




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 17 May 2018

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Cairns Electorate, Small Business

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (2.51 pm): With Queensland's Small Business Week fast approaching, I rise to speak of the small businesses in my city and my region to make people aware of the support the Palaszczuk Labor government is providing for them, particularly in the pursuit of jobs. We know how important jobs are, particularly in regional areas.

The Queensland government recognises that small businesses are the engine room of the state's economy. My area has a population of 170,000 people and there are approximately 10,000 small businesses in and around Cairns. The number of small businesses within the region as a whole mirrors quite closely the small business economy which dominates the Queensland economy. Recent census results indicate that retail trade is the largest employing industry in the Tropical North, with over 12,000 people, or 12 per cent of the workforce, employed in that area. The next largest is industries such as accommodation, cafes and restaurants, then a multitude of tourism businesses.

There are many small businesses that will enjoy the benefits of the investment being made in our city and region, in particular the Palaszczuk government's \$176 million investment in the Cairns Convention Centre, which currently generates \$80 million a year into our economy. It would be fair to say that once this expansion and upgrade have been completed that number will grow considerably. There is \$120 million being spent on our port expansion and \$46 million available for aviation growth and development. These and other state initiatives will see further economic opportunities for small businesses in and around Cairns.

From a jobs perspective—it is vitally important—we have the Back to Work program. Support payments of up to \$10,000 are available for eligible employers hiring unemployed people; \$15,000 for hiring long-term unemployed people—that is, those unemployed for 52 weeks; \$20,000 under the Youth Boost for hiring young jobseekers between the ages of 15 and 24; and \$20,000 under the mature aged boost for hiring jobseekers over the age of 55. There is a Business Growth Fund Program of \$2.3 million to support Queensland companies to grow and create jobs; the Trade Skills Assessment and Gap Training Program, which provides funding of up to \$4,700 per trainee; Skilling Queenslanders for Work, which provides \$80 million to provide skills training and jobs to a minimum of 10,000 disadvantaged Queenslanders; the Small Business Digital Grants Program; and the Small Business Entrepreneur Grants Program, which provides up to \$5,000 to engage consultants, advisers or a business coach for up to three months to help establish the business. There is a range of opportunities available for small businesses. I encourage people in my area to seek advice from the department of state development, which can assist with their inquiries in these important areas.