



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 May 2020

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Coronavirus, Schools**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.59 am): The period of greatest upheaval in our state's education system will conclude next Monday when all grades return to the classroom. At the start of this year who would have thought that a global health pandemic would hit, forcing schools to shut to keep our community safe? The way in which the Department of Education, principals, teachers, teacher aides, all staff, parents, carers and students have adapted to the sudden change to learning at home must be commended by all members of this House, but we all know nothing beats face-to-face learning.

All Queensland students began a staged return to normal schooling and early years learning from Monday, 11 May. Students in kindy, prep and year 1 and those in years 11 and 12 were the first to return to schooling. Those are the children who are at the most important junctures of education: the beginning and the end of their journey. Children of essential workers and vulnerable and at-risk children are still able to attend school, while for students in year 2 through to year 10 home based learning will continue until the end of this week. These changes are in line with the advice of health experts here in Queensland and at the AHPPC. From all reports, things went extremely smoothly—so smoothly, in fact, that Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania have adopted our plan.

Last week attendance was consistent with around 83 per cent of prep, year 1, year 11 and year 12 students and around 20 per cent of the other grades physically attending school this week, which is obviously a reflection of the easing of restrictions. Those students learning at home are being supported and directed by their teachers while they learn remotely, with prepared lessons and materials being delivered by teachers to those students. Access to a range of resources remains available through the Department of Education's website, in addition to the learning@home TV resource.

We looked at a number of possible models for a return to normal schooling and after consultation with Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young this staggered approach was deemed the safest and best so as not to jeopardise all the gains we as a community have made so far. Health and safety must come first, so any staff and students who are unwell must not attend school. All adults must maintain social distancing of 1.5 metres and must not gather in groups in and around school grounds, car parks, school gates and outside classrooms. Parents should use stop, drop and go options rather than walking children into school grounds and strict personal hygiene protocols, including the cleaning of high-touch surfaces such as desks and door handles, will remain in place. I know that all schools throughout Queensland are looking forward to once again rolling out the welcome mat to all students next week.