



Speech By  
**Meaghan Scanlon**


**MEMBER FOR GAVEN**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2020

**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Coronavirus, Economy**

 **Ms SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (2.40 pm): The global economy has been hit hard by COVID-19 and the Gold Coast has certainly felt that pain. When decisions were rightfully made by governments across the country to put in place restrictions to save lives, my office was inundated with calls and emails from workers and businesses who were not only terrified about the health consequences of this virus but the financial impact on households in my community—people who work really hard every day to keep a roof over their head and food on table and who were already receiving a minimum wage and scared about the prospect of losing their job.

According to a Grattan Institute article, the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast are the hardest hit regions in Queensland and almost around the country when it comes to job losses caused by this global pandemic. On the Gold Coast alone almost 30,000 casuals were deemed ineligible for the JobKeeper payment because they had not been with their employer for more than 12 months. I table an article by myGC which lays out the issues around the federal government's restrictions for this program.

*Tabled paper:* Article from mygc.com.au online, dated 7 April 2020, titled 'Labor: 30,000 unemployed Gold Coasters overlooked for Job Keeper payments' [904](#).

Alongside many others, I have been calling on the federal government to widened their eligibility criteria and extend this program beyond September, particularly for the tourism industry. It is interesting to listen to those opposite talk about the tourism industry given their track record of cutting, sacking and selling: \$188 million was cut from the tourism industry by the Newman government and thousands of jobs were lost in the state of Queensland.

In stark contrast, our government is investing. We have an economic plan to kickstart our economy. We have announced: \$11 million for our theme parks on the Gold Coast and the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary to allow them to retain staff; \$25 million for our Growing Tourism Infrastructure Fund; payroll tax relief; job support loans; today's announcement of a \$15 million package to secure new flights to Queensland; and another \$8 million to provide visitor infrastructure upgrades and enhancements to re-energise nature based tourism.

There is no denying that things are tough. I want my community to know that I will continue to advocate for the Gold Coast, both within the Queensland government and at a council and national level when I think more can be done. Last week I wrote to the Minister for Small Business asking for additional funding for small business grants. Today I was pleased to hear that this call has been listened to and an additional \$100 million has been allocated. I am also really happy to see \$100 million committed as part of our Housing Construction Works for Tradies program to build new social housing.

Multiple reports show that both before and during COVID-19 the Gold Coast was one of the worst affected areas when it comes to risk of mortgage and rental stress. We are implementing a number of measures to address this issue, including: building a new Youth Foyer with 40 self-contained units for

at-risk young people in Southport—which is under construction right now, supporting local jobs—interest-free rental loans to keep loan sharks at bay and sustain tenancies; and nearly 400 new social housing homes are being constructed on the Gold Coast. We have also announced \$24 million of immediate response to COVID-19 support by providing safe accommodation for vulnerable and homeless Queenslanders needing to self-isolate; brokerage funds for specialist services to provide crisis accommodation; and expanding access to private support for people who have faced economic hardship.

Only last week I spoke with Lisa from the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre in my electorate, who has received funding under our Dignity First Fund to help provide food boxes to vulnerable Gold Coasters while supporting businesses by purchasing their food locally. In stark contrast, those Gold Coast LNP members opposite, who did not actually build a single public housing home for the Gold Coast when last in government, have recently joined their federal MP, Ms Bell, to talk about homelessness. It appears that as usual they are all talk and no action, because if Ms Bell and the LNP were serious about homelessness they would join our government and increase funding into public housing like the federal Labor government did during the global financial crisis. They seem to have enough money to provide \$25,000 grants to people who have a spare \$150,000 lying around to upgrade their home but clearly are not quite as generous when it comes to vulnerable Australians.

It is a tough time for many in our community, but stage 2 of our Queensland economic recovery plan, announced by the Premier today, goes a long way in supporting businesses and industry to kickstart the economy and create jobs. I will continue to fight for the Gold Coast to ensure we get back to hitting record tourism numbers again like we did before COVID-19 and creating good, stable jobs for young Gold Coasters.