




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 8 May 2014

### **QUEENSLAND TRAINING ASSETS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (5.16 pm): I rise to speak to the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Bill. There is great concern with regard to selling off TAFE campuses, particularly the opening up of campuses for the use of for-profit providers. As all honourable members would know, TAFE has always been a wonderful training institution, particularly for rural and regional Queensland. We need to focus on ensuring that we do have a TAFE in those rural and regional areas and, likewise, that that community service obligation exists. In the past it has always been the nature of governments to not look after those rural areas due to the cost factor. One reason that rural Queenslanders are always very concerned about the privatisation of any asset is probably due to a concern that there will not be a community service obligation. I am concerned about the LNP's privatisation agenda. Little by little the LNP government is looking at assets to sell. It is trying to find means and ways to hoodwink the people of Queensland as to why we have to sell those assets. I believe that the first-term backbenchers could not have foreseen being put in this position. They believed that it was only the 'baddies', the ALP, that would be selling off our assets. It is going to be detrimental to Queensland that we find ourselves in this situation.

I am very concerned now that we are talking about selling off TAFE. We can look at what happened when the Commonwealth Bank was sold. We are talking now about opening up the TAFE campuses for the use of for-profit providers, and I think there are good private providers out there. However, since the privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank, we have seen a \$5 billion profit and a \$6 billion profit and we have seen the banks ripping off consumers right across Australia. We saw similar things with regard to the sale of Telstra.

This is why I am concerned for rural and regional Queensland. At present people at the TAFE at Charters Towers are on edge about what is going on in relation to this bill. I do not say that they are the only ones in Queensland who are on edge. The public servants are on edge. The doctors are on edge. The nurses are on edge. The firies are on edge. The motorbike riders are on edge. They are all on edge. The people at Charters Towers TAFE are on edge especially in relation to issues such as the student support that they give, have always given and that we are hoping they will continue to give.

They are very concerned about what is going to happen in regards to the privates that coming in because they have to make money in return too, and the only way they are going to do that is through a massive cost to the users who are going to seek that training. That is where TAFE comes in: to benefit areas in rural and regional Queensland.

I cannot speak on behalf of the cities because I am not quite sure, but we have seen the privatisation of the State Government Insurance Office, SGIO, and what did we get? We got massive insurance hikes. It was supposed to bring about competition. I have always heard about the benefits of privatisation and how it will increase competition, but we are not seeing it. When our retail energy assets were privatised we were told it was going to increase competition, and it has not. We have

seen energy prices double, if not triple, over the time when this parliament agreed to privatise the retail arm of our energy assets. We keep hearing so much about the benefits of the private sector, but I do have great concerns about it.

As we have seen with any asset in rural and regional Queensland, if it is lost there is a massive flow-on effect of rural decline and we see job losses, station closures, courthouse closures and DPI closures. Twenty people are a lot in rural and regional Queensland. We have seen what has happened in Charters Towers, where we are losing over 37 staff as a result of privatisation. We have seen both the Labor Party and the LNP government sell off almost all of the remaining shares in QR National and when it comes to saving those jobs, the transport minister says, 'I wash my hands. There is nothing I can do about this.' I also have a great concern in regards to the privatisation of TAFE and opening up good, valuable land. We are already training those customers, and yet we are now going to open the campuses up for the use of profit providers, when we already have it in the first place.

I know how the backbenchers feel at this present moment, because you thought you were going to contribute to Queensland. You thought you were going to do something good for Queensland, and you did not believe that the hierarchy of the LNP is frothing at the mouth to sell off these assets in desperation. If you do not believe me, read the Treasurer's speech in the Assets (Restructuring Bill) 2006 when he was desperate to have all of our energy assets sold: wires, poles and generators. I am not just saying this; it is in *Hansard*. What you have is already there in front of you.

I think Queensland and the wonderful TAFE institution feels gutted right at this present moment. There is no community service obligation provided in this bill, and I know that my electorate will support me in opposing this bill.