



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

---

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2023

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Budget, Kindergarten**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.55 am): Yesterday we made an historic announcement—free kindy for every Queensland family from January 2024. This is significant cost-of-living relief, with families set to save up to \$4,600 per year. Yesterday I had the pleasure of meeting with stakeholders from the early childhood sector, and their response was overwhelming. They arrived early to get front row seats to the budget briefing and led the applause when the Premier mentioned free kindy for all Queenslanders. There was a second round of applause when it was talked about again by the Treasurer. These organisations work day in, day out educating and caring for our kindy kids. They know what a huge difference free kindy is going to make.

Louise Jackson, CEO of Lady Gowrie, talked about how kindy can stimulate children’s intellectual growth and curiosity, and fosters a love for learning for life. Dr Sandra Cheeseman, the CEO of C&K, said that giving children the best possible start in the first five years of life is the single most important investment society can make. Dr Ros Baxter, the CEO of Goodstart Early Learning, reflected on how important this is for those families doing it tough, and that cost will no longer be a barrier for any family wanting to get their child to kindy. Elizabeth Death, CEO of the Early Learning & Care Council of Australia, said free kindy is ‘precisely the right policy for the times’.

One of the things the stakeholders told me yesterday was just how happy they were that this is a broader package. The money we are investing will not just make kindy free. I remind the House that it is so much more than that. The Palaszczuk government is investing \$120 million over the next four years to attract and retain a quality workforce, with a portion specifically dedicated to getting staff to kindy services in regional and remote areas—we on this side of the House will always look after the Nationals!—by providing benefits like relocation expenses and accommodation assistance. Others might not, but we do.

The successful Kindy Uplift program has received a \$20 million boost to make a total of \$112 million over four years. Some 2,000 services will now benefit from programs in five targeted improvement areas including oral language, communication and physicality. There is an extra \$15 million to boost support for children with disability and additional needs, taking the total to \$91 million. As part of our new kindy inclusion service we will partner with specialist organisations such as Down Syndrome Queensland, Autism Queensland and Hear and Say to provide free practical support services. I take this opportunity to thank the early childhood sector for their passion, commitment and advocacy. I look forward to working with them closely over the coming months ready to welcome new children to the wonderful world of free kindy in January 2024.