




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2016

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Budget, Employment

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (9.59 am): As employment minister, I am proud to add to the statement made by the Premier outlining the government's new two-year \$100 million Back to Work regional employment package. The Palaszczuk government's No. 1 priority is jobs. Since the state election, 52,500 new jobs have been created in Queensland and our trend unemployment rate has fallen from 6.6 per cent to 6.2 per cent. Regional communities are doing it tough. Hit by a resources downturn and ongoing drought, they need support and they need more jobs.

Our Back to Work program specifically targets regional Queensland and delivers support for up to 8,000 jobs in the regions throughout Queensland. It will give employers who hire an eligible unemployed person a \$10,000 support payment, rising to \$15,000 for hiring someone who has been unemployed for 12 months or more. Back to Work officers will help disadvantaged jobseekers to connect with local services and employers to gain and maintain employment. They will also connect jobseekers with training opportunities, including apprentice and trainee pathways.

I have held 13 regional employment forums throughout Queensland where employers made it clear that it was a lack of confidence that was holding them back from hiring new workers. Back to Work gives employers that confidence and support. Employers and community representatives also made it clear at these forums that they found it difficult to connect with existing services and jobseekers. Back to Work officers will make a huge difference to employers and jobseekers, making it easier to find the skills they need and navigate the employment support services.

This package is a win for jobseekers, employers and regional economies. Do not just take my word for it, listen to what the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland and regional Queenslanders are saying. Nick Behrens from the chamber of commerce said Back to Work is a fantastic idea. In today's *Townsville Bulletin*, Great Northern Laundry managing director Mark Bogiatzis said Back to Work was a breath of fresh air and a welcome development for the local economy. In Rockhampton builder Scott Kilpatrick believes any incentive to get people into the workforce is a winner, saying, 'Anything that encourages business to employ more people can only be good for everyone.'

This is a government that listens and acts to support jobs growth. We know how important more jobs are to regional Queensland and that is what Back to Work is all about. I encourage employers and jobseekers to find out more information by calling 13QGOV or visiting the Back to Work website and registering their interest in what Ernst & Young Brisbane said is a positive move for employers.