Speech By

Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

TAFE QUEENSLAND BILL

Mr BOOTHMAN (Albert—LNP) (4.33 pm): I rise here today to contribute to the debate on the TAFE Queensland Bill 2013. This bill can be seen as the biggest revolution to the very fabric of TAFE Queensland since its humble beginnings back in 1882. To put it simply, the world is changing, expectations are changing and we need to change to remain viable in tomorrow's market. Before I speak in detail about the bill I would like to thank my fellow committee members, the committee chairperson, Rosemary Menkens, and committee staff, Bernice Watson, Gregory Thomson, Emily Booth and Carolyn Heffernan.

This bill will establish a new independent statutory body, TAFE Queensland, to be the public provider of vocational education and training. This change is designed to ensure TAFE Queensland operates in an efficient and effective way to meet the challenges of future educational requirements and is commercially successful.

The Queensland government commissioned the Skills and Training Taskforce to identify the competitiveness of the current vocational education and training system. This resulted in TAFE Queensland being identified as a direct competitor with private vocational education providers. The task force delivered its final report to the Minister for Education, Training and Employment on 5 November 2012. The report included multiple recommendations in relation to the creation of an independent body designed to deliver a focused system with priorities on delivering training for quantifiable job outcomes. This is about building the capacity of our vocational education and training sector to ensure viable outcomes.

The need for education to meet current and future demands is paramount. We need to be prepared to meet the demands of technology. A year 7 student may undertake a career pathway in the future that has not even been thought of yet. Our schools are fighting to meet the challenges in education.

I seek the indulgence of the House to mention a wonderful program in one of the schools in the electorate of Albert. That is the multitier model at Pimpama State School, a truly wonderful state school in my electorate. This school recently won a Queensland government showcase award for excellence. This sort of innovation is what TAFE Queensland needs to be able to undertake to meet the challenges and adapt to the rapidly changing needs of industry.

The Skills and Training Taskforce recommended the creation of a new entity that replaces the existing TAFE institutes and STIs with a board that has strong commercial and industrial experience to oversee the operation of the new entity. I would like to mention that such an entity would be independent of the Department of Education, Training and Employment but accountable to the minister.

This bill is about engaging the industry and delivering vocational education and training in an efficient and effective manner. We must steer ourselves away from the traditional supply driven model to a demand driven model to help deliver real job outcomes. Building a demand focused model is crucial. This will have direct ramifications on a broad spectrum of society through building necessary

employment outcomes for all employable age groups. Furthermore, this gives hope to younger generations and school leavers who are looking for their first full-time employment. Preparing these individuals for a demand driven economy should be on the list of any good government.

The Australian Council of Private Education and Training Queensland supplied statistical information to the Education and Innovation Committee which demonstrated TAFE reforms in Victoria had led to an increase of enrolments in both TAFE and private training organisations.

This bill focuses on multiple aspects in establishing a new statutory body for TAFE Queensland. Firstly, as an independent body, TAFE Queensland will be a commercially focused, independent statutory body. It will be a not-for-profit entity that will have control of its own budget, staffing arrangements and revenue. These arrangements provide TAFE Queensland the flexibility to deliver services, reduce costs and streamline investment into public funded training.

Commercially focused boards are a key focus of this legislation. The TAFE Queensland Bill 2013 gives the board overseeing TAFE Queensland the ability to incorporate industry demands into learning outcomes. This board will be made up of industry based professionals who possess qualifications and experience in their given fields.

The TAFE Queensland brand is a true educational icon in Queensland and requires safeguards to ensure its protection. This bill creates the necessary safeguards by rendering the unlawful use of the TAFE brand as an offence. The bill also intends to enable a more flexible and productive approach to employment which is designed to make vocational education more competitive and more focused on commercial and industry outcomes.

As I have previously stated, this bill establishes TAFE Queensland as an independent statutory body. This will give TAFE Queensland the powers of an individual, including the powers to manage its own budgets, revenues and assets, and the ability to develop innovative business practices. This bill also negates the role of the Queensland government as the government retains oversight of TAFE Queensland through governance, reporting frameworks and accountability.

This bill also ensures TAFE Queensland adheres to other legislation such as the Financial Accountability Act 2009 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982. These two protections can be found in part 3, planning and accountability, clauses 37 to 48.

This bill is designed to ensure that safeguards are maintained, even to the extent that clause 34 provides for criminal history checking of all and any members and staff appointed to the board. Board members have enormous responsibility for the oversight of the publicly funded entity. Therefore, it is important to maintain high levels of safeguards with limited effects on individual's liberties. The bill includes smooth transition provisions to provide for the transfer of staff, contract assets, legal proceedings and student enrolments.

This bill has received support in principle by the Queensland Teachers Union and the Resources Registered Training Organisation Association. Both of these groups believe that the changes will stimulate further competition within the existing private training sector and assist TAFE Queensland to become the provider of choice by having the drive to develop innovative business practices and the ability to deliver in a competitive marketplace.

This is a once in a lifetime reform to vocational education and training in Queensland. This government stands by its commitment to build a four-pillar economy, and to do this we need to provide our youth, and those who wish to be retrained, with the education and training resources to meet these future demands.

I reiterate that there are students in year 7 who will be undertaking career pathways in the future which have not even been thought of yet. Having an education system ready to meet these challenges only enhances outcomes for both students and the economy. Furthermore, with continual changes around the world, more than ever we need a commercially focused TAFE system that can adapt to our ever changing world. Lastly, I wish to thank the Minister for Education for his forward-thinking approach in tabling this wonderful piece of legislation. I commend the bill to the House.