



Minister for Education and
Minister for Industrial Relations

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Dear Mr Moloney

Thank you for your letter regarding your Queensland Election Statement 2020.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the strong and enduring working relationship the Palaszczuk Government has with the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU). The open, collaborative and constructive manner in which the QTU approaches all matters related to its membership is deeply valued.

Since 2015 the Palaszczuk Government has achieved a great deal in addressing and advancing a wide range of industrial, employment and professional matters for Queensland's teachers and school leaders. This includes significant work to address principal and teacher workload, a record investment in infrastructure and support for the wellbeing of our principals and teachers. Education is a key priority for the Palaszczuk Government, as it always has been for Labor Governments, therefore you can expect that during the election campaign, there will be a substantial package of announcements made that build upon the great things we have already achieved in education for Queensland.

COVID-19

The global pandemic has impacted upon every facet of our society. This ranges from our health system, to our economy, to the way education is delivered and to the many workers who have lost their jobs.

We acted decisively to ensure our public sector workforce was supported throughout the pandemic. This has included ensuring vulnerable workers are protected and accommodated by providing flexible working from home arrangements and through the implementation of a revised Health Pandemic Directive, with up to 20 days' paid pandemic leave and access to paid special leave. We have also produced the *Looking after yourself during COVID-19* suite of wellbeing support resources, specifically developed to support staff wellbeing in response to COVID-19.

I once again extend my deep gratitude and thanks to our teachers and school leaders who have gone above and beyond in 2020 to ensure Queensland students continue to receive a world class education. The manner in which our workforce has adapted during these unprecedented times has been inspiring.

It is important at the outset that I address the issue of the Palaszczuk Government's temporary wage arrangements for the public sector workforce. I acknowledge that whilst we were not able to agree on this matter, the Government acted in good faith to find a balance between the fiscal and economic realities facing the state whilst ensuring employment security for public sector workers, including our teaching and school leadership workforce. As you are aware, we have honoured all agreements and ensured that by the end of the life of all public sector agreements, all wage increases are paid in full.

As a result of the strong advocacy and representations of the QTU and due to the positive relationship we share, I was pleased we were able to finalise a joint position in relation to

various matters including the early end of the 2020 school year by two days in acknowledgement of extraordinary efforts undertaken during the pandemic.

Principal and Teacher Workload

Providing Queensland students with a world class education is a key priority for the Palaszczuk Government. The Government is also committed to ensuring that our hard-working and deeply committed teachers and school leaders are appropriately supported in their jobs and receive fair and reasonable pay and conditions. This is not only critical in achieving world class student outcomes but is also critical to ensuring our highly valued teaching and school leadership workforce is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

I was pleased last week to issue a joint communication with the QTU on the outcomes achieved through the *Workload Advisory Council*. We recognise and acknowledge that our teachers want to focus on teaching and this has been at the forefront of discussions about workload management and ensuring our students receive a world class education. As a result of the consultative and collaborative work undertaken significant outcomes have been achieved, some of which have been immediately implemented, including:

- the rationalisation of the *P-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework*, including professional autonomy in schools to determine pedagogical frameworks, aligning assessment requirements and promotion of the P-6 Curriculum Planning model to reduce workload; and
- streamlined data and information collections, including improvements to the school review process, reduced workload to deliver school opinion surveys, the reduction of reporting required for School Annual reports, and operational improvements to OneSchool.

I also note additional measures under the Teachers' Certified Agreement 2019 which have been either fully, or in part, implemented that are specifically designed to address workload concerns including:

- increased non-contact time from 2021 (beginning teachers) and from 2022 (primary and/or special school teachers);
- reduction to the annual accumulation of time for student-free day coverage, as well as greater flexibility in the accumulation of student-free day time;
- one additional Teacher Relief Scheme day per secondary teacher FTE in 2020;
- inclusion of reasonable release time for LCC members to conduct consultation related to workplace reform initiatives.

Work is also underway to develop an automated school Annual Safety Assessment (ASA) process to streamline the completion and submission of the ASA, and to simplify chemical management administrative processes to simplify risk assessment processes and record keeping.

