




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 28 October 2015

JOBS QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (4.27 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

On 16 September 2015, the Jobs Queensland Bill 2015 was introduced into the Queensland parliament. Parliament referred the bill to the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee for consideration. The committee tabled its report on 20 October 2015. I now table a copy of the Queensland government's response to the report.

Tabled paper: Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee: Report No. 5, 55th Parliament—Jobs Queensland Bill 2015, government response [\[1510\]](#).

Firstly, I thank the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee for its thorough consideration of the bill. I note that before preparing its report the committee received a briefing from the Department of Education and Training, considered written submissions from stakeholders and invited selected stakeholders to a public hearing. I particularly acknowledge the contribution of stakeholders and their valuable input into the committee's consideration of the bill. Indeed, it was pleasing to see the widespread support expressed for the establishment of Jobs Queensland from a broad range of stakeholders in the written submissions received by the committee.

The government is committed to growing the economy, building new and innovative industries, and strengthening the competitiveness of established industries in Queensland. Central to achieving those goals is ensuring the state has a highly skilled and productive workforce and a vocational education and training sector that is responsive to the skills and training needs of industry, now and into the future. This bill delivers on our commitment to establish an independent industry led statutory entity, which provides industry advice to government on skills demand and long-term workforce planning.

Before I move on to the committee's recommendations, I would like to address an issue raised by the opposition members of the committee. It is an issue that they raised during estimates, which I took on notice and provided a comprehensive answer to.

Those opposite have questioned this government's commitment to setting aside \$40 million over four years for the establishment and continuation of Jobs Queensland. The Palaszczuk government is committed to investing in skills and training. To develop new industries and support innovation, Queensland needs an appropriately trained workforce so we have a highly skilled, capable workforce to deliver the jobs of the future.

Those opposite do not seem to understand that investing in skills and training is an investment in Queensland's economy that pays dividends now and into the future. To achieve this, it is important to establish an independent body that can assist in advising the government and achieving these outcomes. We have committed to ensuring that Jobs Queensland is adequately funded to achieve this outcome.

The committee has prepared a comprehensive report on the bill. I am pleased that the committee unanimously recommended that the bill be passed. I turn now to the two additional recommendations that the committee has suggested.

Recommendation 2 suggests that the bill be amended to require that at least one member of Jobs Queensland is a person with direct experience in the education, training or employment sectors. The government supports this recommendation. The government notes that the committee's recommendation is consistent with the overall policy intent to provide a broad mix of membership relevant to the functions of Jobs Queensland.

The bill allows for a member to be appointed with direct experience in the education, training or employment sectors, but does not mandate this. The government will make the committee's suggested amendment and strengthen this requirement to ensure that at least one member will have skills or experience in the education, training or employment sectors.

Recommendation 3 of the committee suggests that clause 10 of the Jobs Queensland Bill 2015 be amended to require the minister, in recommending persons for appointment to Jobs Queensland, to have regard to include persons of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and from regional areas who have experience and knowledge relevant to Jobs Queensland's functions. The government supports this recommendation and agrees to amend the bill accordingly.

The government is committed to ensuring Jobs Queensland has a diverse membership to ensure members represent a wide range of backgrounds and have a broad knowledge and skills base to support the work of Jobs Queensland. This amendment is consistent with the government's policy to have broad representation on Jobs Queensland including a balanced gender representation, which is provided for in clause 10(5) of the bill.

The government also notes that, in addition to membership, clause 9 of the bill supports Jobs Queensland to bring a broad perspective to its advice on future skills needs and workforce development and planning. Clause 9 requires Jobs Queensland, in performing its functions, to consult with community representatives, including representatives from rural and regional areas and representatives from a broad range of industries, including representatives from employers, unions, industry associations and peak bodies. I intend to move amendments to give effect to the committee's recommendations during consideration in detail.

This bill ensures that future workforce planning and independent industry advice is central to the government's skills and training priorities and investment decisions. The bill also ensures that Jobs Queensland forms part of our broader plan to make Queensland's vocational education and training sector the strongest and most productive in the nation—supporting industry to employ people with the skills it needs to grow into the future.

The bill establishes Jobs Queensland as a new independent entity to provide strategic industry led advice to government on skills demand and workforce development and planning. The bill provides for its statutory functions and governance arrangements while providing flexibility and longevity to allow Jobs Queensland to be responsive to changing economic and industry needs.

Under the bill, Jobs Queensland will have three key functions. It will provide advice to me as Minister for Training and Skills on skills needs for particular industry sectors or regional areas; future workforce development and planning; and the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland. It will also have a research function and be required to publicly promote its role and functions.

I am committed to industry having an independent voice on skills. It is important for the state that government receives independent industry advice on where the future skills demand is likely to occur within the economy. I want to be clear that when we talk about future jobs we are talking about what skills are needed, where the training gaps are, what new jobs are likely to evolve, what industries will arise into the future and what skills and training will be needed as a result.

Jobs Queensland will be established to ensure it has a structure which allows it to wholly focus on its strategic, advisory role, genuinely engage with industry, identify demand for skilled work across the economy and, in turn, consider the implications of this at a strategic level. Jobs Queensland will identify the skills and training needs across industry sectors to inform priorities for the government's significant investment in vocational education and training.

Jobs Queensland's advice and reports will help inform priorities for the state's investment in skills, training and workforce planning, and inform the development of strategies and programs to respond to these priorities. Importantly, neither I nor the Department of Education and Training can direct the content of the advice that Jobs Queensland provides. Jobs Queensland must also produce a public annual report about how it has performed its functions.

To ensure the new body can hit the ground running following formal establishment, a Jobs Queensland interim reference group will be created. The group will operate until Jobs Queensland is established and the Jobs Queensland chairperson and members are appointed. Upon my selection, representatives for this group will be considered and endorsed by the Premier and Minister for the Arts.

Access to independent industry advice on the future skills needs across the economy is critical to allowing the state to better target our training programs and skill investment towards the needs of the future. The establishment of Jobs Queensland is a critical initiative that will support Queenslanders into employment, foster a skilled and productive workforce for business and industry and contribute to a productive and growing economy. I commend the bill to the House.