




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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MOTION

Jobs

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (6.15 pm): There is nothing quite like being lectured about how we do not know what we are doing in regional Queensland from some bloke who is not really from regional Queensland. He is trying to say that, in terms of regional Queensland, he has more authenticity than me. I know where I live. Certainly, it is not Slovakia.

To hear the members opposite speak to any motion related to unemployment is quite galling. I have said this a number of times and I will say it again tonight. The member for Kawana asked where were we in supporting people who had lost their jobs in various parts of the state. My question to the members opposite is: who was going to stand up to Campbell Newman and the now opposition leader when he was treasurer when they were axing the jobs of tens of thousands of people? Some of the job losses that we have seen have been in the private sector owing to the transition of the economy. Let us be really clear: the members opposite made deliberate decisions to sack people. Tens of thousands of people went as a result of a deliberate decision of those opposite. Yet they come in here and ask what we are doing to support jobs.

If the members opposite had moved a fair and decent motion that talked about the challenges in regional Queensland in terms of job creation and the fact that the economy is in transition, we would have supported the motion. It is true that the economy is in transition. It is true that parts of Queensland are doing it harder than others. Yet the members opposite come in here and, yet again, politicise everything—using terms like ‘do nothing’ and ‘finally delivering an economic plan’. Guess what the economic plan of the members opposite was? To sell everything in Queensland that was not tied down. It was to sack everyone, cut every service and sell off everything. The members opposite want to challenge us with two budgets that have been in surplus, reducing debt and making sure that we have unemployment lower under this government than it was under the previous government. It is truly galling to hear from those opposite.

Again, tonight, I am going to be setting the record straight. We certainly oppose the motion that has been moved. We have implemented policies that have increased business confidence in this state. This morning, I talked about the NAB Monthly Business Survey, which has Queensland at plus 12, ahead of New South Wales at plus six. We have gone up three points in the last month, coming off the back of very good retail trade figures over the last two months. Of course, there was also the announcement that we made this week to increase employment through additional trading hours across the state. All of these things bode well for where we are headed.

As we know, when we have an economy that is in transition, we have to make sure that we do our best to fill the gap. No doubt, the Minister for Employment will speak about the Back to Work program that we are very proud of, because everyone who finds out about this program says, ‘This

sounds like a great offer.' People have been very impressed with the Youth Boost, which we started in December last year. It is tracking very well. We know that the more people find out about this program, the more they will take it up.

We are more interested in creating jobs than cutting jobs. As I said, that was the hallmark of the members opposite when they were in government. It was all about cutting, slashing, burning and making sure that they could sell everything that was not tied down. We know that the trend unemployment rate in Queensland is at six per cent. That rate is 0.6 per cent lower under this government than it was under the last government. That is a stark difference. We know that the ABS figures and the data shows that, in the first 23 months of this government, we created more than 28,400 net new jobs. That is something that those opposite could not talk about under their watch. They had month-in month-out job losses. They were in negative territory. We are in positive territory in amongst a transitioning economy which those opposite were not experiencing at the time. It was pre the significant wind-down of investment and construction related to mining and resources projects.

It is galling to hear from the member for Kawana, who was himself the architect of many different program cuts working very diligently under the former premier Campbell Newman and the now opposition leader Tim Nicholls. Based on verified and published ABS figures, full-time employment in regional Queensland fell by 22,100 people over the year to December 2016. This 43,000 figure is a propaganda exercise by those opposite. This is a political motion that clearly shows that the conservatives are quite rightly now earning the reputation as being lost at sea. They have no identity. We do not know what they stand for. In particular we do not know what the member for Clayfield stands for. We know he stands for asset sales—he just will not admit it. We know he stands for cutting and slashing—he just will not admit it. Those opposite have a track record of racking up the cuts and spending to get to an \$8 billion hole that they are yet to explain how they will fund because they do not like the way we have done it. Our \$200 million Jobs and Regional Growth Package and the Back to Work—Regional Employment Package are positive signs that we are doing great things—

(Time expired)