

~~their children. Australia's humble beginnings lay the very foundations that led to the multicultural society that we now live in. From the Chinese who settled in the goldfields in the 1870s to those from European nations who were displaced by war in the early 20th century and the Vietnamese in the 1970s, people from many countries have come for many reasons and created their new homes here. Communities across the state continue to embrace the notion of a fair go for everyone, regardless of where they come from, what language they speak or what religion they follow. The Queensland government welcomes this diversity and is committed to building a fair and equitable society.~~

~~Our multicultural festivals provide an opportunity to build bridges between cultures and increase appreciation of and respect for diversity. I enjoyed the opportunity to attend a number of festivals in South East Queensland, including the Iraqi festival. This culture has a deep and rich history that dates back to ancient times as Iraq was home to some of the world's earliest civilisations such as Sumer, Babylon and Assyria. The Vishu festival originates from the state of Kerala in South India and marks the first day of the Malayalam year. The Ipswich Global Fiesta, organised by the Ipswich City Council, celebrates Ipswich's cultural diversity and increases community engagement in the region. The ethnic youth ministry multicultural fiesta gathered young people from various ethnic communities in the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane to share in and celebrate the richness of their cultural heritage through food, fellowship and entertainment. The Sinhala and Tamil new year celebrations recognise the contribution of Australia's oldest migrant groups.~~

~~Such celebrations build bridges within cultures. For young people in particular the festive environment is ideal for connecting with and sharing their cultural heritage with the wider community. We live in a complex world and this makes it especially important that our youth develop a strong sense of belonging and pride in their identity, which of course includes their cultural identity. I congratulate the organisers for their continued efforts so that people from many different backgrounds can be sure that culture remains strong in Queensland while sharing this with the wider community. As I have said, the Queensland government has a strong vision for a fair, equitable and inclusive society.~~

~~I also briefly mention the government's review on Queensland's multicultural policy. In October last year, Multicultural Affairs Queensland launched extensive public consultations seeking people's views on how the state's multicultural policies can be improved for the benefit of all Queenslanders. This review was about planning for the future of Queensland and deciding what we would like our state to look like. The government has held many community workshops across the state, attended by cultural groups, refugees, migrants, peak community bodies and many non-government service organisations. I have attended workshops in Emerald, Gladstone, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg and the Sunshine Coast and was impressed with the numbers present and the contribution people made to the discussion topics. We held these consultations because we recognise that community input is vital to good government. We know that for policy to be effective it must truly reflect the needs of the people it is meant to support.~~

~~Some of the important issues raised included the recognition of prior qualifications, the underemployment of migrant groups, training and educational opportunities, information about services and strengthening multicultural identities to name but a few. The total number of submissions was outstanding, with 240 submissions received. This review is designed to ensure that the policy continues to be responsive and relevant to the changing needs and demographics of Queensland. I look forward to the ideas raised in the community contributing to a multicultural policy that is bigger, stronger and more inclusive than ever before.~~

EDUCATION AND TRAINING LEGISLATION (SKILLS QUEENSLAND) AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training) (12.34 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005, the Industrial Relations Regulation 2000, the Public Service Act 2008, the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Regulation 2007 and the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000 for particular purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Tabled paper: Education and Training Legislation (Skills Queensland) Amendment Bill.

Tabled paper: Education and Training Legislation (Skills Queensland) Amendment Bill, explanatory notes.

Second Reading

Hon. GJ WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training) (12.34 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Today I introduce the Education and Training Legislation (Skills Queensland) Amendment Bill 2010 into parliament. This bill will establish Skills Queensland, an independent skills commission to lead the state's skills and workforce development. The bill will also amend the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 to strengthen the child protection measures within the teaching environment. Skills are vital to Queensland's economic prosperity. For workers, qualifications represent the passport to increased employment and earnings potential. For employers, a skilled workforce is flexible, innovative and productive.

Queensland's skills system is a formidable industry sector in its own right. Education and training is now Australia's largest services exporter and is worth \$2.4 billion a year to Queensland's economy. Queensland's vocational education and training or VET sector has over 1,140 active training providers, which is more than any other state or territory. Queensland now trains about 45 per cent of the nation's school based apprentices and trainees. Again, that is more than any other state or territory. A higher percentage of unemployed Queenslanders engaging in the skills system find employment after the completion of their studies than the national average. Despite the strength of Queensland's VET sector, more can still be done.

Queensland's strong population and economic growth over the past decade has meant that maintaining a high participation rate in the skills system has been difficult. The boom years leading up to 2007 stretched our system, with providers struggling to keep up with a growing demand for skills. The global financial crisis presented other challenges to the system as providers struggled to shift their training effort to meet a rapidly changing demand for skills. With the state budget predicting a return to strong growth in the years ahead, it is now time to ensure our system is focused on the future. That is why the Queensland government proposes to establish Skills Queensland, a statutory body to lead reform to Queensland's skills system to create a more flexible and demand-driven system that meets the needs of industry, communities and the economy.

