




Speech By
Hon. Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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**TAFE QUEENSLAND (DUAL SECTOR ENTITIES) AMENDMENT BILL; FURTHER
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BILL**

 **Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.08 pm): I rise to speak in the cognate debate on the Further Education and Training Bill and the TAFE Queensland (Dual Sector Entities) Amendment Bill, but my focus will be on the dual sector bill. I want to speak to the event which has prompted the legislation we are debating regarding the merger of the Central Queensland University and the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE into Queensland's first dual sector tertiary institution. Both institutions have a long and significant history in the Central Queensland region. The Central Queensland Institute of TAFE has a history that stretches back to 1889, with the initial formation of the subcommittee to create and plan for a technical college in Rockhampton. Within the next decade the first classes were held in buildings in Bolsover Street. Over the next few decades a School of Mines was established and engineering courses were offered. A high school was included in the technical college in 1919.

Mackay's technical college was open in 1912 at a new building on the corner of Wood and Alfred streets. That building still stands today. The technical college opened simultaneously at the same premises with the Mackay State High School, which was one of the first state high schools opened in Queensland in that year. The growth of the technical colleges both in Mackay and Rockhampton followed a similar trajectory. The technical colleges became important parts of their communities beyond teaching the skills needed for the growing communities of Central Queensland. During the 1918 Mackay cyclone and flood, the Mackay Technical College was used as a maternity ward. After both of the world wars, Rockhampton Technical College retrained returned servicemen, helping diggers return to civilian life.

As their high schools were spun off in the 1960s, the technical colleges grew to offer further advanced courses in mining and advanced trades. As technical colleges became TAFE colleges in the mid-1970s, prevocational adult education and hospitality courses were introduced. In 1994, TAFE colleges in Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone and the Central Highlands were merged into a single Central Queensland Institute of TAFE. At the turn of the century, Central Queensland TAFE gained a reputation for excellence, winning the Large Training Provider of the Year Award at the Queensland Training Awards on multiple occasions.

While the CQ University has a shorter history, the struggle for the establishment of a university in Central Queensland stretches back over half a century. The push for a university in Rockhampton began in the early 1940s. In 1941 the former member for Mackay, William Forgan Smith, introduced section 17 of the National Education Co-ordination and University of Queensland Amendment Act, which provided for the creation of a university college outside of Brisbane. In 1944-45, a series of Rockhampton delegations lobbied the Queensland government for a university college. But after the University of Queensland established a network of provincial study centres in the late 1940s, the issue became dormant.

Rockhampton's university campaign resumed in 1958 when the local branch of the Institute of Engineers started organising an association to agitate for a university in Central Queensland. With the support of local schools and religious leaders, on 3 March 1959 Rockhampton's mayor, the late Alderman Rex Pilbeam, called the first public meeting of the Central Queensland University Development Association—or UDA for short. The UDA presented university proposals to federal and state governments and in 1961 the Queensland government reserved 161 hectares of government land at Parkhurst as a tertiary education site.

In March 1965, the Commonwealth government's Martin report recommended the expansion of tertiary education. The Commonwealth government soon announced the foundation of a new form of tertiary institution at both Rockhampton and Toowoomba. The Rockhampton institute was named the Queensland Institute of Technology, Capricornia and was affiliated with the main Queensland Institute of Technology campus in Brisbane. Although the QITC lacked the autonomy of universities and was controlled by the Queensland education department, Central Queensland finally had its own facility for higher learning.

When QITC opened in February 1967, it did not yet have a campus of its own. Ironically, the initial classes were held on the top floor of the technical college in Bolsover Street. What was to become the CQ University was born in the classrooms of what was to become the CQ Institute of TAFE. This July, if this legislation is passed, these two institutions will be together once again. By 1969, most of the facilities had moved into the new Parkhurst campus.

Amendments to education legislation in 1971 granted autonomy with its own governing council to the newly renamed Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education. The young institute gradually began to spread its wings across Central Queensland. In 1974, comprehensive distance education was introduced. A second campus was opened in Gladstone in 1978. Further campuses were opened in Mackay in 1987, Bundaberg in 1988 and Emerald in 1989.

As part of the federal Labor Dawkins reform to higher education, in 1992 the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education became a fully-fledged university as the University of Central Queensland. Further expansion of the campuses followed, as CQU aggressively injected itself into the global marketplace for higher education. New campuses were established in Sydney in 1994, Melbourne in 1997, Brisbane in 1998 and, in 2001, Noosa and the Gold Coast. CQU embarked on offering its courses even further afield, with joint venture international campuses in Shanghai, Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Shortly after the turn of the 21st century CQU was winning critical acclaim for its innovative higher education offerings as both a regional university and as a provider of higher education to international students. CQU was also recognised by the *Good universities guide* with a five-star rating. In 2008, the university became known by its present name, CQUniversity.

CQUniversity has continued its tradition of pursuing innovation in its courses. Over the past decade or more CQUniversity has developed a constellation of research centres that has spurred excellence in their respective fields, such as the Centre for Rail Engineering, the Process Engineering and Light Metals Centre, the Centre for Environmental Management and the Institute for Sustainable Regional Development. These research centres are important engines for industrial innovation and growth in Central Queensland.

I believe that the creation of the dual sector entity, providing both higher and vocational education by the merger of CQUniversity and the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE, is an important step forward for both institutions. It will allow hitherto separate institutions to benefit from each other's areas of expertise, offer new pathways for vocational and higher education and reduce the administrative costs through having both campuses under the one roof.

I know that the communities across Central Queensland support this proposal. I reflect the remarks that the member for Gladstone made. Because of the due diligence that was carried out, it certainly created uncertainty for TAFE employees but, now that the agreement was signed late last year, certainly, both institutions have worked hard so that the merger, when it happens, will be smooth. I think the great thing about having a dual sector is the opportunity that it will provide for lifelong learning. Often people will study for a trade and then go on to undertake tertiary studies.

The success of the new dual sector institution will occur because the vocational education faculty will continue along with the different schools within the university. I think that, if there was a merger of the vocational education faculty with the different schools within the university, that will weaken the VET sector over time. I do not believe that that is what the members of this chamber want to occur. We want to see both institutions bringing their strengths together so that, as a new institution, it can grow and service not only the people of Central Queensland and the economy of Central Queensland but also produce graduates who will work in Australia and in the many corners of

the world. The shadow education spokesman has outlined Labor's concerns in relation to these two bills—

(Time expired)