




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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ADJOURNMENT

Coronavirus, Education

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (6.22 pm): I rise to commend our schools, teachers, parents and students for a relatively seamless transition back to the school year after what we know were the longest school holidays in living memory.

Ms Grace: No, New South Wales and Victoria had those.

Mr WHITING: Absolutely! I said 'relatively seamless' because we have had less disruption to our teaching years here than in other eastern seaboard states. During this pandemic our schools have been opened nearly all the time, and that is unique on the eastern seaboard. That reflects well on our policies as a government.

Firstly, I want to say thank you to the parents I have seen at local schools. They have done very well at wearing masks at school and encouraging their kids to do so as well. Thank you to the parents who have had their kids vaccinated. We need to have more kids vaccinated. I encourage my local parents to keep getting their kids vaccinated, but I thank everyone who has done that so far. I thank the parents for their understanding while we have limited access to schools for four weeks. They have coped with that very well. I thank them for accepting why sometimes we have had to cancel school excursions and school camps. I think the parents have been very understanding as to why we had to do that and I thank them for that.

I want to thank all the staff at my local schools. They have done a tremendous job. To hear that across the state we have a staff absentee rate of just 3.5 per cent, in spite of the doom and gloom we have been hearing everywhere about what would happen, I think reflects really well on our staff. The vaccination rate of over 98 per cent is really good. I commend our staff and teachers—and I commend the minister as well—for what they have done. They have shown the right thing to do—the right thing to do by the students, by the parents, by their colleagues and also by their own families at home. I thank them for getting vaccinated.

Certainly in some of my schools it has been an exciting return for staff and students because some really great infrastructure has been delivered or is being delivered in the area. For example, the Deception Bay State School hall is in the early planning stages. Some \$5 million is coming to this school for the hall. We have the footprint now. We have gone out to consultation. I am really looking forward to that school getting that infrastructure. The performing arts block at Deception Bay High School has been rejuvenated. The STEM block at Moreton Downs State School has been upgraded. I am really proud of the work that we have done at North Lakes State College: the student support centre has been upgraded to a flexi learning centre. There is a \$500,000 project to deliver a rejuvenation of the outside-school-hours care centre. I will talk more at the next chance about the wonderful upgrade of the oval and amenities which has happened.