




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2016

MOTION: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (6.06 pm): I rise to oppose this motion. On all measures of jobs and employment, those opposite failed. Let us look at their track record. They sacked 14,000 public servants. We are led to believe that they have a newfound concern about jobs and employment, but when it comes to credibility: fail. Perhaps I should pull out my red pen. Let us go through this. Unemployment was 6.6 per cent when we took office after peaking at 7.1 per cent when the Leader of the Opposition was treasurer: fail. Another red pen mark. Trend unemployment in Queensland is now down to 6.2 per cent, with an extra 52,500 jobs created since the election.

The contrast between the Palaszczuk Labor government and those opposite could not be clearer. We have committed to creating jobs. Those opposite were committed to destroying jobs. We have invested \$100 million on the Regional Back to Work jobs package, specifically targeting regional Queensland, where the LNP sacked front-line workers and gave up on creating jobs in my city of Townsville, in the city of Mackay and in the city of Rockhampton. The LNP gave up.

We have \$10,000 for employers who hire an unemployed person and \$15,000 for those who take on a long-term unemployed person—all because we are committed to regional Queensland and reducing youth unemployment. The member for Kawana cannot even get his facts straight on youth unemployment. Youth unemployment is down since we took office—from 14.1 per cent to 12.8 per cent. And 14.1 per cent is less than what those opposite had. That is the 12-month rolling average for youth unemployment in Queensland since the state election, the measure preferred as the most accurate by the ABS. I repeat: the youth unemployment rate is down under Labor—not up, as claimed by the member for Kawana.

Of course we acknowledge that youth unemployment is a serious challenge, particularly in regional Queensland, but, unlike those opposite, who did nothing to tackle youth unemployment, we have a plan. It is a plan that invests in job-creating infrastructure, nowhere more so than in my electorate of Townsville and right across North Queensland. The state budget commits \$586 million for infrastructure projects in North Queensland—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Townsville, I apologise for interrupting you halfway through your speech, but, member for Burleigh, you know the standing rules. If you persist, you will be warned.

Mr STEWART: The state budget commits \$586 million for infrastructure projects in North Queensland, including \$140 million for the new Townsville stadium. I could go on about the new Townsville stadium, but we are investing in infrastructure right across the state because that is what we need to tackle youth unemployment. The state budget commits \$10.7 billion to a statewide infrastructure program. This will support 31,000 jobs right across Queensland. Make no mistake: Queensland jobseekers, particularly young jobseekers, have more cause for optimism under Labor. One only needs to look at regional youth unemployment figures to see that. We have made significant inroads in the youth unemployment rate in major regional centres.

Since the state election, youth unemployment is down. On the Sunshine Coast it is down from 14.9 per cent to 8.9 per cent, and I will say that again: down 14.9 per cent to 8.9 per cent. The member for Kawana should be shouting this from the rooftops, but unfortunately he is running a fear campaign instead. Youth unemployment in Toowoomba is down from 12.3 per cent to eight per cent—down—and on the Darling Downs it is down from 8.9 per cent to 6.6 per cent—down. Youth unemployment is also down in Ipswich, Logan, Beaudesert, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. We recognise that it is still too high, but that is why we are also investing in skills and training. We are restoring Skilling Queenslanders for Work, which was axed by the LNP—another LNP fail. We are saving TAFE, which those opposite brought to its knees—another LNP fail. Those opposite took the axe to skills and training—another fail by the LNP. We are also investing in the knowledge jobs of the future through the \$4.5 million Advance Queensland package.