



Speech by

CAROLYN MALE

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (12.16 p.m.): I rise this afternoon to tell the House about the effect of the Beattie Labor government's positive employment programs on the Glass House electorate. Almost 250 people in the seat of Glass House have received jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships under state government programs over the past two and a half years. These 246 people were able to gain positions directly through initiatives under the Beattie Labor government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program. They vary from young job-seekers fresh from leaving school to mature, long-term unemployed. These unemployed people include 30 who received training, Jobsearch and other assistance under a project that received \$55,670 from the Community Employment Assistance Program. Another \$178,000 has been paid as cash incentives to 77 private employers and five group training organisations who have employed 35 additional trainees and 66 additional apprentices in crucial skills shortage industries.

The state government and local authorities have done their part as well by creating 38 extra traineeships, two extra apprenticeships and nine school based positions under the Public Sector Employment Program. The innovative Mary Valley CAN DO project has also received over \$154,000 to increase the skills of 400 Mary Valley people, and it is getting wonderful results. Extra training has also been provided for mature-age job seekers through the Back to Work program, and employers have received \$10,000 in wage subsidies for hiring three eligible, mature-age job seekers under the Experience Pays program.

The Beattie Labor government has taken the policy position that the only way to improve job opportunities is to directly intervene in the employment market by offering apprenticeships and traineeships, especially in skills shortage industries such as building and construction. It is one of the reasons Queensland now has the lowest unemployment rate in well over a decade. The latest employment rate is down 0.3 per cent to 6.3 per cent in Queensland, and most of that growth is in full-time jobs.

The Beattie government's approach to job creation is in stark contrast to the National Party's publicised policy. The National Party employment policy document mentions apprenticeships or traineeships only once, at the end. Indeed, I call on the National Party to explain if it supports apprenticeships and traineeships and if it would continue the government programs to the current levels if it were to win government.

Mr McNamara: They abolished them all last time.

Ms MALE: I think I know the answer already, as the member for Hervey Bay has alluded to. Last time the National Party won power, in 1996, it abolished Labor's employment programs and did not even have an employment minister.

The previous National Party approach to job creation tended to be hands off, allowing market forces to determine employment levels. This attitude is clearly evident in its present policy document, which was available for perusal on its web site. I say that it 'was' available on the web site because a quick check this morning showed that it has replaced all of its longer policy documents with one-page statements containing mainly motherhood statements, similar to One Nation's policy documents. Gee, the National Party copying One Nation! When did I see that happen before?

While we are talking about One Nation policy, the short two-and-a-half paragraphs on the One Nation policy centre web site was so full of grammatical and typographical errors that it was almost

unreadable. Last week the Nationals' policy documents—which I assume are the same ones that the Liberals support—were several pages long. While the documents may have been longer, they did not include many hard details on where the coalition was going to spend taxpayers' funds. Quantity does not necessarily equate to quality.

What has caused this change in policy documents? Does it have anything to do with the fact that the coalition received such a shellacking from the Treasurer last week over its sport policy? It has obviously taken the view that it is going to hide its policies from the people of Queensland in case more people realise what an outdated policy vacuum the National Party is. So much for an open, accountable and positive National Party! But do not worry: I printed off their first set of policy documents last week—in the same way that the Treasurer did. So if people want to read a bit more about the Nationals' policies they can contact me and I would be glad to give them a copy and also point out the many flaws in their policies—just like in their employment and training policy.

The Nationals' and Liberals' policy of letting the market alone decide who gets employed does not help the long-term unemployed, the mature-aged, unskilled or inexperienced job seekers. It also does not help job creation planning, where training programs can be designed to plug future employment gaps based on long-term employment forecasting. People need governments to proactively play a role in creating jobs through apprenticeships and traineeships and not leave them at the mercy of market forces, where the bottom line is profit margins, not job opportunities and job security.

This is what the Beattie Labor government has done. However, having the lowest unemployment rate in over 10 years is not enough. More has to be done to get people into a job, especially in Glass House, where unemployment rates are still too high. The recently passed education and training reform legislation will go a long way in further improving the employability of our young people and includes programs which target those kids who are most likely to drop out and go on the dole. It is another example of where the Beattie government is directly getting involved in the jobs and training market. The Beattie government's track record shows that it works and that is why we have policies for the future growth of our state.