



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR MCCONNELL**


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Record of Proceedings, 23 June 2022

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

**APPROPRIATION BILL**

**REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (12.38 pm): Budgets are about making choices: hard decisions about where public funds are best directed and spent. Budgets are an expression of what a government takes seriously and what it does not. Ultimately budgets are about values. There has been deafening silence from those opposite so far. In this budget the Palaszczuk government has once again given a clear marker of our priorities for the state. Here on this side of the House we are for good jobs, better services and investing in our wonderful Queensland lifestyle. It is not the approach of those opposite with their agenda of cut, sack and sell.

At the last three state elections, the people of Queensland have given their resounding verdict on what they think about that way of doing things. Instead, our approach is one of investing, sensibly and wisely, in the future of our state and backing Queenslanders all the way, regardless of where they live. In my portfolio, this means investing in the future of our kids and grandkids through both schools and early childhood care. We are giving our kids the best possible start in life and supporting our tireless teachers and educators every step of the way. Therefore, I am delighted that in this year's Education budget the Palaszczuk government has invested a record \$16.5 billion.

**Mr Skelton:** It's a great budget. Thanks, Minister.

**Ms GRACE:** I take that interjection from the member for Nicklin. We are doing this because we know that delivering a world-class education allows every child to reach their full potential. That is what I mean when I say budgets are an expression of our values about making choices and setting priorities for the future, just as the great member for Nicklin does.

I turn now to summarise some budget highlights and welcome initiatives in my electorate of McConnell, before going into further detail. As I said earlier, I am thrilled that we have announced a game-changing shift in the way we fund schools to support students living with disability. Among other benefits, that is going to mean dedicated support for an extra 30,000 students a year and an additional \$80 million over the next two years to ensure that no school or student misses out on support as we transition to a new model.

Queensland has led the way with our approach to respectful relationships education, providing students with the skills and knowledge to form relationships that are safe, healthy, free from harassment and sexual violence, and based on mutual respect. In this budget we will invest an additional \$15.5 million over three years to support the delivery of respectful relationships education.

Access to period products should never be a barrier to learning. That is why we are investing \$13.3 million to expand our partnership with Share the Dignity to fund the installation of free period product vending machines in every Queensland state school that wants one. Students will also have access to the Period Talk education program, to help reduce misplaced stigma around periods.

We know how important the early years are and this budget increases our investment in that critical area, with increased funding of \$263 million over four years and \$77 million ongoing to support universal access to kindergarten in the year before school. That is part of our total investment of more than \$1 billion over the next five years, which is the most significant reform to kindergarten in over a decade. It is a great investment in our youngest Queenslanders and a great investment in our state's future.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to all our students having first-rate facilities to learn in. In 2022-23, we will invest almost \$2 billion in hundreds of infrastructure projects from the Gold Coast to the Cape, supporting around 4,200 jobs. In the fastest growing areas of Queensland, that means building new schools. In this budget we announced \$390 million to build another five new primary schools in 2025-26 in Caboolture West, Caloundra South, Ripley, Flagstone and Bahrs Scrub.

For those schools experiencing enrolment growth, there is almost \$220 million to deliver more classrooms. The Palaszczuk government delivers for all of Queensland and that is why we will invest around \$650 million on hundreds of infrastructure upgrades right across the state. Thirty-six schools will share in over \$183 million for the contemporary renewal of learning spaces for specialist curriculum delivery, such as industrial design and science, manual arts, hospitality, home economics and the arts. There is \$109 million for substantial renewal at special schools. There is so much! Every single one of our 18 discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will share in \$43.2 million to get a targeted infrastructure project, co-designed with the local community.

As the Premier talked about this morning, we are also investing \$20 million for playgrounds and tuckshops right across the state. In the coming year, we will invest \$147 million on facility upgrades, including new security fencing, electrical safety, amenities, administration spaces and upgrades to outdoor areas.

This time in 10 years, Queensland will be proudly hosting the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and we want our kids to start getting ready now. Our \$100 million Go for Gold Fund will see major investment in new and improved high-performance sports infrastructure for schools and their local communities. We are also investing \$3.8 million to plan and design 19 school halls and performing arts centres. There is no doubt that investing in education is in Labor's DNA and this budget proves it.

