




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Education

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.04 am): Since our election four years ago the Palaszczuk government has prioritised giving Queensland kids a great start. As a result we have seen record investment in new and enhanced school infrastructure; additional teachers, teacher aides and support staff; and a focus on programs that will make our students the global citizens of tomorrow.

Since 2015 the Palaszczuk government has delivered 13 new schools in the fastest growing parts of the state, including North Shore State School in Townsville, Picnic Creek State School in Coomera East, Yarrabilba State School in Logan, Cairns Special School and Bellmere State School in Caboolture. In fact, today there are now some 2,000 more classrooms from Cape York to Coolangatta compared to when the Palaszczuk government was first elected. Since 2015 we have also delivered 33 new school halls and nine performing arts centres at state schools across the state, and it was great to open the one in Nanango recently.

Not only is our massive investment in educational facilities great news for students in school communities; it also created thousands of jobs in the construction industry. In the past four years the Palaszczuk government has employed more than 4,000 additional full-time equivalent teachers, from just over 42,000 at the start of 2015 to more than 46,000 full-time equivalents today. We have also employed more than 1,500 additional full-time equivalent teacher aides. Today there are around 10,900 teacher aides in Queensland schools compared to around 9,300 in January 2015. Not only have additional teachers been employed to cover the continued growth in enrolments; the Palaszczuk government has employed 875 teachers above growth, which has assisted us in meeting our class size targets.

I am particularly proud of the Palaszczuk government's remote kindergarten program. This program, which commenced in 2016, ensures all children have a great start to learning and life regardless of where they live across the state. The program has expanded to 43 schools this year, educating more than 160 young Queenslanders and by the start of next year it will be in around 60 schools.

The Palaszczuk government has also made a considerable investment under the leadership of the Premier in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM. We have invested \$81.3 million to support STEM in our state primary schools, which includes building capability and building industry partnerships, purchasing resources and initiatives to encourage students in STEM programs, and haven't we seen some progress in that area? The Palaszczuk government's investment is reaping dividends, with the Grattan Institute last year describing Queensland as the 'star performer' when it comes to improved student progression.

We have also made great strides in closing the gap. The latest year 12 attainment data shows that Queensland is a nation leader in the proportion of Indigenous students receiving a Queensland Certificate of Education. I am proud to report the gap is now only 0.3 per cent, a remarkable outcome. The Palaszczuk government strongly believes in education, and our efforts over the past four years have ensured every Queensland kid, no matter where they live, gets a world-class education.