



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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NATIONAL JOBS STRATEGY

Ms STRUTHERS (Alger—ALP) (10.24 a.m.): Last week, ACOSS president Michael Raper called on the federal government to implement a national jobs strategy in the May budget. Employment growth must be a national priority. The outlook for job seekers across Australia will be very gloomy if the federal government fails to act. But we know that John Howard has been 'Stoned' and told bluntly by his own colleagues that he is out of touch—so out of touch that, when he first came to office, he ripped \$4 billion out of labour market programs, and the national employment effort has not recovered from this savaging.

The Beattie government has been making headway with its Breaking the Unemployment Cycle and Smart State strategies. More than 30 people in my local area have gained work from their participation in Community Jobs Plan projects—projects that provide real work and real training.

I am certainly pleased to have been appointed by the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth to work with mature age people across the state. Our state effort, however, is like putty to major cracks, and the cracks themselves have to be removed through a national jobs strategy. The strategy must include a range of economic and social policies, improved macro-economic and fiscal management, regional and infrastructure development and industry policy.

I have heard it said that John Howard is a 'Prime Miniature', not a Prime Minister—a mean-spirited, narrow-minded man, not the kind of courageous and compassionate leader that this country so desperately needs. The unemployed people in my electorate—many of them highly skilled, displaced mature age people—desperately need a federal government that cares about their job security and their future.
