




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 12 February 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Weather Events, Critical Disaster Funding Assistance for Schools

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.07 am): Schools in Townsville and surrounding areas are getting back on their feet after the unprecedented flooding emergency. At the peak of the monsoonal event, 61 state schools were closed, impacting around 22,000 students and their families. I am pleased to advise that thanks to the excellent work of those involved in the recovery effort, all but one of those schools will reopen by the end of the week. Oonoonba State School, which I visited on Friday with the Premier, Minister O'Rourke and member for Townsville, was the worst hit of our state schools and will be closed for at least eight weeks to allow for significant cleaning and repairs.

Recovering from such a disaster has not been easy. I inform the House that a dedicated school recovery coordinator, Hayley Stevenson, has been appointed and is on the ground working with principals and school communities to provide a coordinated approach to the major operational aspects of the recovery process for our schools. I would like to pay tribute to school staff, parents and carers and others, like members of building and admin services and the ADF, who have been working extremely hard to get our schools back up and running. I also acknowledge the efforts of staff from the department's northern region office and Infrastructure Services Branch who have been providing much needed support to local schools.

We know teachers, school staff and students have lost personal and work related items essential for learning. That is why I am pleased to announce, along with the Premier, critical disaster funding assistance to replace learning essentials destroyed by the floodwaters. Teachers and other school staff can claim up to \$1,000 and families are able to claim up to \$150 per student to cover the cost of replacing resources such as textbooks, musical instruments, stationery, uniforms and any other items essential for teaching and learning. I understand that non-government schools have similar assistance packages.

I advise that as of this morning more than 2,660 claims valued at close to \$650,000 have been submitted since the website went live yesterday. Around half of those claims relate to the replacement of school uniforms, while the remainder are for stationery and learning resources. Already \$143,000 worth of claims has been paid out, which is an extraordinary effort. There is still work to be done. Schools have reopened quickly and students are again learning after the devastating floods, but we have to ensure that those facilities are safe, mould free and able to be used by students to receive a world-class education.