




Speech By

Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

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FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TRAINING OMBUDSMAN) AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (4.59 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. I would like to thank the chair of the committee, the deputy chair, the member for Townsville, the member for Toowoomba South and all the members of the committee. The committee put a lot of work into its consideration of this bill. There was unanimous support for the bill, unlike some of the decisions of the member for Everton many years ago. It looks like he is out of touch again.

Education and training is the future of Queensland. A skilled workforce is a strong workforce. That is what the Palaszczuk government is committed to. We rely on well trained and skilled tradespeople—builders, electricians, concreters, locksmiths et cetera—to keep this great state going. Our community services rely on trained professionals in the aged-care sector, the disability sector and the healthcare sector. These are just a few of the professions that require the services of the VET system across this great state of ours. The member for Everton talks about up to \$5 million. It is heartbreaking to see people come into your office who have signed up for courses and have been hoodwinked into getting free things such as overseas trips and then they find out they are left with a huge bill and the training course is absolutely nothing. They have had nowhere to turn, nowhere to go, they were confused. They signed up and they were left with a legacy. In my electorate we have so many warehouse managers that we do not know what to do with them. They were signed up by dodgy RTOs. There are about four warehouses in the electorate. We have a lot more warehouse managers than warehouses. I am glad this bill has come before the House and that we are implementing it. It was an election promise. People now have somewhere to go.

Education has transformed over the last decade with online studying and private providers and TAFE moving into a competitive market. Flexibility for those who need to study is vital. Many of our hardworking Queenslanders must work and study at the same time, often holding down a full-time job or shiftwork. There are a lot of single mothers who are looking after children and studying, which puts a real stress on them. Over the three years of the LNP government in Queensland the VET sector was pushed aside, drastically underfunded and severely underresourced.

When I stand here today to talk about this bill, I am talking about the TAFE in Maryborough and what a wonderful thing has happened to TAFE in Maryborough. On the night that I got up and thanked the minister and the member for Redcliffe, who has done a marvellous job in resurrecting TAFE in Maryborough, the member for Everton had a few comments about it. The LNP does not look to the future and understand that this is part of the future of this great state. This is upskilling people and getting them into the jobs of the future. That is why I am glad that we have a minister who is committed to making sure that we have a great VET system in this state and that people have a chance to further their education. I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government. I am proud to be part of the Labor

Party that always delivers in education. We will make sure that every child and every worker has a chance, no matter where they are from in this great state, to further their education.

The establishment of the independent Training Ombudsman is an important part of the commitment of this government to complement the return of TAFE assets to the government, employing an extra 100 teachers and support staff and spending \$34 million to restore TAFE's status as Queensland's premier public provider of VET. The Training Ombudsman will be a one-stop shop to which students, parents, providers and others can turn to navigate the very complex VET system, make complaints and be assisted to resolve disputes. As I said earlier, there has to be somewhere where people can go. If we listen to the member for Everton, there is nowhere they can go; they hang around and look into space. There has to be someone they can get help from. We are not talking about a minor matter; we are talking about the ability of people to further their education and job prospects in the future. Not only that, it is a commitment to look after Queensland so that we have workers for the jobs of the future.

Another key component of the ombudsman role will be to monitor the quality of vocational education and training provided by relevant training entities in Queensland. This is vital to ensure that all Queenslanders are receiving quality education and support from their providers. I was talking to the client of a job provider the other day. There are certain people in my electorate who, when they turn up and they have a certificate from some known RTOs, are not even looked at for the job because employers know that the quality of training from that RTO has been shonky and that it is not up to standard. We do not want that. This bill ensures that we are not only getting bang for our buck but we are getting outcomes—we are getting people trained for their profession or upgrading their skills to make sure that we have the best people for the jobs in Queensland.

I am pleased to be part of a government that is committed to supporting Queenslanders in our VET sector. This bill is part of an ongoing movement to ensure that all Queenslanders have access to affordable and quality education. I am proud to be on the committee. It is a good committee. Since being elected, the minister from Redcliffe has really looked after the VET system in Queensland. I see the differences in my electorate. I am happy that this bill is before the House. I urge the LNP to support it. You cannot keep knocking working Queenslanders, you sometimes have to give them a helping hand. I urge those opposite to support the bill so that when people come into my office—or anyone's office—we can point them in the right direction where they will get a fair hearing. On behalf of the constituents of the Maryborough electorate I ask the LNP to support this bill so they have somewhere to go so that we can get on with the job of educating Queenslanders. I commend this bill to the House.