



Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2021

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Vaccination

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.51 am): The Palaszczuk government has a sensible and measured plan to reunite families and protect Queenslanders from COVID-19. We are close to 80 per cent double dosed, and when that happens our borders will reopen. With the new Omicron strain on our doorstep, it is now more urgent than ever that Queenslanders go out and get vaccinated. We take the health of children in our care very seriously indeed. We have a responsibility to protect the more than 500,000 children under 12 in Queensland schools—and even more in early childhood centres—who cannot yet get vaccinated. We have a responsibility to parents and carers who want to know their children are in safe—particularly in education and care—environments.

We have always listened to the health advice and taken appropriate action. We were the first state to move school and early childhood staff into the priority 1B vaccination category. We have had great results from that, with more than 85,000 vaccination doses delivered, and that does not include those teachers and staff who receive their vaccine at their GP or pharmacist.

Today we are taking further strong action to protect those in high-risk settings such as schools and early childhood centres—action that is in the best interests of our children, young people and staff. The health directive to be issued by the Chief Health Officer will mean that all staff and volunteers in schools and early childhood centres, unless they have an appropriate medical exemption, will need to have their first vaccination dose by 17 December and be double dosed by 23 January, prior to the commencement of the 2022 school year. This will include Department of Education staff who go into schools and early childhood centres as part of their work. It will include those going onsite to provide cleaning, repairs and maintenance. This will apply to all sectors, government and non-government. It brings us into line with the mandates in every other mainland state and territory.

This afternoon with my department I will be briefing key stakeholders on the announcement, including professional associations, unions and representatives from the independent, Catholic and early childhood sectors. This action will ensure we keep our children and our education workforce safe and keep our schools and early education centres open. This action will help keep all Queenslanders safe.