I am proud of what we have achieved to date, but there is more work to be done in this important area. If re-elected, the Palaszczuk Government commits to continuing to work with the QTU on matters concerning teacher and principal workload.

Health and Safety and Workforce Wellbeing

The safety of our teachers and school leaders is of paramount importance. The Palaszczuk Government is committed to ensuring all school-based staff feel safe in their workplace, that the highest work health and safety standards are adhered to and that wellbeing is appropriately supported. The development and implementation of the Occupational Violence Prevention procedure demonstrates the seriousness with which this Government takes health and safety in Queensland schools.

Additionally, a comprehensive strategy is being developed to provide safer and more supportive school communities. We acknowledge that this strategy is being developed in collaboration with the QTU and recognise the constructive manner in which the Union is

engaging on this important initiative. A re-elected Palaszczuk Government looks forward to finalising this important work as a matter of priority.

I also seek to highlight the Palaszczuk Government's delivery of the \$8m Principal Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This strategy plays a key role in ensuring our school leaders are supported in their roles to lead healthy workplaces. This strategy will positively impact and support the workload of principals and school leaders in the following areas through:

- A *Principal Hotline* and a *Principal Complex Matters Referral Service* to address and manage raised by parents/students/community.
- Enhanced stress and resilience training programs.
- An updated and overhauled complaints management processes along with new tools and resources to support school leaders to confidently and consistently respond to school-related complaints.

We have also invested \$31.1 million to establish four rural and remote *Centres for Learning and Wellbeing* to provide professional learning and capability development for teachers and school leaders at all stages of their careers. These centres provide mentoring and coaching, resilience building for staff new to rural and remote settings and wellbeing support for both staff and students.

School workplaces are also supported through local workplace health and safety committees, health and safety advisors and regional health and safety support. The *Staff Wellbeing Framework* provides a range of information and resources to support staff health and wellbeing, and free, individualised counselling and support for all staff, and their immediate family members, is available through the department's Employee Assistance Program.

As you know, work health and safety has been an issue I have held close to my heart my entire working life. We have achieved some real and tangible improvements in this area, but more can always be done in this vitally important area. If re-elected, the Palaszczuk Government commits to continue to enhance work health and safety and wellbeing for all school-based staff, including teachers and school leaders.

Alternative learning settings for disengaged students

Ensuring all Queensland children have access to quality and inclusive education is a key priority for the Palaszczuk Government. That is why I am particularly proud of the work we have undertaken with disengaged students.

We have invested \$11.2m in Regional Youth Engagement Hubs to locate, case manage and re-engage early school leavers back into education and training. We have also provided \$16.6m in funding to establish FlexiSpaces in schools to provide a differentiated environment for secondary school students at risk of disengaging.

The \$8m Link and Launch program is helping young people who have completed Year 12 but are not yet in education, employment or training. This program supports these young people to choose a pathway to assist them to successfully transition to study, training or work.

We have also continued to support the 15 Positive Learning Centres to provide alternative spaces that meet and cater for local needs.

Not only do these programs and services assist at risk or disengaged youth and support the re-engagement of those disconnected from education, they also support our teachers and principals in providing alternative collaborative, flexible spaces for their students to undertake their individual learning pathways.

If re-elected, the Palaszczuk Government commits to continue this important work to help positively shape the lives of disengaged students.

Capital works program

Simply put, the Palaszczuk Government's record of investment in education and school infrastructure is unparalleled. Since 2015, we have invested more than \$5.2 billion in school infrastructure, tripling our annual investment in school infrastructure between 2015 and 2020 from \$500 million to \$1.5 billion.

New schools and upgrades

Our record investment in school infrastructure has supported nearly 17,200 jobs across the five years of the Palaszczuk Government. We know that by building and upgrading the schools of the future we are creating the jobs of today and providing a world-class education. As we unite and recover from the COVID-19 global health pandemic, our recovery plan continues our investment in school infrastructure and through supporting local jobs. When it comes to building the new schools, new classrooms and new facilities in schools, it is the Palaszczuk Government that does it best.

Since 2015 the Palaszczuk Government has built and opened 13 new schools with another nine to be delivered in the next four years.

