



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 February 2016

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Jobs**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.04 am): Along with my colleagues, I am proud to present my first ministerial statement. Job creation is the Palaszczuk government's No. 1 priority. Unlike the LNP, which sacked tens of thousands of hardworking Queenslanders despite telling voters they had nothing to fear, we have a jobs plan. Our jobs plan is working. It is generating employment opportunities and jobs throughout the state—more than 60,000 jobs since the state election in January 2015.

On average, 2,010 full-time jobs have been created every month since we took office. That compares to the 330 full-time jobs lost every month under the previous government. Our strong record on job creation is reflected by the data, which shows unemployment in Queensland at a two-year low. After peaking at 6.6 per cent under the LNP, the state's trend unemployment rate stood at 5.9 per cent in December, according to the latest available ABS data. This is an encouraging trend, but we know that there is more work to be done, particularly when it comes to youth and regional unemployment.

While the average unemployment rate in regional Queensland is down by almost one per cent over the last 12 months, it is still too high. Unemployment remains a challenge in communities throughout the state. That is why I am hosting a series of regional employment forums throughout the state this year, continuing on from those already held last year by the Treasurer in Cairns, Bundaberg and Rockhampton.

I am very pleased to have held my first regional employment forum at the Palaszczuk government's first community cabinet for 2016 in Gladstone earlier this month. This forum brought together local businesses and community leaders to discuss employment issues and how government and the community can work together to generate more jobs. We will use the feedback from this forum to identify new job creation opportunities and new policies to drive employment in Gladstone and throughout the rest of Queensland.

Later this month I will be hosting an employment forum in Mackay with the member for Mackay, Julieanne Gilbert. I will be continuing this series of employment forums in Maryborough with the member for Maryborough and in Mount Isa in March—I look forward to working with the member for Mount Isa—and at other regional centres in Queensland throughout the remainder of the year. There will be four employment forums held in a two-month period.

Our pro-business policy settings are one of the main drivers of Queensland's improving employment outlook. We have a comprehensive range of initiatives to promote job creation. None is more important than our payroll tax rebate. Under our payroll tax rebate scheme, employers who hire apprentices and trainees receive a payroll tax rebate of 25 per cent on their wages until June 2018, in

addition to their wages being exempt from payroll tax. It is clear that this important job creation initiative is a hit with Queensland employers. To date, 2,072 businesses throughout the state have taken advantage of the scheme, claiming more than \$3.8 million worth of rebates.

The payroll tax rebate is one of many Palaszczuk government initiatives designed to generate jobs in Queensland, including the \$40 million Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, which we restored after it was axed by the LNP. Our \$10.1 billion capital works program is supporting 27,500 direct jobs throughout Queensland, and this program has been accelerated to provide job and employment opportunities sooner in communities that need jobs now such as North Queensland—in Townsville, Mackay and Cairns.

The Palaszczuk government showed its commitment to jobs by immediately deploying a rapid response team to Townsville in the wake of 237 redundancies at Queensland Nickel in January. This team was out on the ground in Townsville straightaway, helping to connect workers with services to help secure their rights and entitlements along with other services including access to financial advice and employment assistance.

I have spent my entire working life representing workers and fighting for jobs, and that is exactly what I will continue to do—for all jobseekers including youth—as Queensland's minister for employment.