This budget has also delivered a boost to Queensland's racing industry, especially country racing, through a new sustainable funding model. Our five per cent levy on the point of consumption tax and the inclusion of bonus and free bets is levelling the playing field for all wagering operators. Increasing the proportion of betting tax revenue that goes directly to the racing industry from 35 per cent to 80 per cent will provide certainty and, of course, if the size of the pie grows so too will their share. These reforms mean organisations profiting from Queensland's thriving racing industry will be investing in its future.

There are some fantastic highlights for the electorate of McConnel too. The brand new world-class \$750 million Queensland Cancer Centre at the Herston Health Precinct is a fantastic part of our record health budget. There is also the ongoing funding for Newstead House as part of a major conservation project to safeguard Brisbane's oldest surviving European residence. Building on new renovations, there is a much welcomed funding boost for the New Farm Neighbourhood Centre as part of a \$115.8 million investment in neighbourhood and community centres. I know Brisbane Central State School will welcome \$400,000 for equitable access at Block E and there is around \$750,000 for maintenance and minor works for schools. Since 2015 in my electorate, \$180 million has been spent on new school classrooms, the Ballet Academy, multipurpose courts, et cetera.

Of course, like many other residents in Brisbane and those who travel here, my community will benefit hugely from the breathtaking Cross Rail project that is really taking shape and will revolutionise public transport around Brisbane.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Speaker has reviewed and approved my budget speech for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*.

*The speech reads as follows—*

I'd now like to look at some of the announcements I've already mentioned in a little more detail.

The changes we are making to support for students with disability are game changing.

We will be moving to a model that is based on the level of support and adjustment that a child needs to participate in education.

This means that for the first time all disabilities will be formally recognised—including dyslexia, ADHD, foetal alcohol syndrome, Tourette Syndrome, and mental health conditions.

While schools already support these students, there will now be more dedicated resources available.

As well as supporting an extra 30,000 students, other benefits of the new model include:

- A focus on Prep students to give them a great start;
- A new Extensive Plus resourcing category for students with the most intensive needs;
- An easier, streamlined, single process for families without the need for additional medical or specialist reports.

It's a major change, and schools will need time to adjust to the new way of gathering and recording information for the new model. We don't want any school or student to miss out on support during the transition.

That's why we are investing \$80.6 million over the next two years as part of this budget.

This money will fund almost 500 new frontline positions to support students, and provide continuity and certainty, until the new model is fully implemented.

Speaker, students living with disability have the right to participate fully in education on the same basis as their peers. That's what this new model will deliver.

I'm delighted about the \$15.5m we're investing for Respectful Relationships too. The funding will support eight principal advisor roles across the state to provide tailored professional development for our schools and teachers.

This will ensure they are prepared to deliver what can be at times challenging and sensitive topics.

With this funding, every Queensland state school will also be provided with a pro-rata amount of Teacher Relief Scheme funding for three years.

Again, this funding will assist in providing teachers and staff with time to access appropriate personal development and curriculum planning. This is all about building teacher capability and supporting our students' health and wellbeing.

Speaker, let me come back to the 5 new schools we have announced.

Since 2015, the Palaszczuk Government has opened 21 schools, with 11 more already planned for 2023/24.

This means since we launched our Building Future Schools Program, we have invested over \$3 billion for 37 new schools in the fastest growing areas of Queensland.

We are upgrading our existing schools too. This deliberate focus on school renewal has projects from the smallest classroom refurbishment, to multi-million specialist facilities.

Under our \$650 million renewal fund, we have \$183 million for contemporary specialist spaces.

Gladstone High will receive almost \$13m towards renewal of its manual arts building—a project I'm personally delighted to see happen.

There is \$8.5 million for Kepnock State High in Bundaberg for ITD studies.

It's for smaller schools too: \$900,000 each for a science block refurbishment at Springsure State School (Gregory) and a tuckshop upgrade for home economics students at Keppel Sands State School (Keppel).

We've already identified the six special schools that will get major upgrades:

- Red Hill Special School (Cooper)
- Ipswich Special (Ipswich)
- Western Suburbs Special (Inala)
- Kuraby Special (Stretton)
- Woody Point Special (Redcliffe)
- Maryborough Special School (Maryborough)

This builds on the almost \$120m invested last budget to cater for increasing enrolments in 13 special schools across the state with many of these projects still under construction.

