



Speech By  
**Brittany Lauga**


**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Back to Work Program**

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (12.11 pm): The Palaszczuk government is committed to growing jobs now and jobs for the future and our \$100 million Back to Work regional jobs package aims to do just that by providing support for jobseekers to build confidence and retrain for jobs in a more diversified economy. Back to Work provides incentives for regional businesses to employ new staff which we expect should get around 8,000 regional Queenslanders back to work. Back to Work provides employers with payments of \$10,000 for hiring an unemployed person, rising to \$15,000 for the long-term unemployed. Employers can access payments within four weeks of hiring under this initiative, which commenced on 1 July. The program is only available to employers outside South-East Queensland because that is where the area of greatest need exists. Back to Work also includes \$10 million for the Certificate 3 Guarantee Boost program that will see more Queenslanders able to access subsidised courses to obtain jobs. This is a package which aims to support up to 8,000 jobs in regional Queensland, and it has already received a very positive reception from regional business owners and the peak industry body the CCIQ. Minister Grace and I recently met with Rockhampton business owner and Marketing Mafia's Tracey Siddins, who will take advantage of the Back to Work program by hiring new staff. If you are a regional Queensland employer like Tracey who is thinking of hiring, I encourage you to take advantage of our Back to Work program.

Queensland is forecast to have nation-leading economic growth over the next two years, so now is the time to invest in more staff. The unemployment rate in Central Queensland is still too high, particularly youth unemployment, but we now have a positive program to get people back to work. I welcome this new Back to Work initiative and its focus on supporting more local jobs in Central Queensland. I am getting very positive feedback from local employers about this program and I know it has also excited a lot of local jobseekers.

Regional Queensland is crying out for more jobs, and employers who are looking to hire say they need more help to link with support and assistance to find jobseekers. While the Palaszczuk government has brought the trend unemployment rate in Keppel down by 0.7 per cent in the quarter to March 2016 and down one per cent in Rockhampton, unemployment in Central Queensland is still too high. That is why this package is specifically targeted at the regions. Our regional jobs package has been designed with input from business, employer and industry groups along with local government representatives. The Back to Work program is also better funded and better targeted than the LNP's alternative. The LNP's jobs plan is little more than a cruel hoax in that 20,000 vouchers is not 20,000 jobs.

Unlike the LNP's jobs plan, our program is open to all regional employers and businesses willing to take on a jobseeker and not just to businesses with a turnover of less than \$2 million. Employers can access payments four weeks after hiring a worker under our program as opposed to four years under the LNP's. Our scheme also has a dedicated regional focus whereas the LNP has thrown its scheme open to businesses in Brisbane and the south-east. The Newman-Nicholls LNP government put regional unemployment in the too-hard basket, but we have a plan to bring jobs to the regions. Our Back to Work officers will create links between employers, business and jobseekers that are needed to kick-start jobs in regional Queensland. Our Back to Work officers will connect real employers with real jobseekers, and I congratulate Mr John Fitzgerald on his appointment as the Central Queensland Back to Work officer. I met with Mr Fitzgerald last week to discuss the Back to Work program and I offered my full support to Mr Fitzgerald in his new role to grow jobs in Central Queensland. Specialist workers like Mr Fitzgerald will provide on-the-ground support throughout regional Queensland and are being rolled out across regional Queensland, including in Wide Bay-Burnett, North Queensland, Far North Queensland, Mackay-Whitsunday, Central Queensland, the north-west and south-west of the state.

So good is this Back to Work package that it received a glowing thumbs up from local builder and former LNP candidate Scott Kilpatrick. Mr Kilpatrick said that he believes that any incentive to get people into the workforce is a winner. That is why the local owner of Affordable Quality Homes is backing the state government's Back to Work regional employment package which was announced in the state budget in June. Mr Kilpatrick said that anything the government can do to create incentives to employ people was a benefit to the regions. Mr Kilpatrick said that when it comes to the local economy confidence is key, and that is what this Palaszczuk government is doing for regions like Keppel—delivering this \$100 million Back to Work program to continue to build confidence and grow regional jobs now and regional jobs for the future.