




Speech By  
**Leanne Linard**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGE**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 July 2015

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

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (9.17 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Repeal Bill 2015. This bill reflects an election commitment made by this government to the people of Queensland to restore TAFE as the premier public provider of vocational education and training in Queensland after an unprecedented ideological attack by those opposite. This ideology-driven reform process by the former LNP government was not about improving and strengthening Queensland's vocational education and training sector, it was not about ensuring that all Queenslanders—metropolitan, rural and regional alike—had access to a quality training sector, and it certainly was not about encouraging jobseekers to upskill in order to access economic opportunity. No, it was about reducing its own outlays and cost shifting. One only has to look at interstate examples to know that this does not work. I note the submission by TAFE Queensland 'that establishment of a property manager to achieve commercial returns on education or training assets has not been successful anywhere in Australia or the world' and second the comments made by the member for Bulimba in this regard.

The bill before the House will repeal the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Act 2014, the QTAMA Act, and upon commencement will dissolve the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority and its board, return control of Queensland's training assets to the Department of Education and Training and provide transitional and savings arrangements for legal proceedings, legal relationships and the annual report.

The government, through this bill, will reinforce TAFE Queensland's leading role in the VET market by ensuring that it has priority access to state owned training assets to support planning and delivery of quality training to the community. We were elected on a commitment to jobs, to reducing Queensland's unemployment rate by keeping jobs, creating jobs and to skilling individuals to meet industry demand now and into the future. Vocational education and training is education and training for work and is a vital part of Queensland and the nation's broader educational network that includes schools, universities and adult and community education. TAFE Directors Australia estimates that more than one person in every street in Australia is enrolled with TAFE, describing graduates as the heavy lifters in our economy, and as small business owners, major creators of employment.

This government committed \$34 million over the next three years to regain TAFE Queensland's reputation as the premier provider of VET in this state. The vocational education and training sector is vital to building the Queensland economy by delivering the well-trained workers required to address the needs of industry and fulfil the commitments we made to Queenslanders.

I have already spoken in this House about jobs being the No. 1 issue raised with me by constituents during the recent election. TAFE was also a key concern raised. For me, one of the most troubling conversations I had while campaigning was with an elderly couple who approached me at a

mobile office and asked desperately how they were to afford to support their grandson through TAFE in an environment where TAFE funding and teachers were being attacked, subsidies cut and fees increased. This bill once again reinforces TAFE Queensland's position as the leading public provider of VET in Queensland and, in conjunction with the creation of 100 new full-time equivalent teaching and support staff positions, will support the government's aim of raising the average level of education obtained by Queenslanders and putting them on a path to employment.

TAFE Queensland has an additional role to play in providing training where other training organisations will not, often to some of the most disadvantaged Queenslanders and in regional and remote parts of Queensland. In my former role with the national regulator of the vocational and education training sector, I recall having a number of conversations with privately-run registered training organisations about the demand-driven nature of running a commercial training provider. One RTO that immediately comes to mind indicated that they were withdrawing from a particular certificate III qualification because it was not making them any money. It was not commercially viable. There is nothing wrong with that. They are a commercial business that must make decisions in the best interests of ensuring their continued operation. However, the issue is that they were located in a regional town. The qualification was the entry qualification required to obtain entry into more advanced agricultural studies, which was the main qualification required to gain entry to employment on surrounding properties.

I note the reflections made in this regard in the TAFE Queensland submission to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee that cited the medium and long-term implications for regional, rural and remote training delivery with the QTAMA model not reflecting the additional costs and challenges of providing training in these localities. Full commercial rates for regional facilities were to be sought by QTAMA from July 2016. I am certain that, like other regional members, the member for Dalrymple appreciates the importance of having quality training providers in his electorate. Only last year I was in Charters Towers talking to young vocational education and training students who were desperate to obtain qualifications and realise their dreams of staying on the land. TAFE Queensland has a vital role to play in providing training where other training organisations will not, including in regional and remote parts of Queensland and to some of the most disadvantaged Queenslanders.

The 2015-16 VET investment plan provides a clear statement in this regard that, as a government, we will ensure that investment in VET leads to tangible employment outcomes now and into the future, as well as providing opportunities for disadvantaged learners to participate in skills and training. Beyond the abolition of QTAMA, the Palaszczuk government has committed to conducting a utilisation audit of all Queensland training assets and develop a 10-year asset management plan. That 10-year asset management plan will outline options for the future use of training assets and establish a framework for long-term training asset management, investment plans and funding requirements. The plan will be developed and implemented in consultation with key stakeholders and it will follow an audit of all training assets to support development of the plan, expected to take effect in July 2016. This commitment is in keeping with the findings of a number of reviews of the Queensland VET sector and TAFE Queensland over the past decade, which advocated for more effective management and utilisation of state training assets.

This bill reflects an election commitment made by this government to the people of Queensland to restore TAFE as the premier public provider of vocational education and training in Queensland. The bill before the House will go some way to doing this by dissolving the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority and its board and returning control of Queensland's training assets to the Department of Education and Training. Those opposite had an agenda to sell our training assets, privatise VET delivery in Queensland and force TAFE Queensland out of the training market. As someone who holds a VET qualification and worked in the national VET sector, I know that we need a strong and vibrant TAFE to ensure that we have a world-class education and training sector in Queensland into the future. I commend the bill to the House.