




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2016

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL; DUTIES AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (4.57 pm): The Palaszczuk government is building an agile, modern economy that is creating increased opportunities for the residents of my electorate of Brisbane Central and throughout Queensland. I welcome the latest state budget by Treasurer and member for Mulgrave, Curtis Pitt, which provides an economically responsible plan to drive economic investment growth, create the innovation jobs of the future, and invest in infrastructure.

This budget is unashamedly about jobs, especially in regional Queensland, which is doing it tough owing to a downturn in the resources sector and a crippling drought in many areas. This budget is also a budget for the environment and one that restores front-line services while properly funding the community sector. In short, this budget is a budget for all of those who were forced to do it tough under the previous government's negative policies, many of whom lived and worked in my electorate—nurses, teachers, doctors and lawyers.

This budget is very clearly a budget that invests in schools, colleges, hospitals and health services in the electorate of Brisbane Central. It is a budget that invests in public transport, bikeways, law and order as well as important community services. The budget includes: \$7.1 million of \$7.8 million to complete construction of additional classrooms at Kelvin Grove State College, plus \$700,000 for capital works at Kelvin Grove State College as part of the School Infrastructure Enhancement Program—more than \$8 million in total for one of Queensland's leading places of learning; \$735,000 out of more than \$3.7 million to continue construction of additional classrooms at New Farm State School; and there is \$3.1 million in 2016-17 out of a total of \$13.2 million to reinvigorate the Biala Sexual Health Clinic in Roma Street callously closed by those opposite. This is in addition to \$3 million for urgent repairs and upgrade work on the Old Museum Building in Bowen Hills. These works, due to commence next month, will ensure this much-loved and historic building meets its workplace health and safety and building code compliance. This is a government that proudly protects Queensland's heritage and we will continue to do so. There is \$3.6 million in 2016-17 to continue construction of the North Brisbane Bikeway, Bowen Hills to Woolloowin, at a total cost of \$14 million. We believe in a cleaner, greener Queensland and that is exactly what projects like this deliver.

Jobs are front and centre of this budget, and it gives me great pleasure to say this as the state's employment minister who will be overseeing the new Back to Work regional jobs package. Unfortunately this morning we saw the Leader of the Opposition peddling a half-baked jobs plan that will not work. It is underfunded, has poorly-thought-out financial incentives and would be hampered by a lack of on-the-ground support and coordination. To make matters worse, the LNP's plan lacks a dedicated focus on regional Queensland, where the biggest employment challenges lie. Those opposite have

snubbed regional Queensland yet again, especially when the money dries up because it is all used in the south-east corner, which makes it even more astonishing that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is blindly supporting the LNP's so-called jobs policy which has no dedicated focus on the regions, but not our Back to Work program, which is 100 per cent dedicated to regional Queensland.

Since the Palaszczuk government took office, 43,700 new jobs have been created in Queensland. We know that regional Queensland is doing it tough and that they need more jobs. That is why Back to Work is focused exclusively on areas outside South-East Queensland. This is a two-year \$100 million package which aims to support up to 8,000 jobs in regional Queensland, the areas hardest hit by the LNP's cuts. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech into *Hansard*. I have received approval from the Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

It includes:

- \$80 million for support payments for employers to take on regional jobseekers, including those disadvantaged in the labour market—such as the long-term unemployed, young people, mature aged jobseekers, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders;
- \$10 million for the Certificate 3 Guarantee Boost Program that will see more Queenslanders able to access subsidised courses to obtain jobs; and
- \$10 million for Back to Work officers who know the local economy and local employers, and can connect employers and jobseekers to opportunities and support, including through Regional Employment Networks.

Regional employers who hire an eligible unemployed person will get a \$10,000 payment under this initiative, rising to \$15,000 for the long-term unemployed who have been out of work for 12 months or more.

Apprentices and trainees are also counted as eligible employees under the scheme, provided their employer is not eligible for the Government's payroll tax rebate.

Since becoming Employment Minister, I've held a series of regional employment forums throughout Queensland—and seen first-hand the challenges faced by employers and jobseekers.

