




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2016

MOTION: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.11 pm): I rise in support of the motion moved this afternoon. One thing is certain: the construction sector is the lifeblood of Queensland. With the tragedy of the continued infrastructure freeze, we have seen 5,500 fewer apprenticeships and traineeships completed in the past 12 months under Labor. It gives me no pleasure that we are talking about a serious downturn in an area that I have dedicated most of my working life to—training and development in the construction sector. The construction industry is a great industry that provides terrific opportunities for young men and women and mature age trainees to get a start in the workforce and, in most cases, go on to forge a career in what should be a growing economy. In the first nine months of this Labor government, National Centre for Vocational Education Research figures indicate that 1,800 fewer apprentices and trainees commenced training compared with the same period in 2014 under the LNP.

It is important to remember the commitments being presented from those opposite about the so-called grand plan—that is, they claimed and they promised to create jobs. Still there is nothing happening, but we now have Labor's fingers all over a grubby, job destruction agenda making motherhood statements about things like well-directed investment, increased productivity, job creation and training and skills opportunities all delivering very little. We now know that Queensland will lose tens of thousands of jobs over the next four years because Labor has no courage and no real plans. Leading business analysts BIS Shrapnel forecast that public spending on important infrastructure projects will flatline between now and 2018, ensuring 40,000 workers will move interstate to the progressive booming state of New South Wales. It is time that Labor stopped blaming everyone else and took responsibility for its poor choices and no planning.

BIS Shrapnel also put out a study that shows that the value of government funded construction in the south-east has halved to \$4.1 billion and has no capacity to change over the next four years. When we add this to the private sector deserting Queensland under this government, we will see the workforce shrink from 230,000 to 190,000 by 2018. Since the Palaszczuk government started on its destructive agenda, we have seen a 15 per cent drop in investment in this state during the March quarter alone. Queenslanders need the thousands of jobs on desperately needed projects to deal with the ever-increasing population boom in Queensland. This should not be hard. We have a federal government wanting to fund infrastructure and we have a state government promising jobs. Maybe if it was not Labor we could get on with it.

Key action items in last year's employment plan have either been scrapped or forgotten and do not seem to be a priority. Last year's employment plan contained a commitment to explore the establishment of a Rural Jobs Agency, but that seems to be just a thought bubble and has never been mentioned since. Labor's rash promises never lead to real outcomes, only more bureaucracy. We know that 21,000 jobs for young Queenslanders have been lost under this Labor government and there is no strategy in place to provide the help that young Queenslanders need to get ahead. Our population in

Queensland is forecast to rise by two million to 6.4 million in the next 16 years, with seven out of 10 people living in the south-east corner. With no plan and the rejection of the Queensland Plan, those opposite can only hope to avoid the growing commuter chaos that is coming.

It is no wonder we see and hear of a dark cloud of no confidence around Queensland. There is a lack of information about what this government wants to do or how it is going to pay for any of it. We now know what will happen: as is the Labor way, just borrow more with no regard for debt management and put up taxes. We expect more hefty taxes on hardworking Queenslanders to come from those opposite. Queenslanders are now expecting debt to rise dramatically to way over \$80 billion in the short term. This comes amid mixed messages on the economy, with the recent Westpac CCIQ Pulse survey showing a 13 per cent drop in business confidence and a recent NAB monthly business survey showing little confidence in Queensland under this government.

With all the rhetoric being delivered this week, I was also wondering if anyone heard the Reserve Bank Governor, Glenn Stevens, recently reiterating that sustained investment for a number of projects was needed to improve capacity and help restore confidence in the economy. He also raised the state's debt position, highlighting the inability to continue to borrow without significant cuts to expenditure; otherwise, we are on target for future credit downgrades. Labor has a poor track record on regional and youth employment, and its actions and rhetoric are not delivering real outcomes for Queenslanders, with no funding to tackle training unemployment in the Palaszczuk-Pitt budget.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's budget failed to provide support to tackle a drop in apprenticeship and traineeship completions or to address youth unemployment. This government has no plan to combat the alarming youth unemployment rate or incentivise employers to take on apprentices. In the last year alone 5,500 fewer apprenticeships and traineeships were completed, meaning many Queenslanders are not getting the skills and training we need to deal with skill shortages in the future. With youth unemployment at 15 per cent and 20 per cent in my region alone, an increase of nearly four per cent since Labor came to power, it is the second worst in the nation, ahead only of Tasmania, and under a Labor government Queensland is the only state or territory heading in the wrong direction. More than 21,000 jobs for Queenslanders have been lost with this do-nothing Labor government and there is no strategy in place to provide help for young Queenslanders who need to get ahead. We have to remember the facts: 8,000 jobs have been lost in Townsville under the Palaszczuk government, 12,000 have been lost in the outback and many more across Queensland continue to be lost.