




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Far North Queensland, Education

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (10.00 am): Good morning to the students and teachers in the gallery. The Palaszczuk government is committed to providing a world-class education for all Queensland students no matter where they live. We know that our schools in regional, remote and rural locations provide a rich, rewarding and well-rounded education for students. We also know that state schools are often the heart of our regional communities.

Since 2015 the Palaszczuk government has invested around \$500 million—that is half a billion dollars—in education infrastructure in the Cairns region, which includes the Mareeba, Tablelands, Cassowary Coast, Douglas and Yarrabah local government areas, with over \$87 million alone planned in these areas in the current budget. We have invested \$36 million to deliver a new special school in Cairns as well as additional classrooms as it continues to grow. There has also been an investment of over \$30 million in new halls at Smithfield State High School, Cairns State High School and Caravonica State School, and there are three new halls to come at Trinity Bay State High School, Woree State School and Redlynch State College—an investment of \$45 million supporting around 28 jobs during construction.

In the classroom we continue to employ new frontline teachers, with 85 commencing this year in the Cairns LGA alone and a vacancy rate of just one per cent. We have five Turn to Teaching interns at schools across the region—people with backgrounds ranging from marketing and research to veterinary nursing—who are now our next generation of skilled teachers. Our \$190 million partnership with Telstra to upgrade internet speeds is benefiting schools and students, with 25 out of 30 schools in Cairns already receiving their first upgrade, increasing bandwidth by 40 times or more on their previous allocation. One of the main benefits we are hearing from schools is that they are now able to incorporate more interactive technologies and digital learning into their lessons.

Across the Far North four schools are participating in the GP in Schools program: Trinity Bay State High School, Gordonvale State High School, Ravenshoe State High School and Western Cape College. A further 32 schools have access to a health and wellbeing professional employed under our \$100 million Student Wellbeing Package; fifteen schools have a Dignity Vending Machine installed with more to come; and eight schools have homework centres. Across Cairns and the Far North our education initiatives are being rolled out, especially our new Equity and Excellence Education Strategy. The Palaszczuk government is delivering the jobs for educational infrastructure and services that make a real difference to students and communities throughout this great state.