




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Regional Community Forums

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (10.19 am): I join you, Mr Speaker, and others in acknowledging National Sorry Day. The Palaszczuk Government has always been a government for all of Queensland—the cities and right across the regions. One of the ways we do that is through our regional community forums which give those living in our regions greater access to government and ministers, and better opportunities to influence government decision-making.

Since the forums began, I have been a proud member of both the Wide Bay Burnett-Fraser Coast forum and the Central Queensland forum. I am looking forward to my first regional forum in my new area of the Darling Downs-South West soon. It will be chaired, expertly I am sure, by the members for Ipswich and Ipswich West, and I will be joined by the assistant minister for hydrogen and member for Bundamba.

Families and businesses in Darling Downs-South West, like Queenslanders across the state, are feeling cost-of-living pressures. I welcome the Premier's announcement of \$175 off energy bills which will go a long way to assist Queensland workers balance their home budgets. Workers in the private sector across Australia have experienced stagnating wages for far too long, and bargaining is at an all-time low. That is why the Palaszczuk government is supporting families and advocating a minimum wage increase that keeps up with the cost-of-living pressures.

We have also been working hard to save energy costs for our school communities. Our Advancing Clean Energy Schools Program has now installed more than 197,000 solar panels on nearly 900 schools right across Queensland. This makes a major contribution to our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. It is also expected to reduce energy costs in our schools by around \$10 million per year and support over 550 jobs.

I am delighted that thousands of these panels have been installed in my new community forum region of the Darling Downs-South West, including: Goondiwindi State High School in the Southern Downs electorate with 270 panels installed, and Toowoomba State High School in Toowoomba North electorate with 568 panels installed. Over the last five years, we have invested nearly \$380 million to provide new and improved education infrastructure for the region, such as the wonderful \$15.4 million classroom building which I opened at Harristown State High School. Whether you are a school student in Toowoomba or a business owner in Cairns, the Palaszczuk government is a government that listens and delivers for all of Queensland.