




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2019

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Rockhampton Electorate, Jobs

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (2.41 pm): As my colleagues, the member for Keppel and the member for Mackay, will tell you, we have had a number of tough years in Central Queensland since the end of the mining boom. This was only made worse by a Newman LNP government that axed jobs and cut government spending in our part of the region, rubbing salt into the wounds of our local communities. Our unemployment rate soared towards 10 per cent and wages went backwards. The Australia Institute did the numbers earlier this year and worked out that in the federal electorate of Capricornia wages fell almost 7.5 per cent between 2012 and 2017, house prices fell and many businesses struggled to gain traction.

Today I can report that, although there is still a way to go, our unemployment rate has fallen, new jobs have been created—4,100 in the past year, according to the ABS—and there are finally signs that our housing market has turned a corner. I can feel growing optimism in our community. I am very proud of the role our government has played in supporting the Rockhampton community and helping to create jobs and create pathways for workers. How have we done it? By backing local projects such as: the expansion of the Capricornia Correctional Centre, which will create 232 local permanent jobs; the Northern Access Road upgrade, which is creating 400 jobs during construction; and the Capricorn Highway project between Rockhampton and Gracemere, which is creating another 180 jobs.

Then there is Rookwood Weir, which will create 100 jobs during construction, not to mention a \$53 million maintenance program at Stanwell Power Station; the upgrade to the local courthouse, ambulance station and fire station, which are either being completed or in the works; and let us not forget the 700 jobs our government has supported locally under Building our Regions. Looking to the jobs of the future, we have also commissioned a \$5 million study into the feasibility of a large hydrogen plant at Stanwell.

All up, our capital works program is supporting 3,600 local jobs, which is the equivalent of \$4,325 per capita per project in our area—more than double the figure for the south-east corner. We have also helped more than 2,100 people find jobs through our Skilling Queenslanders for Work program and assisted another 2,500 jobseekers through our Back to Work program. Our government has supported our community by investing in the Public Service following the devastating cuts of the LNP government. The number of people employed by the state government in Central Queensland has risen from 9,160 to just over 10,000 since 2015. That means more teachers, nurses and police in our community. Compare that to the shameful record of the federal LNP government in our area, which employs just 157 people in Rockhampton. Just so we are clear, that is 157 people out of a 150,000 strong federal Public Service, which just shows that the LNP is all talk and no action when it comes to the decentralising of government services.

Finally, we are also working to rebuild QBuild in Rockhampton by re-opening the old North Street depot that was shut down by Campbell Newman. I look forward to welcoming the first round of tradies and apprentices next year. Today the Premier announced that the Office for Rural and Regional

Queensland will be based in Rockhampton. As I said, the future is looking bright for Rockhampton and Central Queensland. Our government is doing its bit by creating local jobs and supporting local workers and jobseekers.