




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Back to Work Program

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (3.19 pm): Jobs are the top priority of the Palaszczuk government. Owing to the success of our Back to Work regional jobs program, we are now expanding the program into South-East Queensland. As of today, the regional Back to Work program is supporting 4,841 jobs, with a further 839 applications pending, representing real workers in real jobs with real employers.

The state budget, which was handed down yesterday, includes an extra \$77.5 million for the Back to Work program, representing \$27.5 million for the south-east and an additional \$50 million for regional Queensland. The additional \$27.5 million available to employers who hire a long-term unemployed or a young unemployed jobseeker aged 15 to 24 years in the south-east is expected to support up to 1,500 new jobs. It means that eligible employers who take on a long-term unemployed jobseeker will be eligible for payments of up to \$15,000 and, if they take on a young jobseeker, the Youth Boost of \$20,000.

When Back to Work was launched in July 2016, South-East Queensland was experiencing relatively strong labour market conditions. However, there are employment challenges, particularly for long-term unemployed and young jobseekers, including jobseekers from culturally and linguistically diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Back to Work SEQ will provide the additional boost that employers need to increase their confidence to take on additional employees and grow their business which, in turn, will drive growth in the Queensland economy. Back to Work SEQ will have a dedicated support team, just as the regional program does, with officers available to assist employers and jobseekers throughout the application process.

I am pleased to say that the state budget also includes an extra \$50 million to support the continuation of the Back to Work regional program, which will support up to 3,400 new regional jobs on top of the 8,000 that are already in the program. These extra funds are in addition to the \$100 million that has already been allocated to the Back to Work regional program, meaning that our Back to Work package now represents a \$177.5 million investment in jobs.

Queensland Council of Social Services CEO Mark Henley has welcomed our expanded Back to Work package. Mark Henley, along with Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill, have both seen firsthand the fantastic results it is delivering for regional jobseekers. I encourage employers in the regions to stick with this outstanding program. I also urge SEQ employers to get on board with Back to Work and give a young or long-term unemployed jobseeker a go.