




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Schools, Education Delivery

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.10 am): Queensland's education system is experiencing the biggest challenge in its history. On Easter Monday the Palaszczuk government announced that for the first five weeks of term 2 schools and kindergartens would only be open for children of essential workers, vulnerable children and children in designated Indigenous communities. All other students would learn from home via remote learning in line with the consistent advice from the national health experts on the AHPPC, the seven key principals for schooling from the national cabinet, and the Prime Minister's statement just yesterday that smaller class sizes are required to ensure social distancing. I am proud to say that our Queensland principals, teachers, staff, students, parents and carers have prepared as best they can for these changes.

Before the first bell on Monday, our 2,900 state school cleaners did an exceptional amount of work preparing our schools. More than 100,000 additional litres of liquid soap were secured as well as an additional 200,000 bottles of hand sanitiser. On the first day of term 2 Queensland state schools recorded a physical attendance rate of 12 per cent, in line with predictions. This means the overwhelming majority of Queensland families are doing the right thing for their health and safety in spite of irresponsible opposition calls to the contrary.

I would like to sincerely thank parents and carers for their patience and cooperation. We know it has not been easy. There were a few teething problems with the learning@home website on Monday morning. Honourable members must remember that this has never been done before on this scale. Our service received a tsunami of traffic on Monday morning. More than 1.8 million hits combined with teachers uploading high-definition content at the same time meant our website experienced issues for about three hours. Most of the feedback we have received said that parents and teachers were able to find other ways to work together with print material in the morning while gaining access as required after midday. I worked with staff from the Department of Education, who worked tirelessly to resolve those issues that earlier testing could not identify. I am pleased to report that the learning@home website operated according to plan yesterday and is currently running smoothly.

There were also some issues with external platforms used by schools such as Microsoft OneNote. Yesterday I received a call from the managing director of Microsoft Australia who said they were experiencing system issues across the country. It really is no laughing matter. Those opposite are treating it as a joke. The Managing Director of Microsoft Australia, Mr Steven Worrall, rang me directly to say they were experiencing system issues across the country—let me speak slowly: across the country—and they have assured me that education in Queensland is their highest priority.

There is no doubt term 2 will be a challenge. After all, we are in the midst of an unprecedented global health pandemic. If we all stay patient and calm and use our common sense we will get through this together. We will help stop the spread of COVID-19 and stay healthy.