




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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QUEENSLAND TRAINING ASSETS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY REPEAL BILL

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (9.56 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Repeal Bill 2015. I regard this as vitally important because, as the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills has said, we went to the election stating that we would save TAFE. I commend the minister for her relentless pursuit of creating a better TAFE system. What this bill will do is repeal the QTAMA Act.

Behind QTAMA is the idea that our training assets could be separated from the actual training. Perhaps the LNP was imagining that these assets could be a potential revenue source so it wanted to sell or palm them off to the highest bidder and remove TAFE's access to its own premises, its own equipment and lease it out directly to its competitors, placing TAFE at a competitive disadvantage. I agree with the minister that QTAMA was created by the LNP as a body to flog off our public training assets and give private registered training companies the inside running. Why is that? It comes down to what the LNP believes in. In a contest between the public and the private, it believes that the private must always prevail. What we believe in is jobs, education and the primacy of TAFE.

The public provider plays the crucial role in the delivery of vocational education and training. TAFE has over 130 years of experience in delivering training and managing the state's assets. As a solid demonstration of our beliefs and our values in this area, we will be investing \$34 million over three years through our Rescuing TAFE commitment in TAFE Queensland to restore its status as the state's premier provider of vocational education and training. We pledged to repeal the QTAMA Act and return control of Queensland's training assets to the Department of Education and Training along with conducting a utilisation audit and the development of a 10-year strategic asset plan.

Contrast that to the LNP's actions. The LNP wanted to implement a solution based on their own ideology, not a solution based on dealing with the actual problem, and these are the issues that need innovative solutions. According to TAFE's submission to the committee, they need a rejuvenated capital works program that includes disposal and refurbishment of TAFE assets, future land acquisitions and the ability to invest in new infrastructure. TAFE Queensland is innovative enough to deal with these problems and point the way forward to solutions. The LNP would not have listened to them. They would simply not take the advice or the leadership of public servants whom they have derided in this House.

Here are some of the solutions offered by TAFE, without QTAMA, as outlined in their submission to the committee. For example, they want to initiate educational precincts where industry and major employers and training providers can deliver integrated opportunities for students and employers. An example of innovative solutions is the proposed Loganlea joint health and training precinct involving Queensland Health, a higher education provider and TAFE. Southbank TAFE, the Acacia Ridge Training Centre and the Townsville Trade Training Centre were developed through campus amalgamations, the disposal of surplus sites and the establishment of new modern sites.

Other innovative solutions and projects as outlined in their submission are as follows. TAFE has established nearly 80 arrangements that facilitate third-party access to its properties as part of building mutually beneficial partnerships. Santos contributed \$1 million of specialised equipment for TAFE to establish a purpose-built training facility at the Acacia Ridge Training Centre. We have already heard from previous speakers, including the member for Ferny Grove, about the fact that TAFE has created two dedicated Komatsu classrooms and a workshop bay, and Komatsu donated equipment so that TAFE could deliver training to Komatsu diesel-fitting apprentices. These asset models are the way forward for better training and better jobs and a better TAFE.

The QTAMA model is not the solution, according to us and according to the TAFE submission. I will explain some of the reasons QTAMA is not the solution, and we heard the member for Morayfield talk about these as well. The first reason is that it restricts industry training partnerships. Any donations made by industry, including plant and equipment, are transferred over to QTAMA, even though they are for TAFE programs. This could deter possible industry partnerships with TAFE to deliver programs utilising this plant and equipment. TAFE are restricted from establishing joint tenancy and occupancy arrangements with other training providers, according to the TAFE Queensland submission, which also restricts the ability to deliver and create partnerships.

The second reason is that QTAMA is not good for rural and remote students. This was very clear from the submissions. From 1 July 2016, there would have been no financial support provided to QTAMA. They would have needed to charge full commercial rents to TAFE and other training providers. An analysis by TAFE Queensland indicates that a number of rural, regional and remote operations would not be financially viable under this model.

The third reason is that QTAMA does not provide incentive for training providers to invest in training infrastructure. TAFE Queensland maintain they have invested substantial amounts of retained earnings—\$30 million per annum—into maintenance and renewal of the asset base. Without longer term tenure or ownership, they would not invest in this asset base and there would clearly be reduced incentives for private training providers to provide this investment for the same reasons. Quite simply, QTAMA is a solution that is not needed. TAFE and this government have the capacity to build efficiency, build partnerships and build innovative solutions, but we need integrated assets to do all of these things. According to the TAFE submission, these types of partnerships cannot be pursued if you have a QTAMA-like structure that does not give you surety over your donated assets. These are the reasons QTAMA has to go. It is an ideological solution in search of a problem, and it causes more problems than it could conceivably or hopefully solve. If we want a strong TAFE, a TAFE that leads our state in providing vocational education and training, and a TAFE that plays a crucial role in creating skilled workers for jobs, I urge the House to repeal this act.