




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Budget, Early Education

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.57 am): The Palaszczuk government is committed to giving all Queensland children a great start, no matter where they live. That is why we have prioritised early childhood education and care in this budget, with over \$270 million in funding. In 2017 more than 95 per cent of Queensland children were enrolled in a kindergarten program before starting school. That is a great result, but we want to do more with a range of targeted initiatives to increase access to quality early childhood education and care, particularly for the most vulnerable in our community.

Through the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme we are investing \$150 million to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for families with kids in care, including \$25 million to ease the burden on vulnerable families through a targeted QKFS Plus subsidy. We are continuing to deliver greater access to kindergarten through our remote kindergarten pilot in 38 Queensland state schools across the state. In 2018 we have almost 100 children taking part in the remote kindy program in schools such as Mount Perry State School in the electorate of Callide and Dingo State School in the electorate of Gregory.

This year, our \$1.9 million eKindy program provides access to kindergarten through distance education for almost 200 Queensland children. We are investing \$24.3 million to support the operation of more than 50 dedicated early years places across the state, such as the one I visited in Mackay last month—one-stop shops that provide a suite of services to families with children up to eight years old ranging from education, parenting and family support to child and maternal health and referrals to other services.

We delivered on our commitment to establish seven new early years places in Barcaldine, Blackall, Gordonvale, Inala, Lockhart River, Tara and, most recently, the Redlands. This year we are investing a further \$3.9 million in capital funding to build a new fit-for-purpose building at the early years place in Tara to support local families. In addition, there is \$4.5 million to continue refurbishment and enhancement of existing facilities across the state. We are continuing the fabulous Play Stars program, which offers families with children aged under one free Playgroup membership for 12 months. This has benefited around 5,700 families since 2016. More than 120 new playgroups have been created right across Queensland.

I am delighted to announce that under this budget the department will commence a 12-month pilot to offer a tailored kindergarten program to kindergarten age patients of the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital and the Mater Children's Private Hospital. This is a great initiative to support kids and their families who find themselves in very trying circumstances. The early years are a critical time in a child's development so it is important we invest in programs that give all Queensland children a great start.