



## Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games

Our ref: PET 18758

Your ref: 10.4 Petitions

Mr Neil Laurie  
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*Dear Neil*

I refer to a petition number 2617-16 lodged with the Legislative Assembly on 16 August 2016 about a school bus subsidy for Goombungee Township and surrounding districts.

The Queensland Government is committed to building safe, caring and connected communities and supporting parents with children who attend educational facilities across the state. As such, I appreciate the request to re-assess the eligibility for students from Goombungee and surrounding districts to receive a school bus subsidy to attend Highfields State Secondary College or Oakey State High School.

I am sure you will appreciate, in a state such as Queensland with a widely dispersed population, it is very challenging for the government to respond to each circumstance or preference that may arise. For those students who do not have a state school in the local area, assistance is available under the School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS). The purpose of STAS is to assist parents in ensuring their children are able to attend a school.

In areas where sufficient eligible student populations exist, the government considers the introduction of designated school bus services. These services are designed to meet the circumstances that exist at the time and may include factors such as the location of the majority of students, the road network, and the location and year levels of schools in the area. A condition of travel assistance is that students must travel on the service provided for their area. Once a designated service is established, it is not considered economically feasible to offer alternate or duplicated services because this involves higher levels of funding for the same number of students.

For the residents of the Goombungee and surrounding areas, there are longstanding government funded school bus services which transport eligible secondary students into Oakey to attend school. As such, the request to fund services to both Highfields State Secondary College and Oakey State High School, is unable to be approved as it falls outside the scope of STAS. Parents are entitled to enrol their children in the school of their choice, however, where this choice falls outside the purpose and scope of STAS, the family will need to fund any associated travel.

It should also be noted that Highfields State Secondary College currently offers years 7 to 9, with an additional grade level being added each year. It will not be until 2019 that the school offers all year levels.

Once again, I recognise and appreciate the distinctive circumstances families in regional communities contend with, and can assure you my department will continue to monitor the situation around the Highfields State Secondary College.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stirling Hinchliffe', written in a cursive style.

**STIRLING HINCHLIFFE MP**  
**Minister for Transport and the Commonwealth Games**

14 SEP 2016