

Question on Notice

No. 236

Asked on 10 March 2011

Mr Kilburn asked the Minister for Education and Industrial Relations (Mr Dick) —

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline what action the Bligh Government is taking to improve early childhood education in the Chatsworth Electorate?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question and his ongoing interest in the educating of Queensland children, particularly those in the Chatsworth electorate. I welcome this opportunity to provide an update on the Government's progress in supporting early childhood education in the Chatsworth Electorate.

It is well known that a quality early childhood education sets up our children for learning and success in life, and that's why the Bligh Government is investing \$321 million to establish up to 240 extra kindergarten services in areas of need by 2014.

National and international research has found positive experiences in the early years of life have long-term benefits for health, learning and behaviour. A quality early childhood education and care program, such as kindergarten, creates the stimulating and nurturing environment children need to thrive.

That is why the Government is establishing a new kindergarten offering up to 44 places at Gumdale State School. This service is due to be opened in 2012. An additional \$1.1 million in funding is being provided to extend the existing Carindale Community Kindergarten at Carina State School, which will offer an additional 44 places.

In addition, five long day care services in the Chatsworth electorate were approved to deliver kindergarten programs as part of the 2010 funding rounds, creating up to 138 extra kindergarten places.

These initiatives have boosted the level of provision of kindergarten programs in the Chatsworth electorate, effectively doubling the number of available places for kindergarten aged children.

Through these initiatives the Queensland Government has increased kindergarten capacity in the Chatsworth Electorate by 92 per cent within the past 12 months.

There are a number of other exciting developments that will continue to improve early childhood education in the Chatsworth electorate, including the announcement of a further round of funding for long day care services, which closed on 31 March 2011. Services that successfully apply will be approved as kindergarten program providers and will receive funding under the Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme (QKFS).

In addition, kindergarten services are able to choose from five central governing bodies that support services to deliver the kindergarten program and to access QKFS. These governing bodies are:

- The Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland (C&K)
- Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ)
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC)
- Queensland Lutheran Early Childhood Services (QLECS)

- The Gowrie (Qld) Inc.

Central governing bodies are also assisting services previously funded under the Department of Education Community Kindergarten Assistance Scheme to transition to the QKFS. To support services, the Queensland Government is providing certainty by guaranteeing that community kindergarten services will receive a minimum level of funding equal to their rate of funding for 2010, plus indexation until January 2014 (and recurrent at that level afterwards).

The Bligh Government has also announced a ground-breaking \$5.76 million Solar Kindergarten Installation Program, with 166 kindergartens to initially be retro-fitted with 1.5 kW solar-power units.

These solar-power units will help create sustainable learning and play environments for our children. As well as reducing the amount of greenhouse gases produced by each kindergarten, these solar panels will help reduce the service's annual electricity bills by up to \$400. The savings will be able to be used for more resources for children.

The Solar Kindergarten Installation Program is part of the Bligh Government's commitment to making public buildings and educational facilities more environmentally friendly. In the Chatsworth electorate, the C&K Carindale Community Kindergarten and the Carina Kindergarten and Pre-School will both have solar panels installed.

Solar panels will also be installed at up to 240 new kindergartens built as part of the Bligh Government's Universal Access to Kindergarten program.