Skills Queensland's key function will be to advise government on skills and workforce development and skilled migration. It will develop a skills and workforce development investment plan, a five-year plan with a ten-year whole of economy outlook that will be renewed annually. This will be the primary way for Skills Queensland to identify priorities, over a five-year period, for investment in skills, qualifications and workforce development. Through the plan, Skills Queensland will be able to recommend how government resources should be allocated to meet the state's skills development needs and to respond to emerging industry opportunities and regional and global economic factors.

Non-government investment in vocational education and training in Queensland is relatively low compared to other Australian jurisdictions. The government is looking forward to employers taking further responsibility for skilling their workforce. Queensland is on the front foot in meeting this challenge with the recently announced CSG/LNG investment fund. This fund leverages resources dollar for dollar from industry to meet the skill needs of this new and emerging industry.

In its first six months, Skills Queensland will focus on developing and implementing industry engagement mechanisms to establish an identity amongst industry stakeholders and support its advisory functions and the development of the inaugural skills and workforce development investment plan. It will also start to look at opportunities to leverage greater contribution from industry. Skills Queensland will have access to strategic purchasing funding held by the government. The funding will be allocated towards the skills and workforce priorities identified by Skills Queensland and will be used to leverage funding from industry through co-investment. Access to the fund will be subject to government approval, taking account of the impact on providers, in particular TAFE institutes, to ensure viability and sustainability into the future.

In the future, when the body has established its credentials with industry and government, the funding arrangements may evolve whereby Skills Queensland could be provided its own funding to support its strategic investments and brokerage arrangements with industry. Skills Queensland will be a genuine partnership whereby industry and government can share the challenge of meeting Queensland's future skill needs. Skills Queensland will be led by seven industry representatives with direct experience in industry, training or employment sectors, one of whom will be the chair. It will also comprise the directors-general from the employment and training portfolios. Industry representatives bring commercial acumen, an understanding of emerging industries and technologies, supply and demand priorities for skilled labour and economic drivers for business.

The establishment of Skills Queensland will strengthen industry leadership of and investment in skills and workforce development in Queensland. It will also increase industry confidence in and ownership of our skills system. Government will continue to play a key role in funding, implementing and

administering skills and workforce development strategies. However, these activities will be informed, and well informed I believe, by Skills Queensland.

I turn now to the College of Teachers legislation. The bill amends provisions relating to teachers who are convicted of disqualifying offences. Currently, the college must cancel the registration of an approved teacher convicted of a disqualifying offence after 1 January 2006 who is sentenced to imprisonment. That teacher then becomes an excluded person and cannot apply for teacher registration. The teacher cannot appeal the decision to cancel registration.

However, where in a limited number of cases a teacher surrenders their registration before they were convicted of a disqualifying offence and sentenced to an imprisonment order, the person is currently able to reapply to the Queensland College of Teachers for registration. The bill will address this by amending the definition of excluded person to include persons who previously held teacher registration or permission to teach who are convicted of a disqualifying offence after 1 January 2006 and sentenced to an imprisonment order. This means that, even if the person surrendered their registration prior to their conviction for a disqualifying offence, they will be excluded from ever again applying for teacher registration.

The bill will also ensure that the college is notified of the outcome of all investigations started by employing authorities involving an allegation of harm caused or likely to be caused to a child because of the conduct of a teacher. Currently, the employing authority is required to notify the college when it commences this type of investigation and then notify the college if the teacher is dismissed after the investigation or resigns during or after the investigation.

However, the employing authority is not strictly required to notify the college of the outcome of every commenced investigation—for example, if the investigation does not result in the teacher's dismissal or resignation. This bill amends the act to clarify that, if an employing authority is required to notify the college that an investigation has commenced, it must also then notify the college of the outcome of that investigation. This will ensure that the college is kept well informed about all investigations and can instigate its own investigation or take disciplinary action against the teacher if appropriate.

The bill also amends the act to make minor and technical consequential amendments arising out of the amendments to the act in the Criminal History Screening Legislation Amendment Act 2010. The amendments are supported by the three education sectors. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Nicholls, adjourned.

~~FAIR TRADING (AUSTRALIAN CONSUMER LAW) AMENDMENT BILL~~

~~First Reading~~

~~Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (12.42 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Fair Trading Act 1989 to apply the Australian Consumer Law of the Commonwealth as a law of Queensland and for other particular purposes, to make consequential amendments to the acts stated in the schedule, and to amend the Security Providers Act 1993 for particular purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—~~

~~That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.~~

~~Motion agreed to.~~

~~Bill read a first time.~~

~~Tabled paper: Fair Trading (Australian Consumer Law) Amendment Bill.~~

~~Tabled paper: Fair Trading (Australian Consumer Law) Amendment Bill, explanatory notes.~~

~~Second Reading~~

~~Hon. PJ LAWLOR (Southport ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (12.43 pm): I move—~~

~~That the bill be now read a second time.~~

~~In 2008, the Productivity Commission published a comprehensive review of Australia's consumer policy framework. This review found that Australia had a sound consumer policy and product safety system but highlighted areas in which regulation could be substantially improved.~~

~~The shape of the current consumer policy reforms were agreed in broad terms by COAG in October 2008, and further defined through a national cooperative process engaging the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs and officials groups from all jurisdictions. The resulting Australian Consumer Law, or ACL, represents the most significant overhaul of Australia's consumer laws in 25 years.~~