




Speech By
Hon. John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Record of Proceedings, 8 May 2014

QUEENSLAND TRAINING ASSETS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY BILL

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (4.56 pm): It is my pleasure to rise and support my colleague the Hon. Tim Mander on the QTAMA Bill, which is a very, very important plank of this government's reform of the VET sector that we have outlined in our action plan 'Great skills. Real opportunities.'. The Skills and Training Taskforce recommended that we establish a separate specialist entity with expertise in infrastructure management to be charged with the efficient management of TAFE assets, and that is what we are doing today. The recommendation was made so that TAFE Queensland could focus on its core business—the delivery of quality training—and not be limited by the responsibilities for assets. QTAMA will enable TAFE Queensland to be more competitive, responsive, innovative and flexible.

I wanted to rise and speak to this bill because of the importance of TAFE as part of the VET sector in Queensland and because of the contribution by the shadow minister in her first serious contribution to a bill in this place and that of the honourable member for South Brisbane, with her concerns about Southbank. The general attitude from those opposite is that this government is selling off assets via this bill, when what we are actually focusing on is making sure that we are going to make the best use of the training money that we have to make sure we get the best outcomes for the economy. That is something that those opposite are unable to understand. In the case of the member for Redcliffe, having just come here from Canberra, where she did not have responsibility in this area but rather had responsibility in an area like ethics, where she was able to use that great power that she had to exonerate Craig Thomson, I do not think that is any great recommendation for her coming in here and making the contribution—

Ms TRAD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I fail to see how the minister's comments are in any way relevant to the title of the bill.

Ms D'Ath: They are also misleading.

Ms TRAD: I ask you to rule on relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Berry): Order! You have stated your position. If you do not mind, can I now do my business? Thank you. Minister, you are within the bounds of relevance, but it is getting close to the border. So, if you would not mind, keep relevant.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you. If I am allowed to continue with the point I was making, I will say that the area the member was responsible for when she was in Canberra has no relevance to the area she has been given responsibility for here. She has come in and given a speech and demonstrated that she has absolutely no knowledge about this at all. That is the point I am making.

We had an accusation about what we are going to be doing, and I am happy to provide the honourable member for Redcliffe with information on what we are doing. She was part of a team which had five different ministers in a year and a half when we were trying to talk about this vocational education and training reform. When I became the minister, the federal minister was Chris Evans, then it was Chris Bowen, then it was Sharon Bird or Craig Emerson—no-one was really quite sure in

the government, and the member for Redcliffe was a member of that government—and then we ended up with Brendan O'Connor. Members may remember that, in the lead-up to the federal election last September, the proposal from the former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, was that he and the federal government would have a takeover of TAFE. The former member for Petrie, who lost her seat at that election, was happy to be a part of a government that said they were going to take over TAFE.

We had negotiated a national partnership on skills reform that saw us come to the position we are at today. That position is that, if you have limited training dollars—because the former federal Labor government wasted so much money so we do not have as much money as we used to have—you cannot put those dollars into skills that will not lead to real jobs. That is what we are asking TAFE to do. There will be no diminution in money that will actually go on training—from around \$600 million—but, thanks to the Labor government at the state and federal levels, taxpayers can no longer subsidise courses that people might want to do just because they like the idea of doing them. We can no longer keep letting people do a certificate II after a certificate III or a certificate IV that does not lead to a real job because of the financial irresponsibility of the former Labor government at the state level. Over a number of years, the government let the utilisation rates in their outdated infrastructure and their outdated enterprise bargain get to a situation where we were spending 60 per cent of money on administration and 40 per cent on teaching. Is that appropriate, Mr Deputy Speaker? I repeat: 60 per cent on administration and 40 per cent on teaching.

Our government's priorities are to get to a four per cent unemployment rate and to support the four-pillar economy. This is not about students only studying subjects at TAFE or university that will lead to qualifications in just those four fields; we want to support front-line services and make sure we have an open and accountable government. That is what we are doing here. We are saying that we do not believe TAFE should be concerned with maintaining their assets. We believe it should go to someone with some commercial acumen to make sure they can focus on the training.

