



Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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ADJOURNMENT

Cairns Electorate, Jobs and TAFE

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (7.22 pm): I am proud to be associated with a Palaszczuk Labor government which has made jobs a priority and continues to invest in the wonderful electorate of Cairns. Cairns is certainly seeing the benefits of our focus on people getting into work. It has the lowest unemployment rate in Queensland, and that is absolutely outstanding. The incredibly successful Back to Work program reached an exciting milestone earlier this month as the 20,000th Queenslander was assisted into work under this successful program—the majority of them being in the state's regions. That is absolutely fantastic and is a milestone to be celebrated. Our investment in this program is an example of our dedication to jobs, particularly in our regional areas.

We know that some Queenslanders have struggled to find the right opportunity to get a job, and that is why this program is so important. That is also why the 2019-20 budget increased funding for the Back to Work program to \$14 million, bringing the total program funding to \$383 million. This is really, really good news.

In Cairns alone, 2,647 unemployed people have now found work through the program, and 1,164 businesses have benefited from those individuals. The jobs are as varied as Indigenous rangers working on boats for Experience Co, baristas working in coffee shops and a number of positions at the very popular Hemingway's Brewery on our beautiful waterfront. The Back to Work program has now injected almost \$26 million into the local economy. This just proves that Back to Work is living up to its name and that the Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job of growing our economy. We want all Queenslanders to have access to world-class training that leads to good job opportunities.

When we were elected in 2015, TAFE campuses were left in a concerning state with a severe maintenance backlog and they were ready to be sold off. That is why we have a \$105 million investment to rebuild and revitalise TAFE campuses across the state, and in next year's budget we have \$15 million allocated to continue the upgrade of the Cairns facility. This investment in TAFE infrastructure will support another great initiative of the Palaszczuk government about jobs—that is, the \$32 million program for free apprenticeships and traineeships for those under 21 years of age. This is on top of our free TAFE for year 12 students.

We want more young Queenslanders to take up an apprenticeship or traineeship in industries where we know there will be jobs. That is why we are offering the free apprenticeships for those under the age of 21, particularly in regional areas. We understand the importance of this, particularly for our children. These are fantastic initiatives. It is good to see the government reinvesting in them and I am very proud to be delivering them.