ravenswood and Mount Surprise. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive in relation to the Bill’s policy intentions, and indeed has shaped the Bill itself. I have provided to the Committee a current list of interested stakeholders who have either contacted or been contacted by my office in recent months on the specific issues my Bill seeks to address. Given the limited parliamentary resources provided to myself as a crossbench Member (1 full-time staffer), the breadth and width of my electorate and the wide-ranging suite of policy priorities I hold, it has not been possible for me or my office to consult directly with all local councils to whom the Bill would apply. I intend to write to them personally in the coming week to request they contribute directly to the Committee process on the Bill, and would also like to thank the EETC secretariat for doing the same.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/bypass-schools-procedure>



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Yours sincerely,



**Robbie Katter**  
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