




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (12.53 pm): I rise to make a small contribution—probably a six-minute contribution—to the debate on the Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2012. The bill will refer Queensland's legislative power to regulate registered training organisations, known as RTOs, and vocational education and training—or VET—courses to the Commonwealth parliament. The Commonwealth VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority—ASQA—will regulate providers and courses nationally.

On 1 July 2011 ASQA commenced regulating RTOs in some other jurisdictions around Australia such as New South Wales and the Northern Territory that provide training to overseas students or which operate in a jurisdiction which has already referred powers to regulate RTOs to the Commonwealth. Earlier this year Tasmania and South Australia referred power to ASQA, and ASQA commenced regulating all RTOs in those states.

The Commonwealth minister made a determination under section 7 of the NVR act, which gives Queensland until 30 June 2012—just nine days away—to refer legislative power. If Queensland does not refer by this date, it will become a non-referring jurisdiction and ASQA will take over regulation of approximately 37 per cent of Queensland's over 1,540 RTOs—that is, those that deliver training to overseas students and/or operate in a referring jurisdiction. The bill will also abolish the Training and Employment Recognition Council—the Queensland regulator—and transfer its remaining functions mainly relating to apprenticeships and traineeships to Skills Queensland.

One of the key issues for us here in Queensland is that Queensland's referral of power excludes primary and secondary education, higher education, the establishment of public providers such as TAFE institutes, apprenticeships and traineeships, and the licensing of occupations. The Commonwealth parliament will not be able to legislate on these issues. The benefits of referring from a Queensland perspective have already been mentioned in this House. There is going to be a significant saving. The Department of Education, Training and Employment will be able to make a total saving of around \$3 million per annum through employing fewer regulatory staff. That, of course, will go towards reducing the deficit for the state that has been sadly introduced and foisted upon the people of Queensland by the previous Labor government.

Queensland RTOs will deal with only one regulator and will not have to change regulator as their business changes—that is, if they decide to deliver training in a referring jurisdiction such as New South Wales. What would happen if Queensland did not refer power? As I mentioned earlier, we have a deadline of 1 July. If Queensland does not refer power by 1 July 2012, there are serious consequences for RTOs and the department. Two regulators would operate in Queensland under different regulatory frameworks. This may be confusing for industry and consumers. It would also make it difficult to assure that quality of training is maintained. The department would not realise predicted total savings of approximately \$3 million per annum because it would need to retain regulatory staff who would otherwise transfer to the Commonwealth. There is an agreement to transition existing departmental employees to ASQA, but that

agreement expires if Queensland does not refer by 1 July 2012. So that would also put employees into jeopardy. The department would need to review its RTO fees, and it is likely fees would need to increase to ensure that the Queensland regulatory model was sustainable in light of the reduced fee revenue Queensland would be receiving after 1 July 2012 when ASQA takes regulatory control of 37 per cent of Queensland's RTOs.

In the last minute that I have left, I would like to talk about the state seat of Coomera and some of the challenges that the state seat of Coomera has for young people involved in this type of training.

Mr Malone interjected.

Mr CRANDON: I take the interjection from the member. Yes, we are struggling with apprenticeships in boatbuilding. In fact, I know TAFE is reconsidering its position in that regard, but the issue goes further than that in that we are talking about transport issues. Trying to get young people who are under 17 who come from disadvantaged homes in and around the area up and down the highway into vocational education and training organisations in and around the Yatala precinct is one of those challenges. In closing, I would ask that we as a state consider transport options for young people from disadvantaged areas when we want to see them move to vocational education and training precincts in and around, for example, the Yatala precinct. I commend the bill to the House.