




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Education

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (10.05 am): I join the Premier and others in welcoming the new member for Stretton, James Martin. Our school students and principals, teachers and teacher aides, school leaders and support staff have shown great adaptability and resilience over the past 18 months in dealing with the reality of living through a world health pandemic. Our school communities, government and non-government, have worked together during this time to ensure minimal disruption to learning. This was on display again in the recent lockdown in early August.

Almost overnight our schools commenced remote learning for some 391,000 students across 575 schools in the 11 locked down LGAs, a truly magnificent effort. Of course, schools remained open for children of essential workers and vulnerable children, with attendance levels around six to seven per cent. All schools were prepared for the lockdown, with over 500 resources uploaded for students' remote learning and online resources for parents and carers also available. More than 150,000 bottles of hand sanitiser were delivered to schools, deep cleaning was undertaken and more than 1.7 million face masks, including more than 500,000 small child sized masks, were distributed to ensure our schools were COVID-safe. I am proud to advise that every one of these masks was manufactured locally in Brisbane. I thank students and staff for wearing their masks.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all staff, students and families particularly from Ironside State School and Indooroopilly State High School as well as Brisbane Grammar School and Brisbane Girls Grammar School. Both of these schools are in my electorate. Their willingness to do the right thing and follow isolation and quarantine directives meant Queensland was able to avoid further outbreaks and, incredibly, lift the lockdown.

We know that this has been a challenging period for many students and their mental health and wellbeing is paramount. That is why we are rolling out our nation-leading \$100 million student wellbeing election commitment to employ 464 additional health and wellbeing professionals in Queensland schools over the next three years. I am pleased to advise that a statewide recruitment exercise for the first tranche of these positions began on 9 August. The Student Wellbeing Package will also provide secondary students in 20 state schools of greatest need with free access to a GP based at their school. The expression of interest inviting schools to participate in the pilot closed on 20 August, and I am very pleased to announce that a total of 50 schools have applied. Because of these efforts, Queensland is the only state on the eastern seaboard of Australia with all schools fully open. I thank all staff and school communities for their magnificent efforts.