



Hon John-Paul Langbroek MP  
Member for Surfers Paradise



Minister for Education, Training  
and Employment

06 JUN 2012

Mr Neil Laurie  
Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie *Neil,*

I refer to petition 1874-12 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 17 May 2012 regarding the request for a co-located kindergarten service at Anakie State School and the re-opening of a day care facility at Sapphire.

The Queensland Government is working towards ensuring all children, no matter where they live or what their circumstances are, can participate in a kindergarten program. As part of this initiative, more than 100 extra kindergarten services have opened across the state in areas of need. Notably, each new service caters for two groups of 22 kindy-age children each week. These services are operated by non-government organisations that receive subsidies from the government, parent fees and fundraising income.

Service operators need to maximise their enrolments to ensure the ongoing viability of kindergarten services. Experience shows that attracting and retaining qualified teachers at small, part-time services in remote areas adds to the challenges of operating a viable service in a small, geographically isolated community.

The Gemfields area based around Anakie is located approximately 45 kilometres west of Emerald. Emerald is the closest area offering a centre-based kindergarten program. In planning a kindergarten service for an area like the Gemfields, a stable enrolment level of 20 or more kindy-age children is required.

Based on the Prep enrolments, which ranged between 11 and 17 students enrolled at Anakie State School in the three years to 2012, it does not appear that the Gemfields area could be assured of a long term stable population large enough to sustain a kindergarten service at Anakie State School. It is also noted that kindergarten is a non-compulsory level of education and may not be utilised by all eligible children.

Planning officers from the Department of Education, Training and Employment will continue to monitor population trends in the Anakie area to determine if, in the future, a kindergarten service at Anakie can be justified.

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The Government recognises the challenge of providing universal access to a kindergarten program in a geographically dispersed state such as Queensland. It is estimated that by 2014, up to 500 children may be unable to regularly attend a centre-based kindergarten program because of their geographic isolation, medical condition or itinerant lifestyle.

Consequently, the Brisbane School of Distance Education has developed a distance education kindergarten program, called e-kindy. The program, as with all kindergarten programs, is based on the *Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline* as well as best practice models for distance education.

Similar to existing distance education programs for school years, e-kindy is a digital, teacher-directed learning program. The Brisbane School of Distance Education is currently piloting the program materials with interested families with the aim of finalising the program for implementation from 2013. Information on the e-kindy pilot has been provided to the Principal of Anakie Sate School to share with local families.

Quality early childhood education and care plays an important role for children and families. Both the Queensland and Australian Governments recognise the importance of planning for a sustainable education and care industry, and make significant investments in early childhood.

I note the suggestion to re-open a former day care centre at Sapphire. This service, formerly operated by Anglicare Central Queensland Limited at Flagon Alley, Sapphire closed in February 2007. Although the Queensland Government approves, regulates and assesses education and care services, it does not regulate the supply of these services, or generally operate education and care services. For assistance with information about the process and regulatory requirements in establishing an early childhood education and care service, please contact the Rockhampton Regional office on telephone 4938 4232.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, I invite you to contact Ms Carol Markie-Dadds, Executive Director, Early Childhood Education and Care on 3239 3114.

Yours sincerely



**JOHN-PAUL LANGBROEK MP**  
**Minister for Education, Training and Employment**

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