Our Renewing Our Schools program is investing \$235 million to upgrade education infrastructure across the state, delivering both new and upgraded modern learning facilities for some of our oldest secondary schools. This investment is delivering a broad range of exciting infrastructure projects to meet school needs including multipurpose sports centres, resource centres, general learning areas, science laboratories, performing arts centres, refurbishments of existing facilities and communications upgrades.

This is on top of the \$200 million we invested through the Advancing Queensland Schools program to build 30 new school halls across the state, with all 30 projects now completed and local school communities using and enjoying these new facilities.

In total, since 2015 the Palaszczuk Government has built 2,067 new classrooms in Queensland schools. Our investment includes the \$250 million 2020 Ready Program, that delivered additional classrooms at 61 state secondary schools to accommodate all students for the start of the 2020 school year.

Our signature \$477 million Cooler Cleaner Schools Program will air-condition every classroom, library and staffroom in every state school in Queensland and we will put 190,000 solar panels on school rooftops to help offset the cost. Our recovery plan will continue to invest in our schools, creating a better future for our children and supporting many important jobs across the state.

Queensland state schools are currently undergoing a refurbishment and upgrade bonanza. This \$220 million investment is supporting 720 jobs as schools engage with local businesses to get vital refurbishment work done as soon as possible. This includes upgrading classrooms, building new outdoor learning spaces, painting and upgrading amenities blocks and improving playgrounds across Queensland.

The Palaszczuk Government's record infrastructure investment is in stark contrast to that of the LNP. When in government, the LNP closed six schools and reduced capital spending by over \$200m in their third year.

ICT capacity

In response to the COVID-19 health pandemic, significant ICT capability development was undertaken. As a result, schools throughout Queensland now have an increased range of videoconference and online learning tools that includes Microsoft Teams, Zoom Enterprise Edition and Blackboard Learn and Collaborate Ultra for both school and corporate users. In addition, 24/7 access to resource and training materials has been provided, supporting online teaching, collaboration and communication tools for school leaders and teachers.

The capacity and availability of online learning systems and resources have been increased and school ICT infrastructure improved. This improvement includes uplifting individual school network bandwidth into schools to support learning@home and online learning.

Upgrades to ICT capacity include:

- Over 1,200 schools upgraded and expanded WiFi capacity under The Wireless Extension Project.
- Over 1,000 schools in areas impacted by the discontinuation of copper-based services were upgraded to ensure they had no interruptions to their services.

NAPLAN

The Palaszczuk Government recognises and acknowledges the concerns expressed by the QTU, teachers, school leaders and parents with respect to NAPLAN. The Palaszczuk Government proudly led the call for a national review and, joined by the Victorian, New South Wales and ACT Governments, commissioned a comprehensive review of NAPLAN testing.

Whilst the Federal Government did not agree to progress the review to the next stage, a re-elected Palaszczuk Government will continue to strongly advocate for the replacement of NAPLAN with a world-class test that best serves Queensland students.

School Curriculum

As you are aware, the school curriculum is set nationally by the Federal Government and any review needs to be agreed by all states and territories. The Palaszczuk Government has been a strong supporter of the review into the curriculum being undertaken right now of the Foundation (Prep) to Year 10 Australian Curriculum, focusing on the refinement, realignment and decluttering of the curriculum.

The Palaszczuk Government's focus has been on providing a world-class education that produces well-rounded adults at the end of their education journey. This includes a very strong focus on reading, writing and mathematics and getting the building blocks of education right, particularly in the early years.

We recognised that Maths, Science and English are a big part of the future. That's why we have invested significantly in Mathematics, Science and Technologies, including \$81m for STEM in primary schools.

This government has provided opportunities for local decision making and flexibility in implementing the curriculum, including determining their implementation schedule and approach, and determining the number of learning areas and/or subjects to be reported each semester.

Extensive resources are also available to support implementation of the Australian curriculum, including Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C), the Assessment and Moderation Hub and the STEM Hub.

If re-elected, the Palaszczuk Government commits to continue to work with the QTU and all other jurisdictions in Australia to refine, realign and declutter the curriculum.

