

JOBS FOR NSW BILL 2015

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anthony Roberts, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [4.03 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

New South Wales is the engine room of the national economy. Since the Liberal-Nationals Government came to office in 2011 more than 250,000 new jobs have been created in New South Wales. This is about 100,000 more jobs than were created in Victoria over the same period. As members would be aware, we have come from ranking last among the States and Territories in economic performance, thanks to members opposite, to again leading the nation on the same key indicators. The latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that New South Wales has the lowest unemployment rate and the strongest monthly jobs growth rate of any State in this great Commonwealth of Australia. In July alone 29,500 jobs were created in New South Wales—four times the amount of the next highest State. This success is no accident.

We have taken the necessary steps to provide the economic policy settings to allow businesses to invest and create jobs. We have cut expenses growth, running rampant under Labor, and brought our budget back under control. Our triple-A credit rating has been reaffirmed by Moody's and Standard and Poor's. And we have allocated \$68.6 billion over the next four years for unprecedented investment in infrastructure, spreading new economic opportunities throughout the State. This position of strength builds confidence for businesses to invest in the strongest economy in the nation and provides the platform for a strong economic outlook for our future.

The New South Wales Government has set a target of creating 150,000 jobs within four years. We have worked hard to improve the broader economic investment environment. We now turn to modernise our approach to incentivising economic development so that commercial innovation and entrepreneurship can come to the fore. New South Wales is the leading State in the Australian economy but for the State to remain strong and prosperous it needs to prepare for the future and embrace innovation and rapid workplace change. The Jobs for NSW Bill 2015 is a bill to establish a new body, known as Jobs for NSW, which will leverage private sector expertise to provide strategic advice to the Government for the purpose of creating jobs and driving investment in New South Wales.

The world we live in is changing rapidly. New technologies and business models are bringing about fundamental change in supply chains, industry structures and the nature of work. In a globalised world we need to innovate to compete. We need to welcome disruption in order to grow the economy. We need to focus more on new and emerging growth opportunities. We need to change as the old models of industry assistance do not deliver the best value to New South Wales taxpayers. Jobs for NSW will provide the foundation for change, innovation and focus. It is a new and strategic approach.

Rather than the old, reactive approach of responding to economic issues as they arise, Jobs for NSW will be charged with taking a strategic approach to identifying the competitive advantages of the New South Wales economy; then attracting, developing and consolidating new and existing businesses in New South Wales to strengthen our economic leadership. To ensure that the advice to government reflects the needs of investors and job creators from the business community, Jobs for NSW board members will largely be drawn from the private sector and will include some of Australia's pre-eminent business leaders. We are determined to leverage the expertise of some of the best business minds in the nation to help drive investment and create jobs across New South Wales.

Jobs for NSW gathers together substantial commercial acumen, and extensive knowledge and experience in growing jobs and improving industry competitiveness. We are delighted that Mr David Thodey has agreed to be the chairperson of Jobs for NSW. Mr Thodey brings a wealth of experience to the role that New South Wales will draw on and benefit from. Jobs for NSW is different from other job creation advisory boards. It is not only an advisory board. It will be held accountable and required to report on its operations, job creation incentives and other measures to demonstrate the success of its strategies. Jobs for NSW will provide advice to the Government on how to improve New South Wales and its region's competitive advantage, and how to make New South Wales a place where businesses want to come and grow.

Jobs for NSW will work with all key stakeholders to develop and implement strategies that ensure that the Government's legacy is meaningful, long-term job creation for generations to come. The bill also establishes the Jobs for NSW Fund that will be used to fund innovative and strategically targeted incentives for economic development in New South Wales. The Jobs for NSW Fund will be a dedicated funding pool to ensure that priority actions, as identified by the board, will have access to a ready source of funding. This bill delivers on the Government's election commitment to boost the State's investment attraction schemes to \$190 million over four years. Initial funding for the Jobs for NSW Fund will include existing funds from the now ceased State Investment Attraction Scheme [SIAS] and the Regional Industries Investment Fund [RIIF]. Payments out of the now ceased SIAS and RIIF funds under existing contracts will now be paid out of the Jobs for NSW Fund.

