



Speech By  
**Glenn Butcher**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 February 2016

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

**Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (3.16 pm): I would be interested to see if the member speaks against the private member's bill for the Health Ombudsman. I rise to speak in support of the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. As many in this House are aware, my electorate of Gladstone is renowned as the industrial powerhouse of the state. Gladstone is a proud industrial town with a workforce that seeks to be properly trained by reputable and reliable training organisations. That is not an unreasonable expectation. It follows that, with that industrial reputation, there is a need for specialised training in skills that are vital to maintain a healthy, safe and experienced workforce. It is the right of every worker to have confidence that the training they have received has given them the proper skills to take into their workplace.

I am a qualified maintenance fitter and turner and I have held positions including a maintenance supervisor and a maintenance superintendent on a large industrial site. I understand fully the importance of having skilled, well-trained, competent workers on the job. That is no more so than in heavy industry, particularly in Gladstone, where the end result of individuals without appropriate training can result in tragedy.

During my 25 years of working in industry, I have seen a wide range of training providers and trainees come and go. I have also seen many hardworking, honest people get caught up with these dodgy training providers whose care for proper training is secondary to fattening their own bank balance. These unscrupulous operators have little regard for proper skilled training or the trainee out in the workforce.

In February this year in my electorate of Gladstone almost 300 trainees received a letter in the mail informing them that some of their qualifications were not valid. Tradesmen with high-risk licences, including forklift truck operation and advanced rigging, dogging and scaffolding, had their current licences revoked after Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspectors found evidence that an accredited assessor had failed to comply with conditions around issuing these licences. Letters were sent from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General to 290 tradesmen in my electorate who had been issued with qualifications to operate nine different types of equipment, including managing large crane loads, stating that their competencies were not recognised and needed to be re-assessed.

The letter stated that evidence obtained by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspectors showed these tradesmen may not be competent to carry out that class of work. That would be an absolute tragedy waiting to happen out in the large industrial workforce. They were told if they did not obtain reassessment and supply the required evidence, their licences may be cancelled altogether.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr BUTCHER:** That was in the past. I am unsure of the case you are talking about. I will take your interjection. I can't talk about that today.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr BUTCHER:** It may have been some of your LNP mates too, you wouldn't know. That is probably where they come from. That is probably where they learned their skills.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! I ask the member for Lockyer to cease interjecting. The member seems happy to interject regardless of which side of the chamber the speaker is coming from. I ask the member to allow the other members to speak.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It gets a little bit hard on my ears when it comes from that way. These hardworking tradesmen who in good faith had been trained felt that they had been conned and were faced with no avenue to have their issues heard.

The Queensland government has committed to establishing an independent Training Ombudsman as part of its plan for reinvigorating the vocational education and training sector under Working Queensland, Labor's jobs plan. I welcome this initiative to give tradies, trainees, students and apprentices the opportunity to have serious issues heard in relation to training. The Training Ombudsman will provide a free confidential and independent service to review and resolve inquiries and complaints from apprentices, trainees, students, employers and other stakeholders about the VET system. The ombudsman can help navigate the complex VET sector and find the best way to address concerns as well as provide free and impartial advice about rights and responsibilities within the VET sector. The Training Ombudsman will look at the circumstances and assist to resolve issues appropriately by reviewing the issue and recommending the most appropriate action to take; referring the complaint to another agency if they are best suited to assist; and mediating between parties to come to a mutually beneficial solution. The Training Ombudsman also plays an advocacy role for the VET sector by reporting on systemic issues and advising the state government on ways to improve the VET system.

The establishment of an independent Training Ombudsman is part of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to rescuing TAFE and reinvigorating vocational education and training. The establishment of an independent ombudsman for training is an important part of our government's commitment to return TAFE assets to government, employing 100 extra teachers and supporting staff and spending \$34 million to restore TAFE's status as Queensland's premier public provider of vocational education and training.

As stated earlier, I am proud of the government for reintroducing this vital role in the training field to give those tradies, trainees, students and apprentices the support that they need to seek assistance when training providers do the wrong thing by them. This initiative is fair and just and I know it will be welcomed as a safeguard by many seeking to gain qualifications through this avenue. I commend this bill to the House.