

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

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to my previous letter sent to you dated 2 November 2004 where I indicated I would seek further advice about the Petition received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly No. 396-04 regarding the State Government's omission of the Youth Training Incentive Scheme for the Burdekin area. I have made further enquiries with departmental officers and can provide the following information.

The Burdekin area has made several written and verbal representations to the department regarding the omission of the Burdekin area as a rural and remote area for eligibility of the Youth Training Incentives (YTI). This issue was also raised at the Ministerial Regional Community Forum on 13 September 2004.

In addition, North Queensland departmental regional officers have visited Burdekin representatives to discuss this issue and provide further information on apprenticeship and traineeship incentives available to employers in the Burdekin area.

On all occasions, Burdekin representatives have been advised that the funding referred to is only one aspect of school-based apprentice/trainee incentives available under the *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle* initiative. There are two other avenues of funding which employers in the Burdekin area can access to employ school-based apprentice/trainee incentives and others for full-time apprenticeships and traineeships.

In support of the government's education and training reforms agenda, incentives are being offered to employers of school-based apprentices and trainees right throughout the State through several different programs. The fact that Burdekin is not identified as a rural and remote area does not preclude Burdekin employers from accessing incentives – it just means the incentives can be accessed through a different program.

The rural and remote incentives under the YTI were specifically introduced to provide school students living substantial distances from major regional centres with similar opportunities to those students living in, or close to, larger centres. As the YTI are school-based arrangements, Education Queensland's definition of rural and remote centres was followed. The boundaries are based on Education Queensland's Priority Country Area Program (PCAP) which aims to improve the educational opportunities, participation, learning outcomes and personal development of rural and isolated primary and secondary school students. The PCAP boundaries are determined by designated shires agreed to by Commonwealth and State Ministers as being rural and remote and where the shire boundary is at least 75 kilometres from a population centre of 20 000 people.

As mentioned previously, employers in the Burdekin area can receive incentives for employing either school-based apprentices/trainees or full-time trainees through other programs.

Through the public sector stream of the YTI, public sector employers in all areas throughout the State are eligible for school-based apprentice/trainee incentives. They are also eligible for substantial wage subsidies to employ full-time trainees through the First Start Program, as are not-for-profit community organisations.

The *Strategic Employment Development Program* (SEDP) addresses Queensland's skill and labour shortages and rewards private employers in all areas throughout the State for employing additional full-time apprentices in skill shortage industries. In addition, those areas not eligible for the YTI rural and remote incentive are eligible for school-based apprentice incentives through the SEDP.

I trust this information helps to clarify the breadth of incentive programs available throughout the State and assures you that the Burdekin area is not excluded from the Queensland Government's apprentice/trainee incentive programs.

Should you wish to discuss the issues further, please contact Mr Graham Smith, Director Employment Support Programs, Department of Employment and Training on telephone 3406 2091 or by email [graham.smith@det.qld.gov.au](mailto:graham.smith@det.qld.gov.au)

Yours sincerely

**TOM BARTON MP**  
**Minister for Employment, Training and**  
**Industrial Relations**