




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 16 February 2016

MOTION: SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (6.06 pm): I rise to oppose the motion. You can always rely on those opposite to throw out the window, arrogantly and without any due regard, good policy, sensible debate and proper procedure. That is exactly what we see in the House today, with the member for Mansfield trying to turn back the clock on IR reform. Last year this parliament passed laws to restore union right-of-entry provisions to worksites where there are suspected safety concerns. Why did we do that? We did it to deliver a key election commitment: to restore fairness in our industrial relations system and to protect Queensland workers.

This half-baked proposal from the member for Mansfield makes no procedural sense at all. What the member for Mansfield is expecting us to do is amend laws debated and passed just four months ago and, worse, amend Queensland laws to replace them with laws to mirror a federal law that does not yet even exist. Instead of mucking around trying to change standing orders, the opposition should be focused on what Queenslanders really want us to deliver in this state: jobs and the economy. That is what they want.

As Minister for Employment I am focused on creating sustainable, safe jobs and employment opportunities for all Queenslanders—younger Queenslanders in particular, given that high youth unemployment remains a real challenge. Youth unemployment is a key focus of our \$1.6 billion Working Queensland jobs plan. I will set out some of the key initiatives we have implemented since coming to government. With our Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, there are grants of up to \$50,000 to help businesses employ university graduates on strategic innovation projects under Advance Queensland. Some \$1.1 million was released in December last year, with 22 businesses already partnering with six universities. In terms of payroll tax rebates for apprentices and trainees I have updated my figures. Some 2,196 businesses have already claimed more than \$4.4 million in tax relief for hiring apprentices and trainees. Skilling Queenslanders for Work is a \$240 million, four-year initiative aimed at helping up to 32,000 unemployed, underemployed or disadvantaged people to gain the skills and training they need to enter the workforce. As I said in my ministerial statement earlier today, four of the programs under this initiative specifically target youth unemployment.

With regard to the Business Development Fund, young entrepreneurs can receive up to \$2.5 million from government in dollar-for-dollar matching to help take their innovative ideas and turn them into a commercial reality.

Mr WALKER: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Ms GRACE: With regard to boosting front-line services—

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. One moment, Minister. What is your point of order, member for Mansfield?

Mr WALKER: Mr Speaker, the minister is giving us a great grand tour of employment opportunities, but that has nothing to do with the motion to suspend standing orders to allow debate of a specific measure. Would you please bring her back to the topic.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the minister.

Ms GRACE: With regard to boosting front-line services, we have a focus on young people in front-line roles—in particular, 4,000 new year 1 graduate nursing places. The latest ABS employment data shows that our focus on job creation initiatives is paying dividends. Queenslanders want to hear about jobs—the 60,000 that have been created in Queensland since the state election. They want to know that the unemployment rate is at a two-year low of 5.9 per cent after peaking at 6.6 per cent under those opposite.

Mr WALKER: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The minister has taken absolutely no notice of the need to return to the topic and I ask that you please draw her attention to the need to do so.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. You gave no direction to the minister, so I think the member for Mansfield's point of order is erroneous. I point out that we are debating the issue of whether we should be suspending standing orders to deal with a certain matter and the minister is making it clear why the time of the parliament would be better spent dealing with other things.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members. I call the minister.

Ms GRACE: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Those opposite do not like it, do they? In 12 months the Palaszczuk government has started to turn around the Queensland economy and now is not the time to turn back IR reform. It is not the time to reignite an attack on workers, as those over there so eloquently and harshly do, that would needlessly put their safety and wellbeing at risk. Anyone in any doubt about the importance of right-of-entry laws need look no further than *Jason's Story*, a new work safety film which I launched on 3 February. The film covers the tragic electrocution of 20-year-old Jason Garrels at a construction site in Clermont in Central Queensland in 2012. Jason had been working on the site for nine days at the time of his death. He did not even receive his first pay packet. Let us not play politics or throw out standing orders just to score a cheap political point. Workplace health and safety in this state is too important.