




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2013

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT (SKILLS QUEENSLAND) AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (4.28 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment (Skills Queensland) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2013, which seeks to establish a more direct relationship between training activity and the actual needs of Queensland industries. The bill will also ensure that TAFE Queensland has the capacity to employ staff on a temporary basis.

As a member of the Education and Innovation Committee, which considered the bill and recommended that it be passed, I am confident that the Queensland VET sector stands to become more efficient as a result of the measures proposed in this legislation. As someone who is a product of TAFE and someone who has trained many apprentices through the VET sector, I can attest to the importance and absolute resolve that I have to ensure the best VET sector in the country. I know my electorate has strong visions and plans for a great VET sector.

With regard to skills and workforce development, it would seem only logical that the focus of those overseeing vocational education and training should be on those areas that are in most demand by industry. However, the Skills and Training Taskforce reported that the existing statutory body, Skills Queensland, had not been effective in addressing the skill needs of industry, hence the main reason this bill is now before the parliament.

This legislation will help the government and the VET sector address those needs by abolishing Skills Queensland and transferring its functions to the director-general of the Department of Education, Training and Employment. Most of Skills Queensland's day-to-day regulatory functions were delegated to the department's regional officers anyway so there will be no noticeable difference in the service provided to industry, employers or employees. What will change is the quality of advice and the government's ability to take meaningful action on the state's skill priorities and the needs of employers.

The Ministerial Industry Commission will be responsible for providing accurate, timely and practical advice directly to the minister. This means a more efficient process for aligning training with career opportunities and determining which qualifications require government funding. The commission will also ensure that the contestable training market is able to deliver the skills needed by the state by consulting closely with all levels of industry and the minister to ensure the right training is being offered and stimulating demand for accredited training.

At this point I acknowledge the submission made to the committee by ACPET, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training. ACPET were represented on the Skills and Training Taskforce that recommended setting up an independent skills commission as a statutory body. In their submission they expressed some disappointment that the government had chosen a different model in establishing the Ministerial Industry Commission and opting to transfer the functions of the existing body, Skills Queensland, to the director-general of the department. As a result, there is an

expectation that the Department of Education, Training and Employment will develop effective mechanisms for regular consultation and communication with all industry stakeholders. I know that the minister and the director-general will ensure this happens.

As for the commission, its make-up will reflect a broad range of industry and employer groups as well as a solid depth of understanding when it comes to labour market economics, human resource management and critical issues. I feel confident that an effective team will be put in place to achieve the objectives of the Ministerial Industry Commission. This is something that was lacking under the previous government and we are happy today that we are able to take some positive steps forward.

Moving to the second objective of the bill, which is to amend the TAFE Queensland Act 2013 to ensure TAFE Queensland has the capacity to employ staff on a temporary basis, the committee has sought clarification from the minister as to why this provision was not included in the TAFE Queensland Act 2013 in the first place and why this bill lacks the level of detail that is included in the current legislation that oversees temporary employment, the Public Service Act 2008. I am now confident this has been addressed and welcome the process of the committee's work in getting this resolved. I support the committee's position in seeking clarification on this and would like to see this point addressed by the minister before the bill is passed. In saying that, I am sure that the minister will be diligent. We all know it has been good to date and we can expect more to come.

In conclusion, I thank the minister for bringing this bill to the House and commend my fellow committee members on the work performed during the inquiry. I believe the measures put in place by this legislation will help Queensland's VET sector address the skilling needs of industry far more effectively than the current system.