



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2021

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **NAPLAN; Early Childhood Education, Funding**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.53 am): I am sure all members will join me in the shout-out to all Queensland year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students as we head into NAPLAN testing for 2021, with 70 per cent of schools going online. My advice is to stay calm and do your best. I also wish the Powerhouse a very happy 21st birthday.

We know how important it is to give our kids access to high-quality kindergarten, with all research showing the benefits that flow in terms of improved school results and better health, wellbeing and employment prospects. In the current budget, the Palaszczuk government is investing around \$174 million in kindy through the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme. This includes subsidies to help reduce the out-of-pocket costs for families accessing a kindergarten program. Additional subsidies are available to support children from low-income families and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to access quality kindergarten programs.

At the height of the COVID-19 crisis last year, we provided an additional \$17 million to enable free kindergarten for families in term 2 to help our community kindergartens remain viable. This year we are expanding the Remote Kindergarten Program by providing \$12 million over four years which will greatly improve our state schools' regional and remote kindergarten program. In addition, we have provided an additional \$26 million for early childhood regulation and \$56 million over two years to support universal access to kindergarten and workforce initiatives, providing grants of up to \$30,000 for providers to support educators to finish their qualifications.

Sadly, the Commonwealth continues to deny Queensland's early childhood education sector funding certainty. The current national partnership agreement is the seventh short-term extension of the original 2009 agreement—an agreement that promised a move to enduring arrangements eight years ago but which has still not occurred. I wrote to Minister Tudge on this issue last month and raised it with him at the recent meeting of education ministers. An independent review has found that this funding uncertainty has hampered innovation, compromised services' ability to plan and invest in staff, and had implications for workforce retention and service quality.

With the federal budget tonight, I once again call on the Morrison government to end this succession of short-term agreements, to implement the recommendation of the independent review and its original commitment to provide ongoing, long-term funding for universal access to kindergarten, and to provide Queensland's kindergarten sector and Queensland families with funding certainty. Queensland's children deserve no less.