




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 21 February 2023

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

State Schools

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (10.07 am): Right across Queensland, thousands of young Queenslanders have returned to school to receive a world-class education in air-conditioned world-class facilities. The Palaszczuk government is committed to giving our youngest Queenslanders—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: It never fails to surprise me how welcoming they are of air conditioning in schools. The Palaszczuk government is committed to giving our youngest Queenslanders the best start in life so they can go on to be engaged young adults who make a positive contribution to their communities. That means supporting our students, teachers and school staff every single day, which is at the heart of our new Equity and Excellence strategy, a vision for a high-performing, contemporary education system that is unashamedly focused on learning outcomes and ensures no child is left behind. Part of this is reviewing our student disciplinary absences, especially as students with disability and First Nations students are over-represented in those figures. Since I have directed the department to focus on this, I am pleased to advise the House that preliminary statistics indicate SDAs are now trending at some of the lowest levels since 2018.

We know life can throw a curveball at students. That is why our \$100 million wellbeing package means they can get the support they need from GPs, psychologists and other wellbeing professionals in schools. I am also proud of our \$80 million investment to support a two-year transition to a game-changing new resourcing model for students with disability because we know early intervention is crucial. The new model will see resources flow to almost 80,000 students. That is an extra 40,000 students compared to the previous model.

We have other extensive support available, including: our education justice initiative with 11 court liaison officers supporting students back into education or training; our 52 flexi-spaces keeping at-risk students engaged in their own school; and our \$11 million Regional Youth Engagement Service, which supported more than 2,500 early school leavers back into education, training or employment last year alone.

We know that the early years play a huge role in shaping your future. That is why the Palaszczuk government is investing \$1 billion in kindy for all—to make kindy free or cheaper for 40,000 Queensland families. It offers cost-of-living relief. A mother I met at C&K Kingston, in the electorate of the Treasurer, was delighted with her savings of \$200 a fortnight. Investing in education and in our young people is what good Labor governments do. It is what the Palaszczuk government does every single day.