



Speech by

Paul Hoolihan

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (8.57 pm): In speaking to the Vocational Education, Training and Employment and Other Legislation Amendment Bill I will deal with parts of the Queensland Skills Plan and also the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE. In relation to the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE, we have heard of the Australian technical colleges and how these are going to solve all of Australia's woes. The concept of Australian technical colleges is flawed. A technical college was to open in Gladstone. Guess what was going to be required to provide the training? The Central Queensland Institute of TAFE, because the Commonwealth still would not employ any teachers and it would use anything to save money.

Action 2 of the Queensland Skills Plan is to reform the Queensland TAFE system. The government is committed to move to more commercial governance arrangements for TAFE. These arrangements represent another key step in the reform of the vocational education and training sector under the Skills Plan. It would position TAFE to continue to meet the skilling needs of Queensland now and into the future. I can assure this House that the skills shortage in the mining industry in central Queensland is getting worse. Hopefully, the training provided by TAFE will remedy that.

The proposed statutory authority model provides more flexible, cost-effective and autonomous government arrangements for TAFE facilities to make sure that they are better equipped to make timely commercial decisions and achieve greater commercial growth, and to develop their training capacity and capability to best meet the needs of industry and individuals. We have heard so much about HECS and the money from the Commonwealth, but it seems to have escaped the notice of some that the Commonwealth FEE-HELP assistance involves the payment of actual money by the Commonwealth to the TAFE to create skilled persons. HECS is purely and simply paying ahead for what one ultimately wants to get. Perhaps if a little bit of forethought was given to those sorts of comments, people could see the fallacy of what they propose.

The Queensland Skills Plan noted that the governance change would occur through a phased transition. As preconditions for that to occur, the institute must have a clear strategic direction, an understanding of business priorities, core competencies in commercial and business acumen, and an acknowledgment of and commitment to the change required. The chief executive of the department will oversee the validation process. Once approved, the institute will be established as a statutory TAFE institute by regulation.

Comments have been made about the boards of the TAFE institutes. It will be a requirement that board members be nominated on the basis of their corporate governance expertise, commercial experience, knowledge of local business or industry, understanding of public accountability or other expertise relevant to the institute's functions and the role of the board as the institute's governing body. As late as the last sitting week I stood in this House and pointed out the uselessness of hospital boards and the legacy that they have left. There is a statement that youth would be a lot better if it came later in life. Perhaps the previous speaker should have a look at the history—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr HOOLIHAN: Let us deal with the member for Toowoomba South's comment about Yeppoon people. This year in Yeppoon we opened a \$2.75 million TAFE which will work in conjunction with TAFE Central Queensland—there are campuses in Rockhampton, Emerald, Gladstone and Mackay—in response to the Queensland Skills Plan action 14 for providing improved support to apprentices during their training, and action 15 about making apprenticeships work better for apprentices and employers. The central Queensland region continues to proactively monitor apprentices in identified skills shortage areas through workplace visits. The visits aim to ensure apprentices are progressing through their training, increase apprentice and employer awareness of the competency based training apprenticeship system to improve retention and promote early completion where appropriate.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! I warn the member for Toowoomba South under standing order 253.

Mr HOOLIHAN: On 18 July 2006, the Minister for Education, Training and the Arts approved the rollout and establishment of Resource Mining and Infrastructure Services to provide whole-of-industry training solutions for the sectors of resource mining and infrastructure. The Queensland Skills Plan announced the establishment of an entity to be called the Australian Resources and Infrastructure Institute of Technology to provide whole-of-industry training solutions for these sectors. Based on extensive and detailed consultation with stakeholders it was established that the creation of a new stand-alone institute was not warranted. Due to this, the Australian Resources and Infrastructure Institute of Technology model outlined in the Queensland Skills Plan has evolved into a new concept under the title of Resource Mining and Infrastructure Services that will be administered by the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE.

The newly constructed Capricorn Coast campus of the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE welcomed its first students in July 2007, with over 160 students commencing study for the semester. The campus is located adjacent to Yeppoon State High School, creating an educational hub in Yeppoon to give enhanced access to training options and facilities for both the institute and the school. This project was jointly funded by the Queensland and Commonwealth governments, 60 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. Investment in TAFE infrastructure is a core component of the Queensland Skills Plan. The Yeppoon State High School has been heavily involved with the ETRF program, as have St Ursula's and St Brendan's colleges, which are major private colleges in central Queensland.

In accordance with the establishment of the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE, it is anticipated that the Capricorn Coast campus will be officially opened in November. I will be pleased to see the minister come to the electorate of Keppel to open that campus. I thank him and the previous minister for the support given in providing that very attractive and effective campus.

Between 2005 and 2007, a range of training opportunities have been on offer in a variety of trade and business operations. In 2008, Capricorn Coast Institute of TAFE will offer a wide range of new subjects, including aged care, business studies, child care, fitness, education support, horticulture, justice administration and retail operations. Throughout the second half of 2007, CQIT has been working collaboratively with schools to deliver a diverse range of programs in 2008 through the use of expanded video conferencing, self-paced learning materials and online programs. These proposals can only assist our declining skills base owing to the resources boom and the boom in Australia. I commend the bill to the House.