




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (3.58 pm): This afternoon I rise to speak in support of the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill. Like all my Labor government colleagues, I am an avid supporter of any initiative which bolsters and enhances our TAFE system, our education system and our training system in favour of those who are its main beneficiaries—the future generation of workers.

Strengthening education and training has long been a core pillar underpinning the mission of the Australian Labor Party. The Palaszczuk government, in line with that Labor tradition, recognises that more can be done in this state to support our next wave of workers to thrive in their training and education environments. Happy learners go on to become happy workers, and happy workers lead to strong employment rates, thriving communities and healthy economies.

In my electorate of Woodridge I have relished watching Labor's investment in employment and education pay dividends. As a government, we have reinstated the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, and the positive impact this has had in Woodridge is palpable. In the electorate of Woodridge the first round of this great initiative saw no fewer than 18 projects given the green light and brought to life. These projects are being delivered through eight organisations which received funding to the tune of \$2.6 million.

The second round has been announced recently, and I am proud to say that Woodridge has again emerged a winner. As part of the latest round, a total of 10 community organisations in my electorate have received \$1.6 million to undertake training programs. Combined, these initiatives are expected to generate around 970 training positions in our local region. The great organisations benefiting from this initiative include Access Community Services, YFS, MultiLink Community Services, the Logan Samoa Advisory Council, BoysTown, Karingal and Life Without Barriers. These groups are hard at work training local people in areas such as youth justice, mental health, disability support work, aged care, hospitality, retail and construction.

This initiative epitomises what Labor is all about: ensuring our communities are skilled up with the right skills to land them the right jobs—jobs which our government is creating and making readily available to such people. This brilliant scheme piloted by the Attorney-General and Minister for Training partners communities with government to grow local employment opportunities, encourage greater social inclusion and assist people who need extra support to enter the workforce.

Throughout Woodridge I am proud to say there have already been some graduations from the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, and these participants are already transitioning into work. That is more young people from Woodridge entering Queensland's job market with the right skills to ensure they can do the job and do it well. These young workers add to the scores of others across Queensland who have also participated in the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. They will benefit from participating not just in the program but also in the Queensland economy.

What is equally important for this government as bolstering education and training for the next generation is upholding promises. The bill I have risen to support today represents our government keeping yet another one of our promises. In the lead-up to the 2015 election, the Palaszczuk government committed to rescuing TAFE and reinvigorating vocational education and training. Reintroducing the successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work program was just part of this commitment.

Another key component of this promise was the establishment of an independent Training Ombudsman to complement the return of TAFE assets to the government. It also equally complements our government's employment of 100 extra teachers and support staff in TAFE and our expenditure of \$34 million to restore TAFE's status as Queensland's premier public provider of vocational education and training.

The Training Ombudsman will act as a one-stop shop to which students, parents, providers and others can turn to navigate the varied and complex VET system. The position will also act as a point for which these parties can make complaints and be assisted to resolve disputes. As the Minister for Training and Skills has noted in this House before, importantly, in this case complainants are not just limited to being trainees and apprentices. They are also employers, trainers and other significant stakeholders—groups in our community which play crucial roles in ensuring job creation and sustainable employment for our state now and into the future.

The role of these groups in Queensland only further strengthens the argument for ensuring any disputes they have are dutifully and respectfully resolved—an action which the Training Ombudsman would help to see achieved. The Training Ombudsman will also identify systemic issues about the provision and quality of vocational education and training in Queensland which may be identified by complaints, and reports to the Minister for Training and Skills on strategies to resolve these issues. Importantly, the Training Ombudsman will provide complete wraparound support for students, apprentices and trainees to assist them to address issues for the VET services they are being provided.

The value of such a position for those in our communities seeking the best training and education for themselves in a bid to earn employment that is the best fit for them cannot be underestimated. Ensuring the regulation and provision of superior services in our training sector is of crucial importance, because the domino effect impacts us all. Tight and thorough service delivery in the training sector will result in the development of a confident cohort of students, apprentices and trainees who will emerge from their training programs assured they have received a fair education. This group will, in turn, carry that confidence and assurance with them as they transition into Queensland's workforce, and our employment figures and economy will reap the benefits. For these reasons, I compliment the minister on this important legislative reform and I commend the bill to the House.