



The Honourable Rod Welford MP



Queensland
Government

26 MAR 2007

Minister for Education and Training
Minister for the Arts

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28/3/07

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

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 7 February 2007 regarding the petition lodged with the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 6 February 2007 numbered 764-07 regarding homophobia in the Queensland community and the review of the Year 9 health and physical education curriculum.

The Department of Education, Training and the Arts recognises that all students have a right to feel safe at school and be free from bullying, including gay and lesbian students. Protection from harm and the risk of harm is fundamental to maximising each student's personal and academic potential. The *Student Protection* policy (SMS-PR-012) outlines procedures regarding child protection and supporting a student who is a victim or at risk of harm.

An understanding of sexuality issues, including sexual identity, sexual orientation and sexual discrimination is important to students' overall growth as individuals and members of a diverse society. As the petition acknowledges, sexual and reproductive health education is primarily taught within the health and physical education key learning area in Years 1-10. Individual schools in Queensland, in collaboration with their school communities, develop health education programs taking into account their local needs.

Under the department's *Inclusive Education* policy, all schools must be supportive and engaging places for all students, teachers and members of the school community. The policy aims to ensure all students are equipped with skills to understand and value equity and diversity so that they have knowledge and skills for positive participation in a just, equitable and democratic global society. It is about building communities that value, celebrate and respond positively to diversity.

Furthermore, our Government is committed to ensuring that schools, as required under recent amendments to the *Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*, take reasonable steps to prevent discrimination or harassment of students based on gender identity or sexuality.

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The *Bullying. No way!* website is an additional resource that provides Australian school communities with information, access to resources, school case studies and networking opportunities likely to contribute to the development of supportive school environments free from bullying, harassment and violence, including homophobic bullying. It is created by and for Australia's diverse school communities. The website is aimed at the whole school community — school staff (administrators, teachers and ancillary staff), students, carers and the wider community. The website also provides links to resources that may be useful for schools in addressing these issues. The *Bullying. No way!* website is located at www.bullyingnoway.com.au.

My department will continue to work with schools to ensure they promote a whole-school environment that is inclusive of the needs of all students, including same-sex attracted students.

Yours sincerely

Rod Welford MP

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