




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Back to Work Regional Jobs Package

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (9.59 am): Jobs are the No. 1 priority of the Palaszczuk government and we are delivering a dedicated regional jobs package supporting real employers and real jobs in the regions. Our two-year \$100 million Back to Work regional jobs package is already a great success. Employers know it, jobseekers know it and Queenslanders living in the regions know it as well. The only ones who do not know about it are those opposite. I am pleased to inform the House that Back to Work is already supporting more than 800 Queenslanders in new jobs in regional Queensland—812 jobs to be precise, which is a fantastic result in just three months after eligibility applications opened and we have been making payments over the last 12 weeks. Already the first instalments have provided 314 regional employers with over \$2.7 million in support payments, and these numbers are growing every day. It is happening in a wide range of industries—health care, agriculture, building and construction, and retail and community services to name just a few.

These jobs are coming in each of the regions covered by the program. It is being led by North Queensland with 165 jobs, Far North Queensland with 160 jobs, 111 in the Wide Bay area, 75 in Central Queensland, 73 in Mackay and the Whitsunday area, there are nearly 50 combined in north-west and south-west Queensland, and there are further draft applications in the system as more and more employers become aware of the great benefits that this program delivers—employers such as the Bundaberg Motor Group, which I visited last month to meet with Rob and Robbie who have both been hired as car detailers at the car dealership. It was absolutely tremendous to see the huge smiles on the faces of these two workers who are being supported through this program. They were so proud. Regional communities are increasingly aware of the benefits Back to Work offers to local employers and jobseekers. The Whitsunday Coast Chamber of Commerce—we know the struggles in North Queensland—in a column in today's *Whitsunday Times* outlines its support for Back to Work. The column states—

We encourage our members to take advantage of funding available through the Back to Work initiative or to contact the Chamber if they are in any need of guidance.

That is a stamp of approval and a great endorsement for a great initiative that is delivering for employers and jobseekers all over regional Queensland. These are early days, but already we are meeting targets of this great Back to Work \$100 million two-year regional program.