

Question on Notice

No. 720

Asked on 16 October 2013

Mr Pitt asked the Minister for Education, Training and Employment (Mr Langbroek) –

QUESTION:

With reference to the member for Cairns' announcement on 8 April 2013 that \$500,000 would be allocated in the 2013-14 Budget to investigate options for a new special school for children with disabilities in Cairns, and as the Budget does not include a specific allocation in the highlights section or the capital statement and further, this funding is not included in the schools section of the member's State Budget announcement on his webpage—

Will the Minister (a) confirm that \$500,000 has been made available in this year's budget for a new special school in Cairns, (b) identify the source of this funding, (c) advise the starting date for investigations to explore options and (d) advise the proposed completion date for this investigation?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question.

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring that all students, including students with disability can access, participate and succeed in education on the same basis as other students.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment has a policy of inclusive education providing special education programs and services in regular school settings, as well as highly specialised and individualised programs to cater for students with intellectual disability and/or multiple disability in special schools.

My Department's planning for new special schools reflects areas of concentrated need where there is sufficient scale to warrant specialised infrastructure. Consideration of the need for a special school takes into account the existing provision of special education programs in surrounding primary and secondary schools.

My Department is currently undertaking investigations into a proposed special school in Cairns, including identifying a suitable location to deliver such a service and undertaking consultation with the community through a steering group to develop the strategic direction for the proposed special school and a specialist consultative group to inform possible design options.

Land acquisition and co-location opportunities are also being explored by my Department as part of this process. As the investigation is not yet finalised, no funding allocation has been made within the 2013-14 Capital Works Program for a special school in Cairns. Should a proposal for a special school in Cairns proceed, further consultation will be undertaken with the community.

While this investigation is underway, students with disability in the Cairns area continue to access high quality special education programs and support services within primary and secondary schools.

As these investigative and planning processes do not represent capital expenditure, the funds used to support these activities are not included in the capital works program for 2013–14.