




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2016

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Back to Work Regional Employment Package

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (9.56 am): The Palaszczuk government's two-year, \$100 million Back to Work jobs program is already supporting 350 jobs in regional Queensland, with hundreds more on the way. This dedicated regional jobs program is supporting new jobs in a wide range of industries in regional Queensland: health care, agriculture, automotive, building and construction, retail, hospitality and community services to name just a few. It is giving regional employers the confidence to hire with more than a third of jobs being supported going to long-term unemployed who have been out of work for more than 12 months. This is a fantastic outcome for a program still in its infancy. There are almost 200 additional applications in the system and once processed this will bring the total of jobs to well over 500. We are seeing more and more employers keen to access the support payments of up to \$15,000 that this program provides. It is particularly encouraging to see some employers hiring multiple workers, which is exactly what we hoped to see. Back to Work has safeguards to ensure that support payments only go to genuine employers hiring real and genuine workers. This marks an important cultural shift whereby workers are being directly employed by employers not third parties who are ineligible under the Back to Work program.

Last week when the Premier governed from Townsville I visited local employment services provider Experience Works North Queensland, which has hired young mum Chandell Derham under Back to Work. Chandell had been struggling to find a job since becoming a mum, but is now working part-time 20 hours a week. She joins her colleague Tanya Wright, who had been out of work for four months, as another Back to Work success story. Experience Works manager Sally Lawrence said Back to Work had been crucial in being able to expand her team—and what a happy team they are.

This is happening right across regional Queensland with workers being employed in every region where Back to Work operates. Far North Queensland is leading the way with 82 workers and North Queensland is closely behind with 80. There are 76 in Wide Bay and 50 in Central Queensland. Back to Work is supporting 39 jobs in the Mackay-Whitsunday area and it is gathering momentum in north and south-west Queensland, with 23 jobseekers gaining work. We are seeing more and more applications every day and we expect those numbers to grow in coming weeks and months. Jobs now, jobs for the future: that is what Back to Work is all about.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms GRACE: I hear those opposite complaining. It is unbelievable that one hears them interjecting and complaining about jobs happening in regional Queensland.