



Speech by

**Tim Mulherin**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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## TAFE COLLEGES

**Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (11.35 am): In another blow to regional Queensland, last week this LNP government announced the potential closure of 38 TAFE campuses around Queensland. As with many of the callous decisions this government makes, regional Queensland will be the hardest hit by any such closure.

**Mr Cripps:** We did not. That is not true.

**Mr MULHERIN:** I said 'potential closure'. There was no word about these closures in the election campaign. The LNP was not letter-boxing regional communities promising to take away TAFE facilities. The training minister, John-Paul Langbroek, must identify which regional centres will lose their TAFE facilities and how locals are meant to access TAFE courses. Prospective TAFE students are currently selecting their courses for the next year. How can they make an informed decision without knowing which TAFE campuses will remain open?

The minister and LNP MPs also need to explain if access to TAFE will be maintained for local students in centres losing their campuses. If campuses in regional areas such as Bowen, Cannonvale, Ayr, Stanthorpe and Maryborough close, young people who may not have a driver's licence or access to public transport will find it impossible to access TAFE training if they have to travel to another larger town to continue their course.

The Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce had recommended the shrinkage of TAFE campus numbers in North Queensland from 26 to 15; Fraser Coast and Sunshine Coast from 13 to eight; Gold Coast from six to three; Brisbane western corridor from 16 to 11; Brisbane metropolitan region from 15 to five; and SkillsTech Australia from six to two in the Brisbane region. The minister needs to explain whether shrinking the number of campuses delivering training to Queenslanders from 82 to 44 will mean the loss of jobs and the loss of community assets and facilities. He also needs to explain if access to TAFE will be maintained for local students in centres losing their campus. Similarly, local LNP members all over Queensland must declare where they stand and if they are happy to see local TAFE campuses shut.

The simple fact is: these closures are another attack on regional communities by the LNP government, which has already slashed thousands of jobs and services in the regions. The LNP is now—

**Mr Cripps:** Talk about how you closed the ag colleges.

**Mr MULHERIN:** I went out and consulted. I personally stood there with the DG and I went back. We maintained those community facilities. The Dalby campus went to Education Queensland for a secondary boarding school that focused on agriculture. The Burdekin college was there for the community.

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

**Mr MULHERIN:** It was Minister McVeigh who wanted to close them. It was only the intervention of the Premier that stopped the closure of Emerald and Longreach. How hypocritical!

The LNP is now making it even more difficult for people in regional areas to access the training and tertiary education needed to gain what employment is left in the regional towns where the LNP has cut jobs and services. In the election campaign the LNP stated that one of its policies was to achieve a four per cent unemployment target. Last month we saw 22,000 Queenslanders put on the scrap heap. We saw more people not participating in searching for work. It will be very difficult for this government to achieve that four per cent target. What is needed is the ability to upskill our workforce, and TAFEs play a vital role in delivering that. The LNP government has already, as I said, slashed the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative which helped place young people and the long-term unemployed in work. Now the LNP government is further disadvantaging regional communities by making access to education and training even more difficult. To add insult to injury, the training minister's assertion on Friday that it is business as usual at Queensland TAFE means nothing unless he can guarantee no campus will be closed. It is time for the minister to clearly state what his plans are for Queensland's 82 TAFE campuses and if he plans any closures. The minister sluggishly responded to concerns raised from the report—

*(Time expired)*