




Speech By
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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Employment

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (12.42 pm): The reality of what unemployment means for people is often lost in the barrage of statistics that are used to quantify, define and describe it. In this place we love to verbally duke it out, throwing stats at each other to back our position and point. I could point out the high unemployment rate created by the former failed Newman government's approach, or perhaps I could point out the unemployment rates in Greenslopes, Coorparoo, Holland Park, Holland Park West and Mount Gravatt that have all declined between December 2014 and 2015. Of course, these verbal debates have their place, but it is too easy to forget that at the end of every set of numbers is a real person and real families—real people who are uplifted and fulfilled through employment or, conversely, put under extreme pressure through unemployment. I am working my way through a book called *The Health Gap* by Dr Michael Marmot, President of the World Medical Association. It is a challenging read that stretches your thinking on health and the things that impact on it. Dr Marmot devotes an entire chapter to employment and noted that there is strong evidence supporting the negative impacts that insecure employment can have on mental health. In fact, the European review on social determinants of health and the health divide summarised over 60 studies on job security that contained overwhelming evidence that job insecurity damages health. As Dr Marmot put it so succinctly, unemployment harms health. We all know that unemployment is bad and we now have evidence that it has negative impacts on people's health.

That is why I am an enthusiastic supporter of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program announced by Minister D'Ath. This exciting initiative of the Palaszczuk government is delivering real jobs for real people. I could throw stats around the chamber to back my point, but instead I want to talk about a couple of these people that I had the privilege to meet recently. I am fortunate to have the Queensland office of Vision Australia in the electorate of Greenslopes. Vision Australia is a leading national provider of blindness and low-vision services in Australia. I was pleased that it successfully applied to be part of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. For people who are blind or have low vision, the search for work can present additional challenges. According to research commissioned by Vision Australia, up to 58 per cent of working age people who are blind or have low vision are unemployed. That is a statistic that we should throw around this place and it is a statistic that we should do something about.

To get beyond those statistics, I asked Vision Australia CEO Karen Knight if I could meet some of the people who are undertaking the program. Maddy and Brett were kind enough to give me some of their time to explain what the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program means for them. After just a short time with Maddy, I was left with an impression that she would be an enthusiastic team member who would work hard to contribute to any organisation. Maddy has achieved qualifications as a psychologist. She completed this qualification several years ago but has been unable to secure any

employment. She told me that since starting the program she has had the opportunity to interact with people who share her profession, which has meant a great deal to her. She is looking forward to her work placement with a community organisation and she is looking forward to the opportunity to apply and think about her skills, not only those learned in this course. She also hopes to utilise her professional qualifications. Maddy said she thinks one of the biggest barriers to people who are blind or have low vision obtaining work is simply attitude and she said that this program gives her the opportunity to prove what she can contribute to any organisation.

Brett managed a retail store for many years before losing his job through a company restructure. He told me how four years of unemployment affected him. He told me of reaching a low point in his life and suffering from bouts of depression, but Brett was able to find his way out of this place after attending a Vision Australia open day and realising just how much help is out there. He started by helping others, volunteering for Vision Australia and Meals on Wheels, and this led him to a place on the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. Brett's excitement at this new opportunity was obvious and he will be using his skills developed over many years to make a real contribution. The Skilling Queenslanders for Work program is, at its core, a program that helps real people move into employment, improving not just their own lives but the lives of everyone around them. The statistics are impressive, but the people are even more so. This program is a great initiative of the Palaszczuk Labor government which proves once again that we are serious about creating jobs for all Queenslanders. Finally, I want to extend my warm wishes to Maddy and Brett and wish them the best of luck in their placements and their future work experience. They show quite clearly that we truly believe that everybody in Queensland should have the opportunity to find meaningful employment.