




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Back to Work Program

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (10.06 am): This week marks another incredible milestone for the Queensland government's Back to Work program. I am pleased to report to the House that we have supported over 9,000 businesses to have the confidence to be able to take on 19,000 previously unemployed Queenslanders—12,500 of whom are young people. Since 2015 more than 192,000 jobs have been created in Queensland, and our Back to Work program has played a strong role in this.

In just under three years, this program has provided opportunities and experience for previously unemployed jobseekers in industries including manufacturing, construction, food service and automotive. One of the things I take great pride in is the fact that Back to Work has also played a significant part in supporting employment and training pathways for so many Queenslanders. Almost one in four Back to Work jobs has supported a Queenslanders to undertake an apprenticeship or a traineeship.

It has also been an opportunity to shine a light on just how diverse our local small business community is—from our smaller rural operators to our larger city centres. One such business—Iron Shadow based in Gracemere near Rockhampton—has a unique origin story as well as being a supporter of our Back to Work program. Panelbeater Dennis Frahm and his wife, Alison, an accomplished graphic artist, combined both their passions to provide a car rescue, restoration and custom artwork service. Dennis said the business needed somebody to assist with the workload but they could not afford to employ anyone. Back to Work funding allowed this small business to employ an apprentice, Reece Jones, and provided them with an opportunity to pass on knowledge of this highly specialised work.

Reece had been unemployed for around four months prior to commencing his apprenticeship in a Certificate III in Automotive Body Repair Technology, and he has been working with the business since December last year. This is just one of the thousands of Back to Work success stories, and Reece is just one of the more than 4,600 apprentices and trainees who are earning and learning because of our government's program.