We've incorporated feedback gained at these forums from employers, jobseekers and service providers into our Back To Work package. We heard loud and clear that employers found it difficult to connect with local services and jobseekers.

That's why the scheme includes Back to Work Officers, who will help disadvantaged jobseekers connect with local employers to gain and maintain employment. They'll also connect jobseekers with training opportunities, including apprentice and trainee pathways.

It's a great outcome for regional Queensland, and I look forward to visiting those communities again soon and working with them to create more jobs and employment opportunities for local residents.

There's also great news for Brisbane Central community groups in this State Budget, Mr Speaker. Unlike those opposite, who ripped funding from community groups the length and breadth of Queensland, we value the community sector. And none more so than in Brisbane Central, with our 2016-17 funding package including:

- \$3.1 million to ensure children in the need of protection have a safe place to stay, including funding for foster and kinship care services provided by Life Without Barriers in Fortitude Valley;
- \$2 million to support the needs of children in out of home care, including funding to Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service in Spring Hill;
- \$421,000 for domestic and family violence counselling services, court-based services and perpetrator intervention programs—including funding for Legal Aid Queensland in Brisbane City and Relationships Australia Qld in Spring Hill;
- \$130,000 for Community Queensland Ltd in New Farm to help support vulnerable Queenslanders;
- \$1.35 million for women's support and counselling services, including the Children by Choice Association in Windsor and Women's Health Queensland Wide in Spring Hill; and
- \$552,000 for Brisbane Youth Service in Fortitude Valley to support young people and the community in Brisbane Central.

These organisations are reaching out into the heart of the community which I'm proud to represent, delivering important care and support to those who need it most. I'll always stand up for these organisations and the vital work they do to make Brisbane Central and Queensland a fairer place.

Mr Speaker, the Palaszczuk Government is also committed to greater fairness when it comes to public transport fares. On Sunday I was pleased to join the Premier and the Minister for Transport at New Farm Park, in my electorate, for the announcement of the government's Fairer Public Transport Fares policy, which is also outlined in the State Budget.

This represents a major overhaul of public transport fares and it's very welcome development for the thousands of people who use public transport in Brisbane Central. It means cheaper fares for 93 per cent of public transport users in Southeast Queensland from 1 January 2017, which is a great outcome.

I'm particularly pleased as Queensland's Multicultural Affairs Minister that the Fairer Fares policy also includes an additional \$19.1 million over the forward estimates, to extend public transport fare concessions to Queensland jobseekers and asylum seekers.

This follows a recommendation from the independent Fare Review Taskforce will be implemented in early 2017, pending discussions with federal agencies.

Public transport plays an important role in connecting jobseekers with education, employment services and job interviews, including in Brisbane Central. Our new Fairer Fares initiative is yet another reflection of the Palaszczuk Government's commitment to support more Queenslanders back to work.

Mr Speaker, I also welcome the Palaszczuk Government's even stronger commitment to the knowledge economy and jobs of the future, outlined in this State Budget. It's a budget that more than doubles funding for our Advance Qld initiative, to \$405 million.

Advance Qld is a whole of government innovation agenda to create the jobs of the future, and to encourage innovation in our business sector. It includes \$22.7 million for an Advancing Small Business Queensland Strategy, and \$10 million for a Platform Technology Program.

It will harness Queensland's existing strengths, while fostering emerging opportunities in biofutures, in the new agricultural economy and through a \$33.5 million Connecting with Asia package to promote tourism jobs in the regions something I wholeheartedly support.

Just as I support the creation, through Advance Queensland, of Queensland's largest innovation hub in Fortitude Valley in the heart of my electorate. This is a \$4 million investment to encourage and promote entrepreneurs to grow and flourish, and I'm proud that it's happening in Brisbane Central.

I've visited the site of this new innovation hub at the former TC Beirne Building, and I'm impressed by the progress that's being made to transform what was once a retail space into a high-tech, digital hub of the future. This will benefit the whole Queensland economy, as just as importantly, it will deliver a boost to the Valley's day economy and that's a great thing for local businesses.

Mr Speaker, this is a Budget that delivers for Brisbane Central and for all of Queensland. I commend it to the House.