




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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JOBS QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (4.44 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Jobs Queensland Bill before the House today. Firstly, as the chair of the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee, I would like to thank my fellow members of the committee for their work and dedication to this bill, as well as the committee secretariat. Finally, to the interested groups who submitted their views to the bill, I thank you as well.

The purpose of the bill is to establish, as we have heard, a statutory advisory body called Jobs Queensland, whose role is to provide the minister with advice about workforce skill needs, future workforce development and planning, and the apprenticeship and traineeship system. Jobs Queensland will also conduct research into skills needs and promote public awareness of its advisory functions.

When talking about the role of Jobs Queensland, it is not through pure coincidence that the Palaszczuk government this week also debated the Building Queensland Bill, which is an independent statutory body that will ensure a whole-of-government perspective to major infrastructure planning, prioritising and investment. Alongside this also sits the draft infrastructure plan for Queensland, which outlines short-term and long-term plans to advance Queensland.

It is important for industry to inform the government's significant investment into vocational education and training, or VET, to underpin skills development and sustainable economic growth in Queensland. Industry led workforce planning, facilitated by Jobs Queensland, is crucial to ensure industry can meet their future workforce needs, stimulate innovation and achieve global competitiveness.

When reading through the submissions received in relation to the bill, they each supported the need for this statutory advisory body. The National Retail Association stated in their submission that Jobs Queensland was 'fundamental to the long-term success of the state'. The Queensland Nurses' Union saw the potential that Jobs Queensland could bring as an important evidence based mechanism to deal with unemployment and planning for future needs.

Every member in this chamber has been to their schools in their electorates, and many of those schools are high schools that work very closely with their TAFE colleges to provide students with alternative education opportunities to prepare them for the future. As a former high school principal, I can safely say that perhaps one of the best meetings I would have attended with my TAFE counterparts was when they presented their annual jobs and training forecast. This is where research had been conducted on future developments in the city and what skills were needed to meet those particular developments. We would also hear from employment agencies and various industry sector representatives from around the region. Schools would use this information to inform their curriculum offerings and develop further partnerships with industry and institutions to prepare students with skills needed for the future. Unfortunately, some did not see the writing on the wall.

I recall one school—and I will safely say it was not my school—that had contracted a registered training organisation, or an RTO, to deliver a certificate II level course for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The course was very successful and was opened up to the rest of the school as funding was provided for students to engage in certificate II courses. This too proved to be a boom, with over 100 students successfully achieving their Certificate II in Personal Sports Training. The school was very proud that it produced so many students with a certificate II qualification, but, there were no jobs for those students at the end of their course. The saturation of qualified personal trainers made it impossible for these graduates to enter the workforce. With the best of intentions of gaining students with an employable skill set, it was in the wrong area.

Jobs Queensland will conduct the research and provide the evidence to inform the government where to invest its training requirements based on the future workforce development and planning needs. It will advise the minister about the skills it anticipates will be needed for particular industries and regional areas. This bill is exactly what Queenslanders need as they prepare themselves for the ever-changing and ever-challenging needs of a diverse jobs market based on a diverse economy. I commend the bill to the House.