



Office of the
Minister for Education and
Minister for Tourism and Major Events

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Mr Bob Buckley
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Dear Mr Buckley

Thank you for your to the Honourable Kate Jones MP, Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism and Major Events, regarding the education of students with autism and bullying in schools. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

The Department of Education and Training is committed to ensuring all state schools are safe and supportive places to learn. The Department does not tolerate violence or bullying in any form, and students and parents are encouraged to report concerns about these matters immediately to their school principal or their closest Department of Education and Training regional office.

The Department has overarching policy and procedures in place to clarify the responsibilities of teachers and principals in relation to school discipline, support of students with disability and wellbeing. The Department's *Safe, Supportive and Disciplined School Environment* procedure sets out step by step processes for schools to promote a safe, supportive and disciplined learning environment. Every Queensland state school has a *Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students*, clearly outlining the school's approach to promoting and recognising positive behaviour, as well as processes for managing behaviour that is not consistent with the school's expectations.

Further information regarding this procedure and other guidelines for schools to develop and maintain positive school environments can be accessed on the Department's website at www.education.qld.gov.au/behaviour/index.html.

With regards to future actions, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you that the Minister has approved a review of departmental policy and practice models for students with disability in 2016. The focus of this review is to provide strategic, evidence-based information to guide future directions for the education of students with disability in Queensland state schools.

It is a timely review given the recent release of the *Senate Inquiry — Access to real learning: the impact of policy, funding and culture on students with disability*. Recommendations to ensure all students with disability benefit from evidence-based, best practice programs, which lead to improvements in access and attainment and the emphasis on establishing best-practice ongoing professional development for teachers, principals and others who work in the school system, are key issues we are already progressing within our agency.

In late 2015, the Department released *Advancing education: An action plan for education in Queensland*, which included a commitment to create an Autism Hub. The Autism Hub is designed to strengthen partnerships with experts, including parents, to support school communities across the state to specifically improve the learning environment, teaching practices and achievement of students with autism.

It is the interest and commitment of the Minister to improving the educational engagement of students with autism that has driven the establishment of the Autism Hub, which opened in January 2016. Staffed by expert teachers, the Autism Hub is already working with schools, parents and key stakeholders to influence positive change in schools across the state.

The Autism Hub provides evidence-based information, support and advice to assist schools to actively include, retain and engage students with autism. The Hub is also designed to help further empower parents to support their child's engagement in learning through the provision of advisory and training services in collaboration with community organisations and university partners. Training will be provided to support teachers and parents to help prevent and address bullying of students with autism. Further information regarding the Autism Hub can be accessed at www.education.qld.gov.au/autismhub/.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, I invite you to contact Mr Bevan Brennan, Assistant Director-General, State Schools — Operations, on telephone 3513 5838 or by email at bevan.brennan@dete.qld.gov.au.

The Minister thanks you for taking the time to provide your media release on this important matter and confirms the Department's commitment to providing safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments for students with autism.

Yours sincerely



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Minister for Education and
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