Maintaining and maximising permanent employment

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to maximising permanency for all government employees. This is reflected in recent changes made to the *Public Service Act* and provisions contained within a range of industrial instruments that support permanent employment within the Queensland public sector.

As well as ensuring permanent employment of our teachers is maximised, long-term temporary teachers are permanently appointed via the Teacher Temporary to Permanent

(T2P) conversion process. The T2P process provides for eligible teachers to be invited to be converted to permanent employment. Eligibility for the T2P process has recently been reduced from three years of service to two years of service, in accordance with the current industrial provisions.

For principal positions, as soon as a permanent vacancy is identified, planning is undertaken between the Regional Director, Assistant Regional Director(s) and regional Human Resources team to ensure a recruitment strategy is in place to fill the position permanently.

Under the LNP Government, more than 14,000 public servants were sacked. This was after hard working public servants were told they had 'nothing to fear'.

Doing all we can to ensure safe and secure employment for public sector workers is in the Palaszczuk Government's DNA. Accordingly, if re-elected we commit to continuing to ensure maximisation of permanent employment.

Teachers, Teacher Aides, Heads of Department (Curriculum)

Since March 2015, over 6,000 additional teacher FTE have been employed by the Palaszczuk Government. In relation to our 2017 commitment to employ 3,700 over four years, we are on track to reach this target. These measures will ensure we respond to growth as well as the impacts of the introduction of SATE and 2020 Ready.

Our teacher aides play an important role in classrooms across Queensland and I know that they are valued in all of our state schools. Under the Palaszczuk Government's \$24.8m commitment, an extra 4,000 teacher aide hours per week were delivered to Prep classes across Queensland.

In addition, since 2015 we have increased the number of teacher aides in our schools by almost 1,500 FTE.

The Palaszczuk Government recognises the work being undertaken by Heads of Department (Curriculum) HoDCs in our state schools, assisting school leadership teams to lead and coordinate the maintenance, review and implementation of curriculum frameworks, pedagogy, programs, assessment and reporting.

Under the 2019 Teachers' Certified Agreement we have made some positive changes to these positions. Significantly, the threshold for schools to become entitled to a partial HoDC allocation has been lowered from 225 to 200 from 2021.

In addition, the value of these positions has been recognised, with the salary increased accordingly to the equivalent of a secondary school Head of Department.

We have made significant progress to lift the status of the teaching profession and show young Queenslanders that teaching is a desirable and rewarding profession. Teachers can now earn up to around \$122,000 per year as a Lead Teacher and around \$112,000 as a Highly Accomplished Teacher. These classifications are accredited through a rigorous application process that incorporates the professional standards for teachers.

In contrast to our achievements in increasing teacher and teacher aide numbers and address teacher workload, when the LNP was in government, they changed the formula for calculating teacher numbers at schools, leaving some with reduced staffing levels – equivalent to a cut of more than 500 teachers.

Gender Equity

In September 2019 the Palaszczuk Government announced changes to better support gender equity, including providing gender equitable access to paid parental leave by amending the relevant Directive and removing hours-based barriers to increment progression for part-time employees via award amendments.

I am pleased to advise that the Paid Parental Leave Directive was revised last week to provide gender equitable access to paid parental and that the award amendments have been made through consent applications with an operative date of 2 September.

As we all know, there is so much more to be done in terms of gender equity. That is why the Palaszczuk Government, if re-elected will continue to progress gender equity initiatives both for Queensland 's public sector workforce and more broadly within the State.

Further correspondence

We are committed to continuing the collaborative and productive relationship with the QTU. We look forward to writing back to you during the election campaign to outline our education commitments.

In the meantime, please be assured that if re-elected the Palaszczuk Government will continue to work closely with the QTU and its members to ensure our hard-working teachers and school leaders continue to be provided with safe and secure employment. This is in direct contrast with the alternative. Under a LNP Government, led by Deb Frecklington, Queenslanders can bank on cuts to services, sacking frontline workers, the selling of assets and a dim future for working people.

Yours sincerely



GRACE GRACE MP
Minister for Education and
Minister for Industrial Relations