

# Parenting and jobs 'can work together'

## Recruiting mums and dads becomes a priority, as CARLY CRUMMEY reports

AFTER 28 years in the employment business, Sarina Russo has seen countless parents come to her company and find a new direction.

"Accepting how you are today is a big element of success," managing director of her own job access company Sarina Russo said while visiting Bundaberg yesterday.

"Execution is too, which is making the decision to go out and get a job... this creates winning parents."

Jobs for Parents month started yesterday and will see a host of events across the country staged to encourage employers to recruit more parents to the workforce.

Neato Employment Services Bundaberg area manager Cheryl Graffunder said the benefits of employ-

ing a parenting workforce were the knowledge and experience that followed.

"Parents have a wealth of skills they have gained through being on committees," Mrs Graffunder said.

"Plus they have good interpersonal skills, reliability and flexibility."

Workforce Participation Minister Sharman Stone said the government's \$3.7 billion Welfare to Work reforms were introduced 18 months ago, seeing parents on benefits, with children aged over six, required to take up part-time work.

"As part of the Welfare to Work reforms, up to 215,000 parents who were previously on pensions are now entering the jobs market — many for the first time," Mr Stone said.

He said the reforms aimed to help parents, people with a disability, mature aged and long-term unemployed find work and help employers overcome labour shortages.

A spokeswoman for the minis-

ter's office said parents could access work easily by visiting their Centrelink office.

She said the parent would go through "employment preparation" which identified gaps in skills and filled them so the person was ready for a new role.

"Parents can also access other support services like wage subsidies, work experience placement support, and access to the Job Seeker account, which can be used to purchase equipment for jobs, clothing, or used for travel costs," she said.

Centrelink general manager Hank Jongen said the agency could help parents meet the cost of child care through payments such as Child Care Benefit and the 30% Child Care Tax Rebate.

■ The month-long Jobs for Parents campaign will also see a function at IMPACT Make Your Mark tomorrow night.



**BALANCE:** Sarina Russo meets Desiree Christen at Hinkler Central as part of her Jobs for Parents month visit.

*Photo: DARRYN SMITH job2908a*