




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Schools, Air Conditioning; Caserta, Mr C

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.53 am): As part of our economic recovery plan, the Palaszczuk government is investing in world-class educational facilities across this state, and that includes air-conditioning every classroom, staffroom and library in every state school by June next year. I am pleased to advise the House that Queenslanders are again leading the way in achieving this milestone and, in the process, supporting more than 1,500 jobs.

Of the 649 schools requiring air conditioning, 625 schools have now had their air conditioning installed and are fully operational. This represents over 96 per cent of schools in our Cooler Cleaner Schools Program fully completed, or just over 8,600 spaces. To break it down even further, that is over 7,760 classrooms, over 500 staffrooms and over 190 libraries. This is an absolutely amazing, historic achievement of the Palaszczuk Labor government. The Premier and I announced the program in February 2020, around the same time as the start of COVID. They said it could never be done! They must have thought we were in New South Wales. The remaining 24 schools are all at various stages of installation and electrical works, with all contracts in place.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: Listen to them. They cannot be more happy than to have air conditioning in their schools. They must be jumping in their seats at the moment!

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: Listen to them over there. They are loving every minute of the Palaszczuk Labor government. What an achievement in their electorates—all of them! They are loving every bit of it. All I say is thank you very much to all of you.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. Minister, it would help if you—

Ms GRACE: I digress. The remaining 24 schools are all at various stages of installation and electrical works, with all contracts in place. Significant works will occur during the long Christmas holiday break to minimise disruption to learning. This program is well on its way to be delivered by June 2022, six years—I repeat, six years—earlier than the LNP's inferior commitment to air-condition just classrooms. No wonder they are happy—no wonder!

The new air-conditioning systems can also be used to draw outside fresh air to help ventilation in classrooms. At my request, my department has convened a ventilation strategy working group, who have met throughout October and November, made up of representatives from across the government and non-government education sector. They have consulted widely and received advice from several authorities, including Queensland Health, SafeWork Australia, the World Health Organization, the Dorothy Institute, and QUT and, looked at actions taken by other states and territories.

However, the most important thing we can all do to limit the spread of COVID is to get vaccinated, and that is why all school and early childhood staff will need to be double vaccinated by 23 January 2022, in time for the start of the school year. I take the opportunity to thank my department, hardworking teachers and their staff for all their hard work, professionalism and commitment after another big year, and wish them all the very best for the festive season.

On a sad note, my thoughts are with the family and friends of jockey Chris Caserta, who is currently missing after a late-night swim at Surfers Paradise. I can only imagine what Chris's family and friends are going through.