




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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JOBS QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (5.52 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Jobs Queensland Bill 2015. When the Palaszczuk government was elected by the people of Queensland earlier this year, we made it very clear that our focus was on jobs, jobs and jobs. Labor is committed to providing Queenslanders with secure jobs with fair wages and conditions. After the rising unemployment and mass sackings under the Newman government, we undertook to show that Labor's way—job creation without asset sales—is a better way for Queensland. It pleased me to see that unemployment has dropped in Queensland since the election of the Palaszczuk government at the start of this year. We have not flagged from our commitment to jobs for Queenslanders and this bill forms a key part of that commitment. We have a plan for jobs now and jobs for the future. The \$1.6 billion Working Queensland framework sets job creation as a Palaszczuk government core policy objective to lead Queensland to a prosperous and inclusive future. Working Queensland includes a commitment to establish Jobs Queensland as an independent statutory entity and that is what this bill is about today. Jobs Queensland will provide strategic industry advice to government on skills demand and long-term workforce planning with a focus on making Queensland's vocational education and training sector the strongest and most productive in Australia. This independent advice will help inform priorities for the Queensland government's significant investment in vocational education and training. It will lead to a more responsive vocational education and training sector which will, in turn, help support future employment opportunities by ensuring Queenslanders' skills better align to future job needs. I am proud to be part of a government that has jobs for Queenslanders as its No.1 priority. We know that the availability of jobs is of crucial importance to the wellbeing of Queenslanders because having a job delivers so many benefits. The most obvious benefit of having a job is financial security, but through work we can also acquire a sense of purpose, identity and connection with our community.

The record of the LNP under Newman shows that the LNP do not take seriously the challenge of ensuring that Queenslanders have access to the benefits of a job. When the Newman government came to power in 2012 it trumpeted a four per cent target for unemployment in Queensland. At the time unemployment in Queensland was 5.5 per cent. Three years later, in January 2015, the Newman government presided over a 6.6 per cent Queensland unemployment rate, hitting an 11-year high. I think it is fair to say that the LNP did not have a serious plan for jobs in Queensland. Sounding off about four per cent unemployment targets and then slashing 24,000 public sector jobs does not constitute a serious plan for jobs in Queensland. Slashing labour programs with a proven track record of delivering real employment opportunities to Queenslanders like Skilling Queenslanders for Work does not constitute a serious plan for jobs in Queensland. The LNP's atrocious track record on jobs was particularly hard felt in my electorate of Ipswich which bore the brunt of the Newman government's slash-and-burn job cuts, cutbacks to training programs like Skilling Queenslanders for Work and the axing of funds to community organisations and front-line services.

At the time of the election in January this year, the *Queensland Times* reported that unemployment in the Ipswich region had risen from 5.3 per cent in 2012 when the Newman government came to power to a staggering nine per cent. Yearly average youth unemployment in the Ipswich region went up from just over 12 per cent in the first year of the Newman government to 18.5 per cent in its final full year in 2014. I vowed at the time to fight hard to get those Ipswich residents back to work and I am proud to be standing here today as part of a government that is putting forward a key part of its Working Queensland framework. Well-targeted vocational education training is so important to reducing the high levels of unemployment, especially youth unemployment, that came about under the Newman government. The Jobs Queensland Bill aims to make the Queensland vocational education and training sector the strongest and most productive in Australia. As the minister for training noted in her speech, it is of great importance that industry is free to form an independent view on where future skills demand is likely to occur within the economy.

The government intends Jobs Queensland to comprise an independent board with a mix of industry leaders, employer representatives, union representatives and members with relevant expert or specialist skills. Jobs Queensland will give independent advice to the training and skills minister about the skills it anticipates will be needed for particular industries and regional areas, about future workforce development and planning and about the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland. Jobs Queensland will also carry out and promote research in relation to these three matters and it will be required to promote public awareness of its statutory functions. This will be one of Jobs Queensland's core functions and it will also lead and work with other bodies to ensure adequate workforce planning is undertaken across the country. It is expected that once Jobs Queensland is established it will identify sectors or regions where workforce planning is required and partner with key agencies and bodies with the expertise and skills needed to undertake effective and comprehensive workforce plans.

The Jobs Queensland Bill specifies that it must perform its functions while having regard to community and industry skills and workforce development needs as well as economic factors affecting the state. As I have said, this Jobs Queensland Bill forms a key part of the Palaszczuk government's election commitments outlined in the Working Queensland framework. Jobs Queensland will help support future employment opportunities, ensure skills better align to the job needs of the future and help develop a workforce capable of supporting sustainable economic growth across Queensland. Jobs Queensland will be an independent body that will reinstate the voice of industry on skills in Queensland. Through the establishment of the independent entity Jobs Queensland, this bill forms a key part of the Palaszczuk government's plans for jobs in Queensland. For all these reasons, I am very proud to support the Jobs Queensland Bill 2015.