



Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace


MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 1 November 2018

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from 30 October (see p. 3153).

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): I call the member for McConnel for her third go.

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (3.01 pm), continuing: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker—third time lucky!

I am looking forward to the \$3 billion Queen's Wharf project, which is a very exciting project for the inner city of Brisbane. That project is going to revolutionise, in my view, the way our city looks and interacts. It is going to be an incredible delivery of world-class hotels and facilities for public visitors and, of course, the residents to enjoy. We are going to open up public space that has not been opened up before. It is going to be a very exciting project, creating 10,000 local jobs. When you have a look at what that is going to deliver in a few years time, it certainly ticks all the boxes.

I am very proud to have been appointed Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations. I am very much looking forward to working with my colleagues—in particular, the member for Mansfield and the member for Townsville who are ex-principals. I often talk to them about issues surrounding education and I always get very sound advice.

I look forward to employing 3,700 new teachers, putting downward pressure on our class sizes and ensuring that all Queensland children have access to a world-class education. We have committed to \$10 million to employ additional full-time instrumental music teachers and \$1 million to purchase new musical instruments. In every school I go to around Queensland their arts programs are second to none, and I am constantly entertained by some fantastic kids who I know are in all of our electorates. I acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition who is nodding. We were at Kingaroy State High School for the opening of the hall there—and how fantastic was that band that played for us that day! Everywhere I go I see some great programs and it is great to be able to work with them.

We are rolling out our new approach for senior secondary and tertiary entrants, moving Queensland to an ATAR. We are improving literacy and numeracy for every child including introducing the Ready Reading program. I was delighted to see that the Grattan Institute recently gave Queensland a shining star when it came to the growth of our students in numeracy and literacy. I am sure that other states can learn from the great work that we are doing right here in our education department in Queensland.

We have committed over \$100 million to the regional and remote strategy and \$31 million to provide four innovative centres for professional learning and wellbeing for teachers and students, opening first in Roma, Mount Isa, Emerald and Atherton next year. Inspiring more students to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, is also one of the goals of this government. I look forward to delivering our nearly \$82 million program over the next four years, making sure that we can deliver the opportunities that we want to give all students throughout Queensland to study STEM and to excel on the world stage.

We are also engaging students at risk. We cannot leave behind those students who may not be as advantaged as some of our other students. I am looking to re-engaging disengaged or at-risk youth in their school communities. We have alternative education programs through our pathway colleges that do an excellent job at Mount Gravatt, Bundamba, Goodna, Bracken Ridge and Townsville. For our children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, we will continue to work with the Clontarf Foundation, the Stars Foundation, Role Models and Leaders Australia, the Brisbane Broncos and Netball Queensland to deliver programs that not only improve attendance but also improve the quality of education outcomes for those children throughout Queensland. We are hoping to expand those programs and work with those organisations.

We want to ensure that we have the best teachers. Our Teaching Queensland's Future strategy will recruit, train and retain quality teachers right across the state. It involves making sure that our teachers get the training, the education, the support and the experience that they need to deliver quality teaching through mentoring programs, through training programs and through a number of other programs that will assist them to do a great job in our classrooms every day.

I am very pleased to have been able to build upon the great work that we have been delivering in our schools. I have been absolutely blown away by the openings of our new halls and our new schools. We have committed to opening seven new secondary schools over this period and beyond. I am looking forward to working with local members to deliver those. Our Renewing Our Schools policy will deliver \$235 million over the next four years, substantially refurbishing 17 state high schools including nine schools in regional Queensland, and a \$750 million rolling fund over four years to ensure that we maintain our 25,000 school buildings in 1,240 schools.

Our infrastructure program is well over a billion dollars this year. I know that a lot of schools are benefiting from that infrastructure. We have to make sure that our schools are 2020 ready. Members of parliament on both sides of the House will gain substantially from improvements to their schools in that program—2019 is going to be a big year for us to be 2020 ready for the full cohort of students in 2020.

