



Speech by

KAREN STRUTHERS

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Hansard 14 October 2003

45 PLUS PROGRAM

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeester—ALP) (12.06 p.m.): Members would be aware of the campaign to achieve 45 jobs for over 45s in 45 weeks that has been running on the south side of Brisbane. It is pleasing to see that the program is breeding and breeding fast. The member for Hervey Bay, Andrew McNamara, has given us a good exposé of his initiative in Hervey Bay and the success of that program. Well done to him. The member for Mudgeeraba, Di Reilly, has also taken up the initiative having seen the success of the south side program, as has the member for Mundingburra, Lindy Nelson-Carr. I know that my colleague Geoff Wilson, the member for Ferny Grove, has been promoting the needs of people over 45 without necessarily having a specific program.

Mr Wilson: I am taking up the vision that you have established.

Ms STRUTHERS: I will take that interjection. I am proud to report that the program on the south side of Brisbane is now complete. It has passed its 45 weeks and guess how many jobs were achieved?. We have now achieved 71 jobs in 45 weeks. That is 71 people who had desperately been applying for jobs and not getting them. That is 71 people who had been fronting up for interviews without success. That is 71 people who now have money in their pockets, greater security and a brighter future ahead.

There are major differences between the Beattie Labor government and the conservative coalition parties. One of those striking differences is our commitment to jobs. The Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program, the \$600-plus million program, and the commitment to that over the past five years is astounding. The difference is astounding. For the brief time that those opposite were in government in the past decade they did not even have a dedicated minister for employment. That is the difference.

The Beattie government is determined to build jobs and to build cooperation between employers, community groups, government and job seekers. The coalition parties were determined to sour these relationships. The coalition parties favoured harsh industrial relations laws and favoured a harsh and cynical view of government jobs programs.

The Beattie government through the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program and our Smart State economic development initiatives have been working together and working in a hugely successful way. Unemployment levels, as members have said this morning, have dropped to the lowest levels in 14 years. When the coalition was in government in 1989 there was a low rate. It is a great achievement of this government that we have it at 6.5 per cent.

That is a wonderful figure. We are not talking about figures, we are talking about people's lives—people who now have jobs and now have security. In fact, Queensland is one of the biggest performers on the national stage in terms of jobs growth and getting the unemployment rate down. In September, Queensland created 74 per cent of 7,700 jobs created nationally. That is 74 per cent of the national total. That is good news because many of these were full-time jobs. It is remarkable. It is remarkable because of the determination of this government to get something done. It means that tens of thousands of people now have jobs who did not have them previously. It means that tens of thousands of people can now look forward to greater security.

The local jobs program 45 jobs in 45 weeks for over 45s has provided real jobs, despite the bleating and cynicism shown by the coalition parties. The magic ingredient in the success of this local

program is the way parties have worked together. When the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth, Matt Foley, asked me to promote the state government initiated programs available for people over 45 in the jobs market, I was very keen to do so.

I approached Ray Goodey, the editor of Quest newspaper the *Southern Star*, Geoff Wilson from the Southside Chamber of Commerce; Department of Employment and Training officers on the south side of Brisbane; and Civic Solutions, formerly Mount Gravatt Training Centre. None of these people needed their arms twisted. They were all keen to be involved and they have all worked together well. Special congratulations should go to Sheila Orr, the project officer at Civic Solutions. She deserves a medal for the great way in which she has supported, trained and placed these people. In fact, the comment she made is that employers are giving her lots of positive feedback about how good the people over 45 are. That is my message to people and to employers particularly around the state. People over 45 are not past their use-by date. Experience does pay. Give them a fair go.