

Question on Notice
No. 579
Asked on 12 May 2021

MR R KATTER ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON G GRACE)

QUESTION:

With reference to the former Newman LNP Government moving Year 7 students into high school in 2015 despite concerns about the effects in rural and remote parts of the state with no local secondary institutions and ongoing negative impacts of forcing kids from the bush to leave home at age 11 so they can attend high school—

Will the Minister commit to reinstating the option of Year 7 and 8 being delivered at primary school campuses in Queensland's remote areas?

ANSWER:

The decision to make Year 7 the first year of secondary school from 2015 in Queensland was a Bligh Government decision and was reached after extensive statewide community consultation, including parents, teachers and principals through the Queensland Government's *Flying Start for Queensland Children* Green Paper.

The Queensland Government is not considering any changes to the current legislation regarding the first year of secondary school in Queensland.

The *Advancing rural and remote education in Queensland state schools action plan* sets the direction for supporting students, families, teachers and school leaders in rural and remote Queensland.

For isolated communities where there is no local secondary school close by, families can choose to enrol their secondary school children in one of seven Schools of Distance Education or attend a state or non-state boarding school. The Department of Education operates three state school residential boarding facilities in Queensland, located at Dalby, Mount Isa and Weipa.

On occasion, arrangements have been made to make use of primary school campuses to support high school students. For example, in 2015 an agreement was formed between the Department of Education and McKinlay Shire Council to establish a remote learning facility at Julia Creek State School to support the delivery of secondary education to Years 7 and 8 students enrolled full-time with Mount Isa School of the Air. In 2016, by agreement, support was extended to include Years 9 and 10 students. The agreement continues to be supported by the North Queensland Regional Office with the resourcing of a teacher aide for 30 hours a week. The facility currently has seven students enrolled.

I understand the challenges faced by families whose children must board away from home to attend school on a daily basis. The department supports these families under the Living Away From Home Allowance Scheme through four potential allowances including:

- the Remote Area Tuition Allowance, which helps pay tuition fees charged by non-state boarding schools;
- the Remote Area Travel Allowance, which helps pay a student's travel costs between home and boarding school during holidays;

- the Remote Area Allowance, which contributes to the cost of boarding at a Queensland Australian Agricultural College campus or a state high school campus; and
- the Remote Area Disability Supplement, which helps with additional boarding costs for students with a disability.