



The Honourable Rod Welford MP



**Queensland
Government**

24 NOV 2006

Minister for Education and Training
Minister for the Arts

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 1 November 2006 regarding the petition lodged with the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 31 October 2006 numbered 690-06 regarding teacher aide allocations for the Preparatory Year.

The decision to replace part-time sessional preschool with a full-time, universally available Preparatory Year program was based on statewide consultations with parents, teachers and other education stakeholders during the development of *Queensland State Education 2010*.

Prep, like preschool is a foundation learning year. Prep however, differs substantially from preschool with respect to curriculum, operation and management and physical environment.

The Preparatory Year will be incorporated into the management and operation of the school, with more immediate access to the support and resources of the school. This is in contrast with preschool, which in many situations was located and operated as an independent and, in some cases, off-site facility. By being located on the primary school campus and being part of the school, prep teachers will not have the administrative burden of running a stand alone preschool.

With Prep integrated fully into the primary school system, the safety and supervision of prep children becomes a whole-of-school priority and will be included in the school's behaviour management and risk management processes. Principals will ensure, as part of the transition to school, that school routines cater for the safety of prep children. Playground supervision and other duties will be shared, as currently happens in primary schools.

As a part of the trial and phase-in of Prep over the last three and a half years, careful consideration was given to the allocation of teacher aides and their role in supporting the teacher. We have invested considerable time and resources to obtain the views of parents, teachers and teacher aides. We have also conducted a scan of the approaches to allocating in-class support in the Prep Year in other states and territories.

The resulting prep teacher aide allocation is a good balance between the existing allocations for preschool and Year 1, and takes into account the fact that children will be generally six months older than preschool aged children.

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Our Government has made a specific and dedicated allocation of teacher aide time to support prep students, while at the same time continuing to recognise the discretion of schools to deploy resources appropriately.

On top of the base allocation to prep, the principal may draw on the whole-of-school teacher aide allocation. Where necessary, extra teacher aide time may be allocated to help children at the start of their prep experience. For example, some schools increase the teacher aide allocation for Prep at the beginning of the year when there may be a greater need for support while the children settle in to their new environments.

The teacher aide time may be taken from the additional 10 000 hours per week provided by our Government as part of the implementation of the Preparatory Year. It is expected that principals will manage allocated resources to respond to the needs of all children and teachers in their schools. The discretion to deploy school resources where considered most appropriate is standard practice throughout Australia.

The Department of Education, Training and the Arts will continue to work towards the successful introduction of Prep in all schools for 2007. Be assured that decisions have always been, and will continue to be, based on what is best educationally for all Queensland children.

Yours sincerely 

Rod Welford MP

Ref: 06/124630