



**Hon Sue Ellery MLC
Minister for Education and Training
Leader of the Legislative Council**

Our Ref: 61-17338

Ms Neesha Flint
Principal
Geraldton Grammar School

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Dear Ms Flint

I write to advise of my decision to make some changes to the arrangements currently in place to enable non-government school students access to the Department of Education's regional student residential colleges.

Regional student residential colleges have for many years enabled public school students to access secondary schooling in the regions, rather than having to board in Perth. This means reduced costs for families, students being closer to home and families being able to have more frequent contact with their children.

To enable students attending regional non-government schools to also have access to the regional student residential colleges, previous Education Ministers entered into a number of financial agreements with non-government schools that required them to purchase beds at the colleges and/or pay annual maintenance levies. These costs were usually passed on to parents.

Earlier in 2019, following representations from a number of non-government schools and the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Western Australia, I asked the Department to conduct a review of the financial arrangements by which students attending non-government schools access the Department's regional student residential colleges. On completion of the review, I undertook to consider the findings.

That review is now complete and the key findings are:

- Parents in regional locations value highly the opportunity to place their children in regional boarding facilities, rather than having to send them to Perth.
- The *School Education (Student Residential Colleges) Regulations 2017* give equal access to regional student residential colleges for public and non-government school students.
- There is ample capacity at the regional student residential colleges to accommodate non-government school students.
- The additional costs to non-government school students are influential in parents deciding to send their children to Perth because of the low cost differential. This results in loss of income to the regions and exacerbates family separation.

Having considered all of the issues, and taking into account the views of a range of stakeholders, I am pleased to advise that from 2020, all students, both public and non-government, will be able to access the regional student residential colleges in accordance with the criteria outlined in the *School Education (Student Residential Colleges) Regulations 2017*. This means that all current financial agreements requiring the payment of maintenance levies will be discontinued. Non-government school students will pay the same costs and charges for accommodation as public school students. These are set annually by government.

The regional student residential colleges provide a safe and caring environment for all students. I believe that these changes will have a positive effect on education in the regions.

Yours sincerely



SUE ELLERY MLC
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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