




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2023

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Kindergarten

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.48 am): As the Premier has said, the budget is about delivering cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders. There is no better example of that than our historic announcement of free kindy for all Queensland families. We asked Queenslanders what they thought about free kindy. More than 6,500 responded to our survey, with 98 per cent saying it would help them and their families. We have listened and we have acted. From next year, every child of kindergarten age will receive 15 hours of kindergarten a week for 40 weeks—a total of 600 hours a year—free of charge, whether they are enrolled at a sessional kindergarten or a kindergarten program in a long day care centre. I am incredibly proud to be the education minister in a Palaszczuk Labor government that is bringing free kindy to Queensland.

This is an additional investment of \$645 million over the next four years, bringing our total investment in kindy to over \$2 billion over the next four years. This is a long-term reform that will provide lasting, positive results; it also provides immediate cost-of-living relief for families feeling the crunch, with savings of up to \$4,600 a year for thousands of families.

The announcement today builds on the back of the great success of Kindy for All that started earlier this year. Kindy for All has done a fantastic job in providing free kindy for around 14,000 families and children this year, but the investment today means that more than 50,000 additional children will be able to attend kindy for free from 2024 onwards. This includes around 8,000 kids who could be enrolled in kindy each year who are not. We want everyone to experience the great benefits of kindy, giving our kids a great start.

To support the increased numbers, we are also increasing the support available to the sector to provide a quality kindergarten program for all children, no matter their background, abilities or where they live in the state. We will increase the funds to attract and retain a quality workforce to \$120 million, with a portion specifically dedicated to getting staff to kindy services in regional and remote areas by providing benefits like relocation expenses and accommodation assistance. The successful Kindy Uplift program, which provides targeted resources and professional development to services where children are more likely to experience disadvantage, will receive a \$20 million boost to make a total of \$112 million over the next four years. The number of services benefiting will grow from currently 930 to 2,000 services. There is also an extra \$15 million boost to support children with disability and additional needs, taking the total to \$91 million.

This is a great Labor reform that will leave a legacy for years to come. It ticks all the boxes—good for children, good for families, and good for the economy, but particularly to support women to participate in the workforce. It is another way the Palaszczuk government is delivering on the things that matter to Queensland families.