




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Jobs

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport) (10.08 am): The Palaszczuk government was elected to create jobs and that remains our daily focus. ABS statewide figures for July show a net gain of 40,000 jobs in the past 18 months since the election. I know that some commentators question the validity of comparisons between the LNP and Labor, but the 40,000 net new jobs compare with a net 26,900 jobs in almost three years under the former LNP government. In other words, the Palaszczuk government has created more jobs in around half the time, but we know that we have more work to do to deliver more jobs across our state.

When Labor took office we inherited an unemployment rate of 6.6 per cent. That is now down to 6.3 per cent in trend terms in July. Looking at the more volatile seasonally adjusted rate, we saw a drop from 6.4 per cent in June to 6.1 per cent. More recently, labour force figures for regional Queensland were released by the ABS. Last Thursday's figures were accompanied by information from the ABS advising users to focus on the 12-month average figures rather than the more volatile monthly data. The ABS is now publishing 12-month average figures for regional labour force data, giving a more reliable picture of trends. This should lead to a more considered assessment of the figures and hopefully put an end to the cherry-picking by some who wish to talk down our state.

The figures for July show jobless rates are lower in 12 of the 19 ABS regions in Queensland compared with a year ago. There were improvements in unemployment rates for regions such as the Sunshine Coast, the Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Wide Bay and Ipswich, among others.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr PITT: Those opposite may wish to listen. The Darling Downs-Maranoa region recorded the lowest regional unemployment rate in the state at 3.6 per cent compared with 3.9 per cent a year ago. The Logan-Beaudesert region recorded the largest drop in the unemployment rate, down 2.7 percentage points compared with a year earlier to reach 6.3 per cent. However, the ABS figures also confirm that some regions including Townsville and Cairns are still experiencing higher unemployment rates than a year ago. We have always acknowledged some regions are doing better than others as the state transitions to a post-mining boom economy.

People being paid fairly and having secure jobs are at the heart of Labor's economic plan. That is why the state budget included initiatives to support regional economies and jobs, including our \$40 billion Capital Works Program over four years to target transport, health, education, energy and water infrastructure. Around \$10.7 billion was allocated for 2016-17 and is estimated to support around 31,000 jobs, with almost half of the investment in our regions.

Our focus on our regions includes the Accelerated Works Program, with more than \$440 million worth of projects brought forward to support almost 1,000 jobs. At the end of July, 92 accelerated works projects were completed, 35 were under construction, with more projects to move to construction over coming months. These initiatives are reflected in the latest Deloitte Access Economics Investment Monitor, which again showed the value of current and planned major projects in Queensland outstripping those in New South Wales and Victoria.

The June quarter Investment Monitor outlines almost \$183.5 billion in planned or committed public and private sector projects in our state ahead of New South Wales with \$129.5 billion and \$78 billion in Victoria. It also shows a pipeline of projects in the tourism sector across Australia, with a significant proportion being in Queensland. The importance of these was underlined at the Premier's Connecting to Asia Forum in Cairns last week. The forum highlighted the way we are working with the tourist industry and all sectors of the business community to capitalise on new tourism opportunities generated by the rising middle class in China and the rest of Asia. More tourists mean more jobs throughout our state.

The state budget also doubled to 50 per cent the incentive offered to Queensland business operators wanting to employ apprentices and trainees. Our Back to Work program is providing a two-year, \$100 million package to give regional employers incentives to engage a total of up to 8,000 jobseekers. Last week in Cairns I saw firsthand the benefits of the program. I met three young people who will soon become employees of technology firm Nexus Labs. All of them are completing their final year of technology studies at James Cook University in Cairns. It is great to see this new program making a real and measurable change in the lives of young people starting their careers. I congratulate all employers who have taken advantage of this and other programs that we have put in place to create jobs and to strengthen our local, regional and state economies.