



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2023

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

### **State Schools, Mobile Phones**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.45 am): Mobile phones are everywhere and there has always been a debate about their place in our schools. The issue was reviewed extensively as part of the Premier's nation-leading Anti-Cyberbullying Taskforce. Recommendation 13 stated that schools are best placed to make local policies about mobile phones in consultation with their school communities. We accepted and implemented all of the recommendations of the task force, with the Premier providing the government's response in February 2019 and tabling progress reports in April and November 2019, with the final report in October 2020.

Under this approach of school autonomy, every Queensland state school has been required to have a regularly reviewed policy in their student code of conduct on the use of mobile phones in their schools. Many schools have taken the decision to ban mobile phones, and they have been fully supported to do so. We are always happy to have a fresh look at things, and there is legitimate community debate about whether this approach continues to be the best way to go, particularly given advancements in technology and the issue of distraction. We also need to think about other devices like smartwatches. Some of this work is already underway. In June last year my department commissioned the University of Queensland to conduct an independent evaluation into the effectiveness of responses to address cyberbullying implemented since the task force, with a draft report due next month. I have also asked my department to survey our state schools so we can get a clear picture on exactly what is happening in our schools regarding the banning of phones.

We will always take a measured and balanced approach, and as always the best interests of our students will be at the heart of what we do. Which is why today I can advise the House I will be appointing former Queensland Family and Child Commissioner Cheryl Vardon to carry out an independent review into our policy. Ms Vardon will lead consultation with key stakeholders, review the latest research and survey, and provide a preferred policy position on the use of mobile phones and devices in schools.

When I met with Minister Jason Clare last week, we agreed it would be beneficial—and his preference—to have a nationally consistent approach, as it is clear that banning means different things in different states. The matter is now on the agenda for the next meeting of education ministers. I have also spoken to the new Labor education minister for New South Wales Prue Car—it has been a while since I have been able to say that—who is also keen for a consistent approach. Ms Vardon will provide a report by the end of June, and this will inform government policy going forward and what I take to the next education ministers' meeting. The Palaszczuk government proudly led the way on cyberbullying, and we will always act in the best interests of our students and communities.

I also take a brief moment to wish Jack McKay all the best. He is a great journalist and an even better guy.