We only have to look at our students. We only have to look at the very thing the member for South Brisbane advocates—that is, she looks to the past and talks about when she was at university or when she may have been to university and what the utilisation rate may be or is going to be or will be in the future. The bottom line is that in Queensland in the 1970s you could not go shopping after 11.30 am on a Saturday but we now allow people to shop at different hours.

Our young people want to train in the best facilities. When they are doing their training, they want to go to registered training organisations or TAFE, but TAFE has to be allowed to compete with those registered training organisations. These people want to go out of hours. The member for Morayfield made the point in his contribution that utilisation after hours between 6 pm and 9 pm is five per cent. Everyone knows that TAFE originally was a night school. If we are asking people to upskill or reskill and they are actually working in a job already, surely the time they will want to go is the time that may not fit with the 9 am to 5 pm during the week or the 9 am to 1 pm on a Saturday—even though they may have been the examples in the past at TAFE.

We need to put TAFE in a position where it is able to compete with private organisations, because from 1 July those organisations will increasingly be able to access these training dollars because of a national partnership that is happening in every other state. Do you think the federal government would have allowed us to sign off on a national partnership if it was not going to force us to make the training sector better? The federal Labor government had five different ministers in a period of about six months—Chris Evans, Chris Bowen, Craig Emerson, Sharon Bird and Brendan O'Connor—because of the government's absolute disarray. We had to sign a national partnership that was also subsequent to \$50 million being cut from the Productivity Places Program, which was another federal program where the federal Labor government had given us this money and then took it away.

So they are the circumstances that this government finds itself in. That is why we are setting up QTAMA and that is why we want to make sure we have people training for things that will lead to real outcomes. Industry has to be able to have a line of sight so they can give us advice on where those training dollars should be placed. That is what we have said. If you want to do photography or fitness training and you already have a degree, you might have to pay more for those courses because the taxpayers are not going to subsidise them if you already have a bachelor's degree. But if you are a student who has come out of year 12 and you do not have a certificate III, we will give you a certificate III guarantee. Those people will get subsidies for their courses.

Let us have a look at the misrepresentations from those opposite. The member for Redcliffe again spoke about fees going from \$800 for a certificate II in auto servicing in 2012 to just over \$7,200 in 2014. That \$7,200 is if you have another degree or a qualification, but it is still subsidised if you do not have a degree or a qualification. So it was \$800 in 2012, and if you do not have a qualification

already and you are a grade 12 person who wants a certificate III then we will do it for you at TAFE for a thousand dollars. That has gone up \$200 in two years, but there are more modules in that course so wouldn't that be seen as a good thing? We are giving you more and we are charging you a couple of hundred dollars more but it is still subsidised.

I ask honourable members to consider the misrepresentations of those opposite, and they have been doing it everywhere and they do it in education all the time. We are pouring more money into education but we are not just pouring it in the way that Labor does, which is to say, 'Look, we are spending more so that must be a good thing'; we are actually saying we want to focus on the outcomes that we get. Do not believe those opposite because that is not how they carry on, and do not believe the union that claims it represents TAFE and claims it is interested in the best outcomes for students. Kevin Bates recently lamented on ABC radio that popular courses such as personal training will attract less government funding, but he also said in the same interview that 'Popular courses are not necessarily those that will support the Queensland economy.' I repeat: 'Popular courses are not necessarily those that will support the Queensland economy.' So even Labor are confused—whether it is their unions or them as a party in this place just arguing about something. They want their TAFEs to be stuck in the seventies, whereas we know that TAFE is big business. TAFE will stay the leader in the market because we have established a commercial board and they are about to make big announcements about why they want TAFE enhanced and why we know it is going to be better.

There are more people who train in TAFE than there are at universities in this state—180,000 students a year. Why would we want to see fewer students? We want to see more students doing it. We want people to value the TAFE courses they do. We have passionate trainers and I meet them wherever I go, including those in Foundation Skills in Maryborough whom I met a couple of weeks ago and those trainers elsewhere across the state. We want more studying in TAFE with a better enterprise bargain so we can get a better future for Queensland.