



The Honourable Rod Welford MP



Queensland
Government

7 SEP 2007

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 9 August 2007 regarding the petition lodged with the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 8 August 2007 numbered 858-07 regarding the lack of air-conditioning in schools across south-west Queensland.

Substantial support has been provided to schools in south-west Queensland. Evaporative air-conditioning systems were installed in schools in the Western Cooling Zone in the 1980s, which includes a large portion of south-west Queensland. The Western Cooling Zone comprised schools west of the Great Divide and in the then electorates of Mount Isa, Flinders, Gregory and Warrego and south of latitude 20 degrees. In south-west Queensland this includes Mitchell State School and schools further to the west.

As many of these air-conditioning units are approaching the end of their functional life, the Government has allocated funding to provide for an air-conditioning replacement program to progressively replace the existing air-conditioning units with refrigerative air-conditioning, where electrical supply capacity allows.

In recognition of the combined effects of heat and humidity, programs of refrigerative air-conditioning have been undertaken under the title of first, *Cool Schools*, then *Cooler Schools* programs. In the original *Cooler Schools* program, an eligibility zone was established in 1996 to provide assistance to state and non-state schools north of Bowen to install air-conditioning. In 1998, the Government extended the eligibility zone to include schools north of latitude 20 degrees and south of Bowen to the Gladstone, Biloela and Theodore areas.

The extension of the zone was confined to areas that experienced a higher percentage of 'heat discomfort' days. This is a combination of the effects of both heat and humidity. These heat stress days occur more often in north and central Queensland.

While the *Cooler Schools* Zone at this stage is not planned to extend beyond its current boundaries, schools are able to use available funding sources to install air-conditioning. Advice is available to schools through regional facilities staff on appropriate standards for any air-conditioning installations proposed by schools outside the *Cooler Schools* and Western Cooling Zones.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the issues raised in the recent petition concerning this matter.

Yours sincerely

Rod Welford MP

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