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Jobs for NSW will recommend for approval by the Minister robust eligibility and assessment criteria for proposals for jobs creation incentives from the Jobs for NSW Fund. These criteria will consider where New South Wales Government funding can best add value—that is, where it will have the biggest impact, both now and in the future in growing employment and the economy. The eligibility and assessment criteria will be reviewed annually. This will ensure that the criteria reflect contemporary priorities as the economy grows and transforms. In addition to recommending criteria, Jobs for NSW will call for, assess and make recommendations to the Minister on funding proposals for jobs creation incentives to be paid out of the fund.

Through Jobs for NSW we are raising the bar for New South Wales Government support to ensure a more robust, systematic and transparent approach to assessing and reporting on jobs creation incentives. The bill gives me, as the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, the power to appoint advisory committees to assist the Jobs for NSW Board. As an example, these advisory committees may consider issues relating to innovation, skills and regional development, and may provide specialist advice to Jobs for NSW. The bill provides New South Wales with an opportunity to enlist the brightest and most engaged minds allowing us to do the most good and unleash the most potential.

The bill contains robust transparency arrangements for Jobs for NSW. Jobs for NSW will submit an annual report outlining the particulars of all job creation incentives paid for from the fund during the year. The annual report will also include particulars of the total amount of payments made from the fund for proposals in rural and regional New South Wales, outside the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle. This includes whether that amount is at least 30 per cent of the total payments made from the fund. It will be clear to all where New South Wales Government funding for job creation incentives is being directed and for what purpose.

Jobs for NSW will complement other New South Wales Government economic development initiatives benefiting New South Wales businesses including: the Jobs Action Plan, which has been extended until 2019 and provides \$5,000 payroll tax rebates to employers to take on additional employees; the small business employment incentive, which provides \$2,000 grants to small businesses that do not pay payroll tax for additional employees they take on; and the \$25 million Jobs of Tomorrow Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships for students undertaking qualifications in technology and growth jobs. These are real initiatives and real support that help New South Wales businesses create jobs, grow and contribute to the State's economic success. They are achieving real results.

To build on this success, the Government has established the Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development to lead a bold policy agenda targeted at jobs creation—real, long-term, sustainable jobs for all of us, our children and their children. The Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development is a mix of old and new. It will ensure that we maintain, regulate, develop and protect our natural resources so they continue to provide ongoing wealth and jobs for our State for generations to come. Through Jobs for NSW we will also ensure that government assistance to industry is targeted, and that New South Wales leads the charge across both State and Federal government to bring policy change to drive jobs growth.

The Government and Jobs for NSW will build on the work from the previous term of government, in particular the initiatives identified in the industry action plans. The industry-led knowledge hubs are proving to be an exciting way to harness the collaborative spirit between industry, big and small businesses, researchers and educational institutions. Jobs for NSW will also build on the Government's efforts to grow regional New South Wales, including through Restart NSW programs such as Resources for Regions and Water Security for Regions, and through a network of advisers working across the State to ensure that regional New South Wales benefits from targeted government support.

A strong New South Wales requires a diverse, productive and thriving regional New South Wales. Jobs for NSW provides an opportunity for government to capitalise on the body's expertise, and support fresh initiatives that will create jobs, drive economic growth and unleash the economic potential of regional New South Wales. The addition of skills and TAFE to the department will ensure that industry and business can work with government to identify New South Wales' skills needs as our economy continues to grow and develop. It will also ensure that service providers deliver graduates with the skills that business needs. A strong economy supports a strong State, where people and businesses can thrive and prosper. The New South Wales Government has committed to deliver 150,000 new jobs over four years. This bill and Jobs for NSW will help us achieve this goal and strengthen our position as Australia's economic powerhouse. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Clayton Barr and set down as an order of the day for a future day.