




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 26 February 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Floods, Schools

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.51 am): I am pleased to advise the House that the repair of flood damaged Oonoonba State School in Townsville is continuing at an impressive pace. To date, carpets have been removed and replaced in two buildings. The internal painting of one building has been completed and the painting of the administration area, resource centre and music block started yesterday. Contaminated sand has been removed from playgrounds and will be replaced by tomorrow, and the external wash-down of all buildings will commence on Thursday. The school is on track to once again welcome its students on the first day of term 2 on 23 April.

In the meantime, the Department of Education has established two temporary campuses of Oonoonba State School to ensure that students can continue to learn while repairs are made to their school. It was great to see the Premier and Minister O'Rourke visit those temporary locations last week. Students in prep to year 2 are now learning at nearby Wulguru State School, while students from years 3 to 6 are based at William Ross State High School.

Working on a 'school within a school' basis, my department has created a distinct Oonoonba State School within those other schools. That has ensured that class groupings remain together and that Oonoonba State School will continue to operate as its own entity. I was particularly pleased to learn of the efforts of the Wulguru and William Ross school communities in welcoming the Oonoonba students to their respective schools.

While Oonoonba is the only state school yet to be reopened after the flooding emergency, 11 early childhood education and care providers in North Queensland are still to reopen after sustaining damage. Six of those providers expect to reopen within eight weeks and two more within five months. Unfortunately, three services have not yet been able to determine a possible reopening date. My department is working with the operators of the centres to get them back up and running as soon as possible. We are also working with centres that are open to enable them to temporarily accommodate more children and assist families affected by the closures to find temporary alternative care arrangements.

I am also pleased to provide an update on the financial assistance paid to families, teachers and other school staff under the Department of Education's Flood Assistance Package. To date, there have been close to 5,800 claims from families of students impacted by the floods and over \$1.3 million has been paid out. There have been 168 claims from teachers and other school staff, with more than \$117,000 paid out. Again I pay tribute to officers from the Department of Education who have worked and continue to work so hard to get schools that were closed by the North Queensland floods back open and students learning again after that devastating weather event, because we know that every day counts.