




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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PAYROLL TAX REBATE, REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (4.47 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Payroll Tax Rebate, Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I thank the members of the committee for their work on this bill, particularly my electoral neighbour and chair of the committee, the member for Bulimba, who is renowned in the electorate for her hard work, which shows up again in this bill. I support the objectives of the bill to provide a payroll tax rebate on the wages of apprentices and trainees, its changes that will support electronic conveyancing and its amendments to the Duties Act, the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000, the Payroll Tax Act 1971 and the Taxation Administration Act 2001 to ensure their proper operation.

It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of a bill that demonstrates that the Palaszczuk government is serious about implementing its election commitments. This bill will give effect to the election commitment to provide a payroll tax rebate on wages of apprentices and trainees. For me personally, one of the most distressing aspects of the election campaign was the number of young people whom I met who were either unemployed or underemployed. Those young people and their families were extremely distressed by the very high youth unemployment rates, which is in the high teens in my electorate. Those families told me that they were looking for a government that would not just support young people to get any job but also assist them to gain real skills to build a career over their entire working lives.

During the election campaign and since being elected I have spent much time meeting with and listening to small business owners. One of the key questions I like to ask is: what do you need our government to do to help you employ just one more person? For many employers, the response often comes back to their desire to support young people at the start of their careers by being able to offer them apprenticeships and traineeships.

Employers that I deal with do not simply view their business operations through the narrow prism of earning a return on their investment. This is very important for them, but they also frequently discuss the obligations they have to build our community. They not only want to provide a good service but also want to provide good and stable employment and assist with training and development.

Assisting employers to create employment has benefits for the prospective employees, but it also greatly assists the employers, many of whom face real capacity constraints when it comes to expanding their businesses. Employment creation of this nature will have multiplier effects in the entire economy. We will increase the skills of the workforce and there will be follow-on effects as newly employed workers gain the confidence to consume additional goods and services.

I started my career as an on-the-job trainee. I commenced my work as a student nurse at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, combining classroom periods with on-the-job training. These latter periods were the times when I had to show up on time, present myself well, deal with real people, be accountable for my actions and build the technical skills necessary to do my job. So while I was getting a formal education about the technical aspects of my career, I was also getting a real life education about what it takes to be a productive employee.

Like many young people at the end of high school I did not feel that a tertiary education was right for me. Apprenticeships and traineeships give young people an alternative pathway into employment. This pathway set me up for a lifetime of productive work. It also gave me time to mature and allowed me time to turn to tertiary education when I felt I was ready. We must continue to support young people who want to access these types of opportunities. This bill allows us the opportunity to do this.

It is with these two groups in mind—young people and small business owners—that I support this bill. This bill will provide real incentives for employers to take on apprentices and trainees. It does this in a way that minimises implementation costs. This bill builds on a model that was introduced by a former Labor government in 2009 and is thus very familiar to Queensland employers.

The fact that this program will create employment is backed up by the submission of the National Retail Association. It is their submission that these payroll tax incentives will encourage employers to increase the number of apprentices and trainees they engage, increasing the levels of employment, particularly amongst young workers. I thank the National Retail Association for their thoughtful contribution and their ongoing work advocating for such an important part of our economy.

The Palaszczuk government is serious about creating employment in this state. We know that government needs to work together with employers to create real opportunities in our communities. We know that governments can and must play a role in stimulating our economy. The Palaszczuk Labor government has listened to small business owners and knows that they want this type of support so they can increase the capacity of their businesses and make a real contribution to developing the workforce of Queensland.

This bill also amends several other pieces of legislation to allow for their proper operation. There are many aspects covered by this legislation, but all will lead to greater efficiency and productive gains. For example, the amendments to the Duties Act 2001 and the Taxation Administration Act 2001 will support the introduction of electronic conveyancing in Queensland. This is a change that will allow this area of operation to join the modern world. The amendments to the Environmental Protection Act will provide certainty for the continued operation of the copper smelter in Mount Isa past 2016. This change again demonstrates that the Palaszczuk government is serious about protecting and creating jobs in Queensland.

We took a commitment to the election to restore high standards in the plumbing industry. The amendments to the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 and the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 will do just that. It is another example of the Palaszczuk government delivering on its election commitments. The amendments will return the state to a situation where only licensed plumbers can install water meters. This important change recognises how important it is to have a fully qualified and licensed person undertaking work of this nature.

I too have a professional background where I require a licence to operate. I am sure many people walk into a hospital and see nurses doing tasks that they think they might be able to undertake themselves such as handing out a few pills. There is so much skill and knowledge that goes into this simple task and the consequences of getting it wrong are so serious that it would be very foolish to allow anyone to perform this task without proper training and licensing. It simply cannot be used as an excuse that we do not have enough people in a particular area to allow us to drop our standards.

It is interesting that we are accused of not understanding the regions by somebody who lives only 30 minutes from my electorate which is only 10 minutes from this House. We have many people on this side of the House who live in regional areas and understand the issues facing regional areas. What next, if we cannot get appropriately qualified doctors and nurses then we will simply let anybody pick up the tools and do those jobs? I do not think that we would seriously consider that and we should not seriously consider that in this place.

Anything related to plumbing can have a devastating impact if not managed properly. It is only natural that we should require licensed people to do this type of work. Unlike the previous government, we do not rush things through without listening to the people. We have listened to people and set up sensible, transitional arrangements that will allow the sector time to adjust to the new legislative arrangements. The industry will have two years to allow for this adjustment period. This is yet another example of the Palaszczuk government listening to the community.

This bill does a number of things that will greatly benefit Queensland. It provides real incentives for employers to create traineeships and apprentices. It will do something real about dealing with youth unemployment. It amends a range of legislation in a manner that improves efficiency and productivity. It meets our commitments to restore high standards in the plumbing industry in a manner that demonstrates that we listen to the community. For this reason, I commend this bill to the House.