




Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (11.48 am): It is interesting that 12 months ago most of us in this House were out on the hustings. This day last year was the Thursday before election day. There was a 12-hour opening of electoral booths on that day. I got to the electoral booth in Fortitude Valley at about 8 am and left at 9.30 that evening. They were long days, but what an outcome!

It was fantastic to see the Premier and the Palaszczuk Labor government returned with an even greater majority. It was outstanding work, mainly because it was an election like no other. I have done six elections in 13 years—that was my sixth—and, as I said, it was an election like no other because we had not been in a world health pandemic for over 100 years. Smack in the middle of it we were hit with an election. We went to the people with three main things that we campaigned on—that we have kept you safe, that we have an economic plan and that we are the only side of politics that is going to guide this state out of this pandemic, and that is exactly what we have delivered. Twelve months down the track we have a road map to open up this state. It is a cautious, well-planned and measured road map.

We have done an amazing job, regardless of what anybody says. Regardless of the whinging and whining that we hear from those opposite, we are the envy of the world and Australia. We are world leaders in how we have handled COVID-19. Every member on this side of the House should stand proud to be part of a team under the guidance of the Premier and under the guidance of the Chief Health Officer and the magnificent job that she has done. She is one of the best chief health officers in Australia despite the fact that she had to withstand some pretty horrific backlash. She took a measured approach, as did we as a team in working together.

There is no manual and there are no guidelines when you are in a world health pandemic. No-one comes to you and says, 'This is what you have to do.' We were the first in the country to act. We were the first in the country to take decisive action, and much of that happened because of the magnificent job of the leadership team on this side of the House and our Chief Health Officer. We should thank her every single day and congratulate her on soon becoming the next Governor of this great state—a job that I know she will do just as well as she did as Chief Health Officer.

This parliament has been a bit unusual in that not long after we were elected we were in estimates after delivering our first budget, and what a proud budget it was as Minister for Education. We have once again delivered our second record budget. Not a single member in this House could not say what fundamental infrastructure has occurred in their electorates. It has been a journey. There are 1,254 state schools in this state and every electorate has benefited from the record infrastructure spend in our budget, and we will continue to do that.

**Mr Furrer:** Give thanks to the Palaszczuk government.

**Ms GRACE:** I take the interjection from Minister Furner, the member for Ferny Grove, that Queenslanders should be very grateful that the Palaszczuk government was elected because any alternative plan that was brought out by those opposite in relation to education simply did not stack up and the people saw straight through it.

The 2021 budget embedded the education commitments we took to the last election with a comprehensive education package worth \$15.3 billion that will ensure we are delivering a world-class education for all Queensland children no matter their circumstances or where they live in this state, with the goal of every student succeeding. It was a package that included a billion dollars in additional education infrastructure and \$100 million for a game-changing student wellbeing strategy, with none other like it in the country with new wellbeing professionals for every school. With regard to the pilot of GPs, we went to the election with 20 and we have 50 because there were outstanding expressions of interest, and under that funding envelope we can do that and we are bringing them in. That will be a game changer.

We have started our homework centres, with some already operating, and then there is our \$20 million Turn to Teaching. There is a worldwide and an Australia-wide struggle happening in terms of attracting young people to teaching. This is not just happening in Queensland but all over the world and Australia more broadly. We have committed to 300 positions, with Turn to Teaching helping those who always aspired to be a teacher but for whom financially and the manner in which to do it was always a little bit difficult. Our commitment to these 300 is all about giving them a scholarship, assisting them through their studies, giving them a school and then a guaranteed job at the end of it, obviously if they meet the criteria required for teacher registration. We are really looking forward to rolling that out over the next four years. We have our numbers right in that we are committed to employing 6,190 teachers and 1,139 new teacher aides over the next four years, and I am proud to say that we are on track to deliver that. This is a fantastic package that supports our schools, supports our teachers and school staff, and supports our students and their families. I wish all teachers a very happy World Teachers' Day tomorrow.

We are doing great work. I absolutely love going to schools and opening up new buildings, because they are really incredible. I note that the member for Hervey Bay is in the chamber, but in terms of that new performing arts centre at Hervey Bay with all of the classrooms in the back I think there is nothing better on that Hervey Bay strip. It is outstanding compared to what was built before. We even held our cabinet meeting in that performing arts centre. A new STEM building is also being built at that school. We are doing one now for Urangan and other schools in that area. That is such incredible work and no wonder the member for Hervey Bay was elected on the back of what we have been putting into Hervey Bay.

