

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter received on 23 March 2004 concerning a petition received by the Legislative Assembly (No 279-04). I welcome representations from community members and wish to advise that this is a matter that has arisen as a direct result of a school community becoming more aware of the need to ensure the safety and security of all students. I sincerely apologise for the delay in replying to you.

In 2003, the Innisfail State High School community determined that there was an unacceptable level of truancy and unauthorised access to other persons by students. The data available to the school community clearly showed that their students were being exposed to unnecessary risks. Therefore, the school community moved to cease the practice of allowing students to leave the school grounds during school hours, except for legitimate educational or other valid reasons.

One consequence of this school community decision was that students crossing a road to access a shop without supervision were stopped from doing so during school hours. I am convinced that, whilst this has had a negative consequence for the shopkeeper, the decision was based on the interests of safety and security for all students attending Innisfail State High School.

I can assure the Parliament that there is an expectation in all state schools that, once students arrive at the school, they must remain within the school grounds except for legitimate educational or other valid reasons. On this basis, the decision of the school community has my support. Principals and school communities have a duty of care for all students once they enter the school grounds and require our support with their decisions to limit needless exposure to unnecessary risks.

Officers from Education Queensland have actively encouraged the owner of the shop involved to continue to work with the school community to develop a solution which meets her desire for students to have the opportunity to access products from her shop, while also meeting the school community's desire to ensure the safety and security of all students.

I have responded to each petitioner regarding this issue and have attached a copy of my response for your records.

Yours sincerely

Anna Bligh MP
Minister for Education and
Minister for the Arts

Ref: 04/21615

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Dear

Thank you for your representation in a petition supporting Ms Burke, the proprietor of Cathy's Corner Café, which is situated across the road from the Innisfail State High School.

I realise that this is a difficult situation for the Innisfail community and understand that the shop proprietor has experienced some hardship as a result of the decision made by the Principal and school community.

However, under Section 27 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 1989*, all principals have a duty of care which requires the school to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and well being of students. Mr More, the Principal of Innisfail State High School has exercised this duty of care in making the decision that students are not to leave the school grounds during the school day, except for legitimate educational or other valid reasons. This is not an uncommon expectation of students.

I would like to advise that officers from Education Queensland have actively encouraged the owner of the shop involved to continue to work with the school community to develop a solution that meets her desire for students to have the opportunity to access products from her shop, while also meeting the school community's desire to ensure the safety and security of all students.

I support the decision of the Principal and am pleased to take this opportunity to explain departmental approaches to you in its efforts to act in the best interest of the students of Innisfail State High School.

Yours sincerely

Anna Bligh MP
Minister for Education and
Minister for the Arts

Ref: 04/27508