




Speech By
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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QUEENSLAND TRAINING ASSETS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY REPEAL BILL

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (9.46 pm): I rise to support this bill and in doing so I am very conscious that this bill will deliver one of the Palaszczuk government's election commitments to restore TAFE as the premier public provider of vocational education and training in this great state. We pledged to repeal the QTAMA Act as part of the Rescuing TAFE plan during the last election campaign and in doing so we will return the control of Queensland's training assets to the relevant state government department—rightly the Department of Education and Training.

This bill ensures that assets of TAFE will not be sold to the highest bidder as intended by those opposite and that TAFE will not be restricted in any way to proper access of its own premises. It is quite unbelievable that TAFE as a premier public provider of TAFE in this state did not have priority access to its own premises but had to stand in line with private providers while QTAMA operated on a commercial basis and was not required to prioritise the interests of TAFE.

I note that the experiment of those opposite—that is, the QTAMA model—to achieve commercial returns on education or training assets has failed not only in Australia but worldwide. Not only did this ignore the essential role that TAFE Queensland plays in the delivery of VET in Queensland, particularly in the regions, but placed it at a disadvantage in meeting any community service obligations that benefit local communities where it was often the sole provider of VET.

This bill will ensure that TAFE Queensland can have confidence with priority access to training assets in the delivery of courses, whilst at the same time also ensuring that the private providers can access the state's training assets. In fact, this bill also provides for the development of a 10-year strategic asset management plan, which includes an audit of all training assets across this great state, to explore options for the best use of assets that will now remain in public ownership.

It is also important to highlight that no-one will be disadvantaged by this bill as the government will honour all existing QTAMA agreements and service arrangements for access to facilities. However, future private providers' access to TAFE facilities will be in accordance with the interim asset management principles approved by the minister and must demonstrate the benefits to the community.

When I was elected, one of the first phone calls was from a constituent who was complaining about the high costs of now undertaking a course in TAFE and how it had become beyond her reach to pay for a Certificate III in Aged Care, which she was keen to complete. Her husband had recently been diagnosed with cancer and had been placed in an aged-care home where she had been volunteering. She was very keen to put her new skills to work and was offered a position following the completion of the Certificate III in Aged Care, but unfortunately she was struggling to raise the thousands of dollars required to pay for the course. I am hoping that these changes, together with the government's commitment of \$34 million over the next three years, will ensure individual training needs to meet industry demands now and in the future will be met.

Affordable access to training delivers well-trained workers and assists them greatly in gaining employment. We must do all we can to ensure that the training needs of ordinary people are not placed beyond their reach, because this will, in turn, not address the needs of industry for well-trained staff.

I endorse an extensive community engagement and consultation plan in raising awareness and formulating the state's 10-year infrastructure asset management plan. I believe it is crucial that we address the challenges being faced in renewing our state's TAFE assets and turning back the systemic attacks by those opposite on the success of our TAFE system in the delivery of quality training, especially in the regions. We have listened to what the community wants, and it wants a robust, high-quality state training TAFE system to deliver VET courses without restrictions and impediments.

This bill will remove restrictions the QTAMA model placed on TAFE Queensland, and it will once again be able to enter industry training partnerships that are crucial for the VET sector to encourage industry investment and collaboration. TAFE will deliver regional, rural and remote training without facing an increase in additional costs for regional facilities, which were due to take place from 1 July 2016. It will address workplace health and safety issues to ensure the safe operation for training delivery, and invest in training infrastructure confident in long-term ownership and tenure.

This bill will ensure that TAFE Queensland assets are safe, TAFE can deliver training courses without restrictions, and TAFE can use its assets and facilities to best suit its needs without fear of possible unreasonable increasing costs. During the last election campaign we committed to Rescuing TAFE. This bill, together with an investment of over \$34 million, will deliver the TAFE that Queenslanders want, industry wants and workers need. I commend the bill to the House.