That is really fantastic, but that is just one. I just came back from Cairns and together with the member for Barron River, Minister Crawford, we opened some spectacular buildings. Even I was amazed at the architecture, the design and the delivery of those buildings within the budgets that were set, because they are truly outstanding. You can see the pride of those school communities come to the surface because of these new facilities, and in your own electorate, Mr Deputy Speaker Martin, there is that beautiful performing arts centre at Stretton state high which is second to none. I see its great lights shining bright on the Duncan Pegg memorial name that it has received. We recently went to Everton Park—a school the Labor government saved.

**Mr Mander:** How'd you save it?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Martin): Member for Everton!

**Ms GRACE:** The Labor government saved Everton Park, and I take the interjection from the member for Everton. I will tell him how we saved it: because we did not sell it! That is how we saved it. There was no 'for sale' sign on it. There was a 'for sale' sign on it from the member for Everton—

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Everton, you are warned.

**Ms GRACE:**—and we saved it. That is how we saved it, because we did not sell it, and we have opened some beautiful buildings in that school—

**Mr Mander:** Absolute fantasy!

**Ms GRACE:**—and it is now going from strength to strength. I will take that interjection as well: just like the fantasy that he thought that he had won the election without Greens preferences. He had to go back and have a look at it, because he came in here accusing all of us of winning our seats on Greens preferences and then it was like, 'Oops, I forgot! I won on Greens preferences too.' It is absolutely ridiculous.

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock.

**Ms GRACE:** You should be worried—

**Mr Mander** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** I will take that interjection about not being—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Everton, do you understand you are on a warning? You are already on a warning under the standing orders. If you continue your interjections, you will be asked to leave.

**Ms GRACE:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your protection. In relation to that, I remember that this last election was like no other in that the LNP directed its preferences in every single seat to the Greens. I said that that was going to backfire in my electorate. I said that the people in my electorate, particularly those who vote Liberal, were not going to like it and the LNP had its worst election outcome in the history of that seat.

In fact, at one stage the LNP was even worrying about whether it was going to come second because it went so far back. I, however, received the most votes that I have ever received in that seat in the six times that I have run, which was amazing. I told the LNP that that would happen and it will be very interesting to see what it does in the next election in 2024, but obviously that depends on who the leader is going to be at the time. As we know, there are more former leaders on that side of the House than there are current leaders.

New schools are being built at Augustine Heights in Jordan, Ripley in the electorate of Ipswich, Bellbird Park in Bundamba, Yarrabilba in Logan, Logan Reserve in Logan and at Redland Bay in the Redlands. We have new schools being built in some of our fastest growing areas.

Four new high schools are planned at Palmview in the electorate of Buderim—I am looking forward to being there and opening up not only the new special school and primary school that we built in Buderim, but also the high school that we will be building very soon; at Springfield in Jordan; in the Logan Reserve/Park Ridge area; and Redbank Plains in Bundamba. We are investing \$180 million over three years for new infrastructure in Catholic and independent schools. That is the most that the state government has spent in that sector. We are very proud to be doing that.

We are also investing in our people with our Great Teachers Great Future program and training packages for local jobs being implemented by the assistant minister for education, the member for Keppel. We are working together to make sure we drive that. It was great to visit Darra State School to see their homework centre. They are working very well. The member for Mount Ommaney and I handed out healthy snacks. It was a pleasure to see the students diligently working at their homework.

In the area of industrial relations we were the first state to bring in labour hire licensing laws. We are protecting workers in an industry that for far too long was unregulated. We are putting in \$6 million to boost our labour hire licensing unit. These frontline positions have been very well received. We are building on the success that we had three years ago.

We are also investing up to \$5 million in medical research to improve the health and wellbeing of workers suffering from occupational dust lung diseases. We will never rest on our laurels. We are reviewing the Electrical Safety Act. There is a five-yearly review of the Industrial Relations Act. We are exploring protections for workers subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace, particularly following the terrible revelations that came out of the federal parliament.

