




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2023

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Kindergarten

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.45 am): I would add that they may want to cut the newsletters so that they can cut the grass. The Palaszczuk government is making kindy free for Queensland kids in 2024. This will save families up to \$4,600 a year, providing much needed cost-of-living relief and delivering a great start in life to Queensland kids. Last week I met with representatives from across the early childhood sector at the Early Childhood Forum, where there was overwhelming support for free kindy. Our providers are ready and raring to go.

I can advise the House that our Kindy for All initiative, which started this year, is already delivering positive results, with kindergarten enrolments up 3.6 per cent in 2023 and significant increases across all target cohorts: a 16.3 per cent increase for children with disability, a 10.7 per cent increase for vulnerable and disadvantaged children and a 10.4 per cent increase for First Nations children. These fantastic results are being achieved through our existing Kindy for All initiative, and we look forward to further improvements when free kindy commences next year.

In total, the Palaszczuk government will pour \$2 billion into free kindy over the next four years, underpinned by targeted investments that include: \$120 million on our early childhood workforce strategy, paying dividends; a \$20 million increase in our kindy uplift program, which will rise to \$112 million over four years, already paying dividends; our \$50 million boost to support children with inclusion support needs, taking the total investment in kindergarten inclusion to \$91 million over four years, paying dividends now.

Our investment in the new online kindy finder has also paid dividends. There have been more than 330,000 visits to the site and more than 12,500 free kindy finder searches since the launch in early October. Hopefully, we will get many more as the Wiggles tour Queensland in coming weeks, spreading the free kindy message in concerts from Cairns to Townsville, Mackay and Brisbane. I cannot wait to join them in Brisbane to spread that message around.

I am also delighted to report that every one of our 2,109 approved providers operating a kindergarten program in 2024 will deliver free kindy. This will be spread across both long day care services and sessional kindergartens. Free kindy is coming in 2024, just in case you missed it. I encourage all families with kindy-age children to enrol for next year if they have not already done so.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Ms GRACE: I take the interjection: 'From enrolments'.

Mr Bleijie: 'Minister Bailey, first enrolment'. That's what I said.

Ms GRACE: I will not take that interjection. If there is any way that someone opposite can find a negative and have a whinge and a whine about a good program, I will leave it to the member for Kawana. This is yet another way that the Palaszczuk government is delivering great services and cost-of-living support to Queensland families no matter where they live. If the member for Kawana wants to enrol in kindy, I am sure they will accept his application as well.

Mr SPEAKER: They might not; that is actually true.