




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Whitsunday Island, Shark Attack; Mackay Electorate, Local Businesses

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.53 pm): Unfortunately, in the news this afternoon there are reports of a second shark attack in the Whitsundays. I would like to put on record our thoughts and prayers for the second victim. It is very unusual to have any shark attacks in that area. I would also like to thank the RACQ helicopter service for their professionalism as they rushed out to those victims yesterday and today.

Mr Healy: They save so many lives.

Mrs GILBERT: They do save a lot of lives. Unfortunately, we have heard the opposition doing a lot of talking down of the wonderful regional Queensland areas over the last week. Readers of the *Mackay Daily Mercury* last weekend were bewildered by a letter to the editor from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Everton. I am not sure if the member for Everton actually knows where Mackay is, let alone what is happening there.

It was only this weekend that Mayor Greg Williamson, who will be attending the drought appeal function later today, said there were some 2,800 jobs on offer across our region. I was also talking to Daniel from Hastings Deering a couple of days ago, and he said there were still 160 jobs from his organisation that they cannot fill locally. Mackay has the lowest unemployment rate in the state outside of Brisbane. Currently, it is at 3.2 per cent. This is coupled with the highest participation rate in the state. We are desperate for skilled workers to return to the area after they were pushed out by the member for Everton and Campbell Newman.

The Palaszczuk government is again investing in Mackay. We were able to entice Mercurius, a US biofuel company, to undertake research and make plans to set up its operations in the regions. Tourism is developing in Mackay and the Isaac regions, and it is booming in the Whitsundays after the LNP ripped out thousands in advertising funds from this industry. The Seaforth net-free zone, which the LNP threatened to repeal, has returned the region to a recreational fishing hotspot. In fact, it is the centre of the Mackay Regional Council's regional fishing strategy. The \$28 million Vines Creek bridges are nearly complete, months ahead of schedule. The \$7 million fire station is complete and in operation.

What we do need, though, is for the large mining companies to come to the table and start paying our local businesses within 30 days. During the commodities downturn, payment days went up to 90 days. It is time for them to turn around. It is time for the federal government to step up and put pressure on these companies. It is the Palaszczuk government that is supporting local businesses.