There's \$147 million for facility upgrades, which will include:

- A \$2m amenities upgrade at Millmerran State School (Southern Downs) as well as investing \$500k to upgrade the amenities at Garbutt State School (Townsville);
- New security fences will go up at Mareeba SS in Cook (\$1m) and at Miami SHS in the electorate of Mermaid Beach (\$1.2m);
- At Petrie Tce State School in Cooper, we'll invest over \$1m to replace shade sails and install a cover of the walkway;
- Water and sewerage systems will be upgraded at Laura SS in Cook (\$100k), Glenore State School in Lockyer (\$300k) and at St Helens State School in Maryborough with \$2m to be invested there to review and replace the sewerage system.

Schools right across the state will receive money for new classroom buildings, such as:

- \$7.2 million for Darra State School (Mt Ommaney)
- \$8.8 million for Emerald State High (Gregory)
- \$8 million for Moranbah State High (Burdekin)

- \$5.8 million for Serviceton South State School (Inala)
- \$2.3 million for Tully State High (Hill)
- \$9 million for Yandina State School (Nicklin)

And let's not forget our \$362m investment in school maintenance to maintain existing facilities and modernise education infrastructure across the state.

It's wonderful that \$5m has also been set aside for a painting program for over 50 of our smaller schools—mostly in regional Queensland.

Speaker, the budget also continues our investment in a range of other areas, including our Schools Refresh Program, a co-contribution program to further boost investment in school maintenance and improvements.

Schools have had the opportunity to apply for further funding to carry out projects like painting and upgrades to flooring and furniture, tree trimming and roofing maintenance including gutters and downpipes. Some of these projects are still being delivered across the state.

There is also our \$100 million student wellbeing package. It's delivering GPs in 50 state schools across the state providing access to free and confidential health care in areas that need it the most, and employing up to an additional 464 health and wellbeing professionals, mainly psychologists, to support our students and reduce the burden on teachers and families.

We are improving internet access for school staff and students by boosting bandwidth at all Queensland state schools through our \$190million partnership with Telstra.

We are on track to meet our target of employing more than 6,100 new teachers and 1,100 new teacher aides over four years, and our Turn to Teaching program is going from strength to strength.

Speaker, our reforms in racing are going to make a real difference.

The Palaszczuk Government is a strong supporter of racing, and the many regional communities it benefits.

In fact, the economic contribution of the industry has grown 60% to \$1.9 billion under this government.

There are 125 racing clubs across Queensland.

For 85 of those clubs, a race meeting is the biggest or second biggest event in their community each year.

For many of those clubs, a race meeting is a once-a-year event that is an unparalleled opportunity for people to get together.

Our government recognises how important those gatherings are to the social fabric of Queensland.

The changes we've made level the playing field, ensure the industry benefits directly from growth, and will also create opportunities for:

- increased prize money;
- enhanced infrastructure;
- better training facilities.

Speaker, I mentioned some highlights for my electorate of McConnel, which I'd like to go into in a little more detail.

The brand-new world class \$750 million Queensland Cancer Centre will be life-changing for thousands of Queensland cancer sufferers.

With more and more cases each year, we've made a clear decision to invest in the world's best facilities, treatments and research to give Queenslanders the best shot.

It's also about jobs—creating local opportunities for Queensland contractors with more than 2000 construction jobs.

The work at Newstead House shows this government values the past and will protect our shared heritage. This year will see a further \$3.6 million out of a close to 5 and a half million-dollar investment in conservation of this important building.

Works to be undertaken this financial year include critical drainage and service upgrades, repairs to timbers, stone and brickwork, and interior works.

The New Farm Neighbourhood Centre provides critical social infrastructure to my local community, and helps to connect people in McConnel to the support and services they need. I'm so pleased about the investment into neighbourhood and community centres that will allow the team there to do even more great work.

I know the centre can be a beacon of hope for those doing it tough and experiencing social isolation or loneliness, and that's why this investment is so important.

Speaker, this is a budget in the best traditions of progressive Labor Governments.

Budgets are about values and this budget reflects our long-standing and dearly held values about the importance of education to give every child a great start, about investing in our communities, and about governing for all of Queensland.

It delivers good jobs, better services, and protects and enhances our fantastic Queensland lifestyle.

I am proud to be associated with it.

I commend it to the House.