




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Harmony Day; Back to Work Program

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (9.55 am): I wish everyone a happy Harmony Day, which celebrates diversity in a community where everyone belongs. The Palaszczuk government's \$100 million Back to Work regional jobs package is going from strength to strength. To date under the program, 1,090 regional businesses have been paid, employing 2,323 Queensland jobseekers. That includes 755 jobseekers aged 15 to 24 who have been hired under the \$20,000 Back to Work Youth Boost. There are a further 807 applications pending across all categories, which, if approved, will result in a total of 3,130 jobs supported under the program.

I have seen firsthand the difference the regional jobs program is making to regional jobseekers. Last week in Cairns, I visited Hunter Automotive, which recently hired young John McGee as an apprentice mechanic under the \$20,000 Youth Boost. Owner Glen Hunter said that the \$20,000 payment he successfully applied for was instrumental in his decision to hire John. I am pleased to say that there are literally thousands more success stories just like that repeated throughout regional Queensland.

Back to Work is delivering great results for those who traditionally face significant labour market challenges: over 12 per cent are from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds; nearly 11 per cent are people with a disability; 24.7 per cent are mature age; nearly nine per cent are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and nearly 42 per cent are women. These are great results from an outstanding program that is not only supporting regional jobs but also boosting regional economies. So far, the total amount paid to regional employers is nearly \$11 million. That money is being put to work in regional economies, following the application of strict eligibility criteria. The majority of applications are for employees in small to medium sized businesses. Five hundred and two applications belong to businesses that have one to four employees and 816 are in businesses that employ five to 19 people.

We understand that the regions are doing it tough and that is why this program is specifically targeted at the regions and it is delivering jobs right across-the-board: 545 in Far North Queensland; 497 in North Queensland, 335 Mackay-Whitsunday; 356 in Central Queensland; 424 in Wide Bay; 69 in North-West Queensland and 93 in South-West Queensland. Back to Work is delivering for jobseekers, employers and regional economies. I urge all members to promote the benefits it is bringing to communities throughout regional Queensland.