




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Moreton Bay, Small Business

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (2.31 pm): The Palaszczuk government is opening up opportunities for small businesses to create jobs and is providing training for local Moreton Bay people to fill those jobs. The Moreton Bay region is a hotspot for small business. Businesses are moving in and local people are starting up their own businesses.

In June 2018 there were 28,000 businesses in the Moreton Bay region. Nearly 17,000 of those had an annual turnover of less than \$200,000. Two years earlier, in June 2016, there were 26,400 businesses. Nearly 16,000 had an annual turnover of less than \$200,000. Some 1,500 businesses have emerged in two years. These are nearly all small businesses—tradies and start-ups. There are businesses such as Fresh Hot Smoked, a smokehouse in North Lakes. Kerrie and Campbell have started up the business they have always wanted. I talked to many of those small businesses at this morning's North Lakes Chamber of Commerce AGM. I congratulate them.

There is a gap experienced by these 1,500 businesses. Some parts of our area have higher rates of unemployment than others. Unemployment in Deception Bay is about 12 per cent, against the national average of about seven per cent. At the same time, businesses need skilled workers. Some of those businesses are telling me that they cannot get skilled workers. How does the Palaszczuk government address this mismatch? We invest in skills and training.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work in Bancroft has put over 800 people into work. The Deception Bay Community Youth Programs has a 90 per cent completion rate. Seventy per cent go into paid employment. Skilling Queenslanders for Work has supported over 54,000 Queenslanders into work. It is a \$420 million investment over six years. This is an example of how we actively support jobseekers and businesses.

We have also increased the payroll tax threshold from \$1.1 million to \$1.3 million. That is helping to relieve pressure from something like 2,000 Queensland businesses. There is also the Small Business Digital Grants Program and the Small Business Entrepreneur Grants Program. Each of those programs offers about \$5,000. Both programs are very popular with small businesses in my area.

We are also offering free TAFE for year 12 school leavers. Add onto that free apprenticeships for Queensland aged under 21 years—

A government member: Sounds like a good Labor government!

Mr WHITING: I take that interjection. This is what an active government does to deliver jobs to Queenslanders. We are seeing this active support for training and skills bear fruit in the Moreton Bay region. Twelve months ago Hastings Deering opened a new depot in Caboolture that employs 25 people. Hastings Deering has about 60 apprentices on the books around Queensland. This active support for training and jobs is a reason 216,000 jobs have been created in Queensland since January 2015, when the Palaszczuk government came to office. Last month nearly 20,000 jobs were created in Queensland. That is nearly half of all the jobs created in Australia.

Many times in this place we have heard the question: 'Are there any alternative approaches?' Sadly, there are not. If there are, they are very mediocre. The LNP has announced a procurement policy for small business. We have already done that with Buy Queensland. If a business's main workforce is within 125 kilometres of the job, it meets the criteria. The LNP has announced that it will cut payment times from government to Queensland businesses. We have already done that. We have already driven down payment times. That is one of our policies. The LNP has also announced \$20 million for Queensland manufacturers. We are already doing that, except ours is twice as good: we have a \$40 million program to support Queensland manufacturers with the Made in Queensland program. I note the opening of another round of that program.

Today it has been proven that those opposite offer nothing. I think former member Scott Emerson was right when he said today that the LNP is not cutting through. Who am I to disparage his judgement? It is very clear that when Queenslanders look at the alternatives they will see nothing to like from those opposite.