




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2021

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Federal Budget, Early Childhood Education

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.53 am): I too join in saying happy International Nurses Day. If I am ever sick, I am happy to be nursed by Queensland nurses.

Yesterday in this House I called on the federal government to provide certainty for Queensland families by ending the succession of short-term kindergarten funding agreements and provide a long-term national agreement. This is a matter I have spoken about many times in the House. I have always said that I would advocate for this for as long as it takes to get some action from the federal government. We know how important it is to give our kids access to high-quality kindergarten. The sector has been crying out for long-term funding certainty.

I raised the issue again at the recent education ministers meeting and wrote to Minister Tudge calling for action to end the succession of short-term funding agreements. Before Minister Tudge, I raised this issue with his predecessors, ministers Birmingham and Tehan. Last night finally we had a breakthrough. After two independent reviews and seven short-term extensions to kindergarten funding, the Morrison government has finally made a commitment to a four-year kindergarten funding agreement. We look forward to seeing further details of this announcement, including Queensland's funding allocation, and working with other jurisdictions to develop the initial four-year agreement.

As always, the Morrison government has had to be dragged kicking and screaming to do the right thing. It has taken them eight years of policy and funding neglect that has left the kindergarten sector and families unable to plan long term. Only when presented with a political problem have they acted. It is the same with childcare announcements that will not even start until July 2022. Childcare fees have rocketed around 36 per cent since 2013 under the coalition. In the past quarter alone they have soared 2.2 per cent, more than three times CPI, but there is not one cent of fee relief in the next 12 months and there is nothing at all for 750,000 families with one child in child care.

There is nothing new on education in the budget. It is a hotchpotch of cobbled-together items with no coherent national vision for education. I note the \$1.2 billion non-government schools Choice and Affordability Fund once again has not been extended to state schools—another missed opportunity. All we ask for is funding equity. I note there is \$10.7 million over four years for additional education resources for young Australians on the important issue of respectful relationships. I sincerely hope for the sake of our young Australians and students that we get better value for money than we did from the previous \$8 million that produced the milkshake consent videos. Our children and students deserve better.