I am looking forward to implementing our solar energy future schools program, with schools benefiting from an investment of nearly \$100 million. This program will help our schools not only to become greener and teach children about the advantages of doing that but also to deliver savings in energy use. It will also deliver jobs. Eight hundred schools across all electorates will be receiving solar panels that will deliver energy efficiency measures. I am looking forward to rolling out that program over the next three years.

In the industrial relations agenda I look forward to continuing to improve health and safety in our workplace and implement the findings of the best practice review. In regard to our labour hire licensing laws, already 3,000 labour hire companies are seeking licensing. We are delivering in an area that for far too long had been unregulated. I take the opportunity to call on the federal government to implement a national scheme so that those workers can be closely monitored and those labour hire companies which do the right thing are not undercut by those who do the wrong thing. I note that the member for Lockyer is in the chamber. I know that there have been great benefits in that area for those businesses and farmers who use labour hire.

I want to commend the good work in finding and addressing those new health and safety issues that we need to address. I commend the department for the recent work with regard to manufactured benchtops and for alerting the industry about the dangerous disease of silicosis. We are working through that and I look forward to implementing that as well.

I was very happy to change the policy to allow girls at school to wear shorts and pants as part of their uniform. Schools are working through that now. They have spent the last few months bringing that in and ensuring they will be fully equipped to implement that from 2019. We have settled our agreement on highly accomplished and lead teachers, and that has gone down very well. We have implemented the findings of the Water Safety Roundtable to make sure that our kids understand the issue of water safety and that they are safe around water. I look forward to working with schools to implement our nearly \$4 million program in relation to that.

There are many more things that we have been doing in relation to industrial relations, and I am once again proud to be the minister in this space. I look forward to our bilateral agreements with the federal government on education for long-term funding not only for the school sector but also for the early childhood education sector. I plead with them to please give us the funds that we need to deliver a world-class education system. I do not begrudge one extra dollar going into education, but state schools need their fair share as well. I call on the federal government to settle long-term funding bilateral agreements not only in our schooling and education sector but also in the early childhood sector.

I think members on both sides of this House know that to get elected we do not do it alone. There are a lot of people who support us to get elected and I want to pay tribute to some of those people. My campaign manager, Linda Whatman, for over 12 months ran an incredibly tight and focused campaign.

I want to thank my electorate officers who also worked tirelessly every day in the electorate office—Judi Jabour and Sam Jones. My volunteer coordinator, Hamish Greenop-Roberts, did an incredible job. He is one of the young stars of Labor coming through the ranks. I think in the not-too-distant future he may be a member of this House.

I have so many wonderful volunteers to thank. In particular, I would like to mention the hard work of Elizabeth and Peter Fraser, Stella Donatini, Maree Ainsworth, Jen Litchfield, Tristan Lockwood, Molly Hammond, Wayne McLeod, Peter Casey and Lyn Kennedy. I wish Lyn a speedy recovery. She has had a bout of unfortunate illness of late that saw her in the intensive care unit for quite a few weeks, and I wish her all the best. I also thank Richard Burke, Sean Kelly and all the other wonderful Labor Party members, union members and community supporters. I want to pay particular tribute to Ron Brault, who unfortunately passed away during the campaign. Rod was an incredible worker. He lived across the road from my electorate office in Spring Hill, and he has been sorely missed by the Labor family.

I want to save the best until last, and of course that would have to be my family. I know how important our families are, and none more so than my daughter, my husband, my sisters and their partners. They are an incredible support for me. I could never do this job without my husband, Michael. He is my rock and such a supportive partner. I think anyone who has met Michael loves him as much as I do. He is an incredible support for me and I can never thank him enough. My daughter, Ally, is amazing. She is my strength. She is such a support. In every way, shape or form if I am a bit down she is the one who lifts my spirits and makes me feel better.

Of my sisters, I am the quiet one of the family, in case members want to know. There are five sisters, and I can honestly say hand on heart I am the quiet one of the family. When the six of us get together, you have no idea what it is like! They are fantastic, and their husbands and partners do a wonderful job in assisting me as well. Unfortunately, I will never, ever be able to thank them enough, but from the bottom of my heart I thank them all.

In particular, as a last word I want to say, Michael, thank you for everything, my darling husband. It has been 33 years of bliss and I could not do this without you.