



Michael Berkman MP
For Maiwar ▲

18 March 2021

The Hon Minister Grace Grace MP
Minister for Education
Via email: education@ministerial.qld.gov.au

New school in the inner west

Dear Minister Grace,

I'm getting in touch regarding Maiwar's new school.

Following our meeting a few weeks back, I have been seeking informal feedback from local residents about one of the options that you indicated the Department is considering - moving the Queensland Academy for Maths, Science and Technology from Toowong, and specifically the potential relocation to Coorparoo. As you're also aware, the local Councillor, James Mackay, is advocating to move the QASMT campus to UQ, despite his LNP colleague Dr Rowan, Member for Moggill, sponsoring a [parliamentary petition](#) opposing any relocation.

My purpose in writing today is to convey the feedback I've received and to reiterate my request that more information be provided and meaningful consultation be undertaken in relation to any and all potential locations the Department is considering for the new primary school.

On Monday evening I took part in a meeting with parents and staff at QASMT. This meeting was very well attended, with well over 100 people, all of whom strongly opposed the potential relocation of the school. My office and I have also been communicating with many parents and students via email and phone, and it's clear that the existing school community strongly opposes any proposed relocation. Additionally, a number of local residents without any direct involvement with the Academy have also expressed their opposition.

The main concern is, of course, the effect on students and the general disruption of the teaching and learning environment. As I'm sure you're aware, QASMT is Queensland's top performing secondary school and it is a testament to the students and staff that they have maintained this exceptional performance throughout the disruption from onsite construction in recent years and as a consequence of COVID-19. The possibility of further disruption is clearly a very unsettling prospect for all the staff, students and their families.

One commonly expressed concern relates to the significant investment the State has very recently made in specialised facilities, including a variety of university level laboratories and equipment to facilitate the advanced studies of the science and technology students. These are truly exceptional learning spaces and, while I applaud the government's investment in such extraordinary facilities, residents feel it would be incredibly wasteful and poorly planned for these to be repurposed, having only been completed in the

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last year. While I would like for every Queensland state school student to enjoy a similarly exceptional learning environment, it's significant that the general learning spaces are entirely open plan and do not lend themselves to an easy or inexpensive retrofit for use as primary school learning spaces.

As you're also aware, the school has only recently completed the transition to accommodating a full cohort of secondary students from grades 7-12, which has led to a number of families completely relocating in order to live closer to the school for their children's entire secondary education. Clearly, any relocation of the campus is an enormous disruption for these families, as well as any other families who have factored QASMT's location into their decision to take an offer to study there.

There are countless other specific concerns coming from individual students and families, and the school community at large. But given the very limited nature of the consultation undertaken in relation to the location of the new school - specifically, that it only contemplated the 'preferred option' of colocation at the Indooroopilly State High School campus - the QASMT community was deprived of the opportunity to voice these concerns through the Building Future Schools consultation process. If, as you've indicated to me, the QASMT campus is being considered as a potential location for the new school, further consultation is absolutely necessary to allow feedback on this and other options under consideration.

I'd appreciate an update from your office about whether QASMT is being actively considered as an option for the location of the new school. If it is, I request that consultation is undertaken immediately so that the broader school community and local residents can have their say directly.

As I've made clear to both you, and local residents, it's important we get this right - both the process and the ultimate selection of the location. There's no single location that the entire community will get behind, but I don't believe we can come to an agreement about this significant infrastructure unless there's a constructive conversation about all the available options.

At the moment, in spite of repeated efforts to advocate and request further information about all sites the Department is considering for the new school, the community has been left in the dark. This is despite your commitment to release information in our meeting on 23 February. This lack of transparency is causing significant concern amongst residents, and stifling the conversation we need to have about such an important decision. I again reiterate my request to release the information outlined in my letter to you on 24 February 2021.

I look forward to receiving an update from you as soon as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if I can provide more information, or you'd like to discuss this in person in the meantime.

Kind regards,



Michael Berkman MP