



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Employment

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.39 a.m.), by leave: Creating jobs and reducing Queensland's unemployment level is my Government's highest priority, so I am pleased to inform the House that, since our election, employment in Queensland has surged forward. In fact, the growth has been beyond expectations. In the 1998 September Budget, the Government forecast year-average employment growth of 2.2%. We have exceeded our own goals and produced employment growth of 2.7%. This growth has translated into a dramatic reduction in the unemployment rate.

The number of employed people in Queensland has increased by 44,500 since June 1998. The Budget of the last conservative Government said that unemployment would rise; we have turned that around. We have created 44,500 jobs since June 1998. That means that 44,500 Queenslanders who did not have a job under the previous Government are now gainfully employed. This Government has lowered the unemployment rate to 8.1% from the 8.8% rate we inherited from the previous Government. We have done this by focusing the Government's policies and programs squarely on job creation.

We promised to create 30,000 new jobs in Queensland over the 1998-99 financial year, and we have exceeded this target by almost 50%. However, the challenge is not just to create jobs and reduce unemployment, it is also to ensure that people are employed in meaningful jobs that support a decent standard of living. We have therefore also strived to ensure that the jobs created are full time. On this measure, the Government is also achieving its goals. Eighty per cent of the jobs created over the past year were full time. That is what is important: 80% of the jobs created over the past year were full time. That compares with the rest of Australia, where less than 40% of the total jobs created over the same period were full time. That is a stark difference.

These results show that not only is Queensland creating twice the number of new jobs as Victoria, or four times the number of new jobs in Western Australia, we are also creating over double the number of full-time jobs in relative terms. In fact, Queensland created around 45% of the total number of full-time jobs created in Australia in 1998-99. This compares with our current employment share of just under 19%. Importantly, strong growth was recorded in both male and female employment in 1998-99, with the total number of males employed rising by 3% and females by 2.4%.

It is also interesting to note that the new jobs created in Queensland since this Government took office have been spread across a number of different sectors of the economy. In 1998-99, particularly strong growth was recorded in cultural and recreational services, 14.9%; construction, 10.4%; wholesale trade, 7.5%; agriculture, forestry and fishing, 6.1%; and health and community services, 5.4%. These figures are encouraging because they indicate Queensland's strong economic growth is translating into employment growth across the economy as a whole.

A further challenge for this Government is to ensure that jobs are being created for our young and for those 45 years and above. After all, it is these two groups that often have the most difficulty gaining employment in competitive employment markets. It is therefore encouraging that in terms of employment by age, exceptional growth has been recorded in both the 15 to 19 year and 45-plus year age groups, with 6.2% and 5.4% respectively. The unemployment rate for the 15 to 19 year age group seeking full-time work fell by 2.5 percentage points last financial year to 24%.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation.

Mr BEATTIE: This level is still unacceptably high but is moving fast in the right direction. The impact of Queensland's strong jobs growth on the State's unemployment rate has been limited by Queensland's persistently strong growth in the labour force. In 1998-99, Queensland's labour force continued to grow at more than double the rate of the rest of Australia, recording growth of 1.9% compared with 0.8% in the rest of Australia. My Government will continue to lead Australia in terms of employment growth in Australia, and we will reach the employment targets that we set for Queensland.