In the racing area I was proud to lock in the Country Racing Package with further funding committed through to July 2023. This package is the lifeblood of non-TAB clubs across the state. The continuity of funding will be welcomed by industry and will support tourism and jobs in these local economies. The budget also saw funding allocated to two transformative infrastructure projects that were announced by the now tourism minister. We have committed funding to commence the first phase of the \$38 million redevelopment at the Gold Coast Turf Club. An expression of interest process has now closed and we are shortlisting respondents. This project will improve training tracks and, importantly, there is the addition of lighting for night racing. The construction phase alone will create 300 jobs.

In the Ipswich area the development of the state-of-the-art Greater Brisbane Greyhound Centre is underway with community consultation occurring as we speak. I expect construction to commence very soon. That construction will obviously deliver jobs as well. We have the off-the-track arrangements following the Martin report. That board has now come together. They have a list of projects that they will be funding under the funds that are available and they are rolling out expressions of interest as we speak.

It was an honour to be re-elected by the people of McConnel. I thank them very much. Every single member of my campaign team was a volunteer. There are so many that it is hard to list them all. I thank my campaign manager Linda for the incredible job she did in leading the dedicated team of volunteers. My two staff members, Sam Jones and Judi Jabour, kept the office ticking for the constituents during the campaign. Many wonderful people worked almost around the clock. I cannot thank them enough. We had some wonderful young people on the team as well, people like Shayne, Leo and David. There were so many I cannot mention every single one of them. I also say thank you to Wayne, Peter, Lyn, Trevor, Scott, Robert, Elizabeth, Peter, Talitha, Pema, Steve, Craig and Steve, Pamela and Kay. Ex-senator Claire Moore was tireless in her efforts to assist. I have two or three pages of people to thank and I cannot go through them all. They know who they are. They are wonderful people who gave up their weekends to doorknock and street stall. They gave up their evenings to hit the phones to talk about the commitments the Palaszczuk Labor government has delivered on and our future policies. This is not a job we can do alone.

We are delivering for the constituency. The new Fortitude Valley State High School is absolutely amazing. We have growing schools in the inner city such as New Farm State School and Brisbane Central State School. They are on track for additional buildings with the growth that they are experiencing. We have secured a double sports court facility on Green Square and 13 more classrooms at Fortitude Valley State Secondary College.

Newstead House is getting a facelift. I would love every member to be there when it re-opens. We have allocated \$5.5 million for extensive remedial conservation works. It will be absolutely fantastic once it is finished. We have also allocated \$15 million for the Ballymore upgrade. We are working on finalising the ministerial designation in relation to that and landing on a fantastic design for Ballymore that will be part of the Olympic city.

There will be an expansion of the extended operation of the Spring Hill loop bus service and a trial of electric buses to make sure that the residents of Spring Hill are serviced just as well as other parts of my electorate. It is exciting that we will soon become an Olympic city. I say soon, but it is 11 years away. Knowing how quickly this one year has passed, I hazard a guess that I will be a lot older very soon because I can see 11 years going past quickly.

This was an interesting election because of the opponents that I was facing. There was controversy over what was being said and media reports about some of the candidates. We were scratching our heads sometimes about where some of these political parties got their finances to do the kinds of things they were doing. Then we read the political disclosure return by the Greens which showed that in 2020 they received around \$370,000 from the JobKeeper payments. We were hearing rumours on the ground that they were using JobKeeper to fund some of the staff that they had in an office. The disclosure that I have in front of me shows that that is the case. From what I understand there are disclosures from the Liberal Party showing they claimed about \$175,000. How these parties can claim JobKeeper is beyond me.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** I hear those opposite whingeing and whining. No wonder the people of Queensland could not bring themselves to vote for them.

**Mr Minnikin:** Thirty-five per cent primary vote.

**Ms GRACE:** The LNP went down to 31, member for Chatsworth, just to let you know, in what is a seat held by the Liberals federally and Liberals in the council. Have a look at that and see the extraordinary member that I am to have the good graces of the people of McConnel who voted a Labor member in and backed the Palaszczuk government every step of the way.

I stand in this House very proud to represent an electorate that I have lived in all my life. I have never lived anywhere else but McConnel. It is a proud moment when you are re-elected for the sixth time. I am very proud to be representing the people of McConnel and I thank them every single day. I leave the last few seconds to my husband, Michael, who is absolutely outstanding.