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5th May 2020

Minister Grace Grace
Minister for Education and Industrial Relations
Parliament House
George St
Brisbane QLD 4000

Email – education@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Outdoor Education programming

Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation Incorporated (QORF) is the peak body representing the interests of the outdoor sector in Queensland. As a member-based, not-for-profit association, QORF represents and advocates on behalf of a coalition of outdoor groups and individuals.

Outdoor Educators Association of Queensland (OEAQ) is the peak body supporting the delivery of Outdoor Education in Queensland. It too is a member based, not-for-profit association with a membership base of schools, practitioners and Universities.

We note your ongoing support and appreciation of outdoor education and learning in the different context that this occurs across Queensland. This includes both delivery through Education Queensland, the Catholic and Private School sectors and the broader network of outdoor providers that support schools to offer students these valuable experiences. This is a particularly vulnerable time for our sector.

OEAQ and QORF are affiliated with the Outdoor Council of Australia, the national peak body for outdoor activities. We enclose a letter that the Outdoor Council of Australia recently sent to the Commonwealth Minister for Education, seeking support from Minister Tehan for a timely return to participation in school camps and outdoor recreation excursions for students at schools and other education institutions across the country.

OEAQ and QORF endorse this call for support from the Commonwealth Minister. We further seek your consideration as Minister for Education for a timely return to participation in school camps and outdoor recreation excursions for students at schools and other education institutions across Queensland.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, Queensland students need outdoor activities and outdoor spaces for their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Students will need outdoor programs to assist them to process the impact that this time has had on their lives. The outdoors has always been an extraordinary space to discover strengths and that must continue. Outdoor programs will help students reconnect through shared experiences following significant periods of social and physical distancing from their peers.

The letter to the Commonwealth Minister refers to the research findings regarding positive impacts on participants of outdoor programs. QORF and OEAQ recognise these positive impacts, and we know that you and your department appreciate the contributions of outdoor programs to their participants.

We understand that once schooling returns from its predominantly home-based situation, there may be a reluctance to allow education institutions to return to excursions in public places like museums and even parliament house. Outdoor Education programs operate in outdoor settings with an abundance of fresh air and opportunity for physical distancing. The natural spaces of Queensland are perhaps the best venues imaginable to allow for meaningful learning, particularly in the social and emotional domain, while suppressing transmission. With careful planning, it would seem possible for schools and outdoor centres to comply with health protocols even more effectively than school based education. While we are not advocating for “business as usual” for the outdoor sector, there will be innovative ways to structure and deliver our programs.

The OEAQ and QORF are firm supporters of the effective and cautious response the Queensland Government has taken. We do ask that the Queensland government consider allowing outdoor programs, following health guidance, even while public excursions may not be allowed for students. By taking this nuanced approach, Queensland could lead the way for Australian education.

If you have any queries, please contact QORF Executive Officer, Dom Courtney by telephone on 0419 976 800 or by email eo@qorf.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Dom Courtney
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Andrew Devenish
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