



Speech By  
**Julianne Gilbert**


**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Mackay Electorate**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (3.11 pm): It is great to be in North Queensland to talk about my electorate.

**Mr Harper:** At least you want to be here!

**Mrs GILBERT:** Yes, it is a great place to be. My electorate of Mackay is surrounded by the wider regions of Isaac and the Whitsundays. Collectively, we are the powerhouse of prosperity for our great state. The Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday region is one of the fastest growing and dynamic economies in Australia. It delivers minerals, diverse agricultural products and tourism to the world and contributes around \$20 billion in gross regional product to the Australian economy. Our collective region produces coal, sugar, beef, aquaculture, broadacre crops and the best vegetables in the state.

The world around us is changing at a rapid pace. We want to put ourselves in a position to tackle the future head-on so we continue to thrive. We want to educate and train our young people and upskill and retrain our mature age workers so everyone has an opportunity to engage in the employment, career opportunities and prosperity that our traditional industries offer. Businesses in my region have embraced the Palaszczuk government's offer of free apprenticeships for young people under the age of 21, with over 30 signed up already. That announcement was only made a couple of weeks ago. The saving of up to \$3,000 is a huge incentive for businesses to increase the number of tradespeople, and this is on top of payroll tax deductions. Training incentives for businesses in my region have never been so attractive.

I recently attended Mackay Christian College with Minister Fentiman and spoke to students there. They said they are excited about the additional number of training opportunities that have been advertised since the announcement of free apprenticeships for under-21s. The Palaszczuk government is building a skilled workforce so that our kids have a real future. In my community we want to be ready for change. We want to understand how it will affect our current industries and how to upskill for the new jobs of tomorrow in agriculture, aquaculture, tourism, METs, mining and construction. We need to understand how technology and automation will change the employment opportunities of tomorrow.

To ensure we are game ready the Greater Whitsunday Alliance—we call it the GW3—hosted a Futures Workforces Summit in Mackay for our wider region. Employers, workers, school students and large and small business owners from all areas of our economy were represented and participated in the workshops. Anders Sorman-Nilsson, a global futurist, was one of the keynote speakers. He opened his presentation with, 'Change has never been as fast and will never be as slow as it is now.' Simon Banks also challenged us to take off the blinkers and keep people in the digital process. He said that possibilities are everywhere by delivering a culture of innovation in workplaces and teams can produce great ideas, products and results. We need to understand our core business, be agile and have an edge.

We are a region of many well-developed edges. For my region, one edge into the future lies with the biofutures industry. As a community our future is focused on how biofutures projects can value-add and sustain our existing industries in the future. The Palaszczuk government is increasing its support to accelerate the biofutures industry as part of our government's vision for the diversification of the Queensland economy. The Palaszczuk government has shown its commitment to the biofutures industry by developing a 10-year road map and action plan to assist Queensland industries partner with emerging technology providers to create new value chains and gain alternate and higher-value revenue streams. We are planning a prosperous biofuture for our region, our state and, most importantly, our kids. The Palaszczuk government is looking after North Queensland to ensure Queenslanders prosper now and in the future.