




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Central Queensland, Jobs and Economy

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.51 pm): The Palaszczuk government continues to back Central Queensland by creating jobs and boosting the economy. In fact, more than 5,100 jobs have been created in our region over the past year by Labor. Creating permanent, secure jobs is my No. 1 priority for the Keppel region, and our government's policies of investment in building infrastructure and the support we are providing for local people so they can get the jobs they want to provide for their families are working. They are making a difference to the lives of people living in Central Queensland.

I am pleased to report that the job growth rate in our region over the past 12 months has been 4.6 per cent, which is higher than the state average. The Palaszczuk government is committed to creating good quality jobs in the regions and we are seeing that commitment pay off. Our Back to Work program has supported almost 1,160 local businesses to take on 2,500 employees, including almost 530 apprentices and trainees across regional Queensland—not to mention our \$47 billion infrastructure budget this financial year, of which 70 per cent is being spent outside the south-east corner in regional Queensland.

The successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative continues to provide job-ready training and skills, assisting almost 4,038 people in our region with over 2,547 participants going on to get a job once they finished the program. Our Labor government has been investing in job-creating projects, like infrastructure for Great Keppel Island, upgrading the Capricornia Correctional Centre, building Rookwood Weir and upgrading the Yeppoon-Rockhampton road. We are building new classrooms at Yeppoon State High School and Parkhurst State School to give our local students and teachers state-of-the-art teaching and learning spaces. We are building a \$14.3 million 42-bed detox and rehab centre to treat Central Queenslanders suffering from ice, alcohol and other drug addictions, and we have given our local elderly people and amazing nursing staff a beautiful new Cec Pritchard wing and kitchen at the North Rockhampton Nursing Centre.

I am proud that the Palaszczuk government is rebuilding QBuild. QBuild was a major economic force in Rockhampton before the LNP sacked 1,500 local apprentices, electricians and carpenters when it was in government. I worked with QBuild on many projects in my time as a town planner before entering politics. It was a horrific time for many hardworking, loyal and experienced colleagues who had dedicated their lives to building our local schools, hospitals and community facilities. The LNP decimated QBuild, destroying its ability to provide safe, responsive trade services throughout the state. I am so proud of Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk's government's incredible announcement to rebuild QBuild and to restore the North Street depot in Rockhampton to be the regional headquarters for plumbing, carpentry, electrical and refrigeration workers and apprentices.

The Palaszczuk government is building and upgrading hospitals, schools, social housing, police stations and other government facilities—the economy-boosting infrastructure that underpins jobs, growth, investment and prosperity. We are backing Queenslanders with free apprenticeships for those

under 21, as well as our free TAFE initiative for year 12 graduates. The Palaszczuk government is delivering on its commitment to Queenslanders to put downward pressure on power prices. Queensland has the lowest average power price on the eastern seaboard. In contrast, electricity prices under the LNP went up by 43 per cent. Meanwhile, the Palaszczuk government's \$2 billion Affordable Energy Plan is in full swing and continues to deliver on lower power prices and more renewables.

Those opposite have no idea how to run our great state. Last time, they cut services, sacked 197 full-time jobs from the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service, including 40 midwives, and planned to sell off our income-generating assets like Stanwell, Ergon and the Gladstone port. The LNP members have already announced \$7 billion in unfunded promises with absolutely no plan, meaning they have no other option but to sack workers, sell assets and cut services to balance the books. Their record includes sacking 14,000 Queenslanders, and the only way they can pay for their uncostered promises is to cut services, sack people or sell state assets.

Under the LNP's watch, unemployment went from 5.5 per cent to 6.7 per cent in trend terms and peaked at 7.2 per cent in seasonally adjusted terms. Overall, the Palaszczuk government has added seven times as many jobs as the LNP did. It would have taken the LNP more than two decades to create as many jobs as we have in five years. Those opposite are happy to throw mud. They are happy to make vexatious allegations, just like the unfounded allegation they made to the Electoral Commission about me. It is dirty politics and it just goes to show that those opposite are not fit to govern. The hardworking people of Central Queensland see through the LNP's unfunded promises and vexatious allegations. Queenslanders will not be taken for fools and it is an insult to all Queenslanders to have an opposition so incompetent and so incapable of running our state.