

Media release

JOINT STATEMENT



Premier and Minister for Trade

The Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk

Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations

The Honourable Grace Grace

Sunday, April 12, 2020

\$17 million relief package enables free community kindergarten for term 2

The Palaszczuk Government has unveiled a \$17 million support package for community kindergartens struggling with falling enrolments from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The big funding boost will enable more than 22 000 young children to continue to enjoy a free kindergarten program and the options for learning at home.

"Without these extra funds, sadly many community kindergartens already facing falling enrolment numbers could be forced to close their doors, possibly never to open again.

"Early years education is a critical part of our efforts to give every young Queensland a great start.

"Our vital one-off funding will now support 465 Queensland community kindergartens right across the state to stay open in term 2 and, importantly, to enable them to provide their programs free of charge for families for this period.

"It also provides confidence and certainty for the nearly 3,000 staff and kindy children's families across this vital sector.

"We must ensure community kindergartens can continue to deliver a much-needed service in their communities, whether that be in a centre or 'learning at home', Ms Palaszczuk said.

"We know the big benefits that flow for children who participate in a quality kindergarten program in the year before school – from learning through play to socialising with children their own age."

The extra funding package is in line with the federal government announcement of free childcare last week.

The Queensland Government's extra \$17 million support for Term 2 is on top of the existing \$90 million in funding the Queensland Government provides the community kindergarten sector each year.

Education Minister Grace Grace said the Palaszczuk Government has been consulting with the sector and has heard their urgent and very real concerns.

"We know the full impact COVID-19 is having on enrolment numbers at community kindergartens and across the early childhood sector," she said.

"We've acted quickly to give them certainty so they can keep open and keep preparing our youngsters for school.

"Community kindergarten has been part of Queensland for over 100 years and we want to ensure that a strong kindergarten sector can continue to operate to support families and children, including children with disabilities during COVID-19.

"Just as importantly, we want to ensure there is a viable community kindergarten sector up and ready to go once we get through COVID-19 pandemic.

"Community Kindergartens play a key role in communities across the length and breadth of the state, including regional centres like Mt Isa, Barcaldine, Longreach, Biloela, Charters Towers, Tara, Weipa, Miles, Clermont.

"The additional funding will cover wages and on-costs for an Early Childhood Teacher and an Assistant early childhood teacher required to directly deliver a kindergarten program for the next 10 weeks of term 2.

"These workers are playing such an incredibly important role in supporting Queensland families, providing safe and engaging environments for children to play and learn.

"I want to thank all early childhood educators for their hard work and patience during this time."

The package will assist:

- 465 community kindergartens to remain operational throughout term 2, including 128 in regional Queensland, often in locations with no other service nearby
- 2,754 early childhood teachers and educators to continue to be employed
- More than 22 000 children who will continue to enjoy a kindergarten program (including options for learning at home)
- and provide certainty for families and children including children with a disability.

The support package also includes the waiving of regulation fees and changing the guidelines to enable services in rural and remote locations who do not have an early childhood teacher to receive payments for this time.

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Media contact: Brock Taylor – 0427 018 178