




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

TAFE Queensland South West

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (12.02 pm): I rise to speak on the excellent work that is currently happening on the rebuilding of TAFE after attempts to decimate it by the LNP. In particular, I will focus on the activities that have occurred at TAFE Queensland South West. The Palaszczuk government is committed to rescuing TAFE and restoring its status as the premier public provider of vocational education and training, or VET, in Queensland.

A key component of this commitment is the Queensland government's working Queensland employment policy, which includes the Rescuing TAFE funding arrangement. This agreement has allocated \$22.8 million over three years—2015-16 to 2017-18—to TAFE Queensland to ensure that TAFE once again is the premier public provider of VET in Queensland.

A total of 801 students, or 29.35 per cent of the enrolments, were at TAFE Queensland South West. As the enrolment places were offered to eligible students where there was student demand for training, I think it is safe to assume that the south-west region, and in particular Ipswich, shows a high demand for training and vocation education. TAFE Queensland South West focused its activities on expanding and improving regional support programs in small locations and increasing courses available under VET in Schools in specific areas. This has allowed additional subsidised training places in a range of qualifications for students who had already extinguished their entitlement under the 2016-17 annual VET investment plan.

TQSW had a Rescuing TAFE allocation of \$353,000 for 2015-16. During this period, of the 801 students who accessed funding, half of them were either VET in Schools or second-chance funding. The funding was targeted at investing in student support services, providing foundation skills courses for disadvantaged learners, increasing courses available under VET in Schools, subsidising second-chance training opportunities, and creating new full-time-equivalent positions.

TAFE Queensland commenced activities under the Rescuing TAFE program in February 2015, with \$5 million allocated for the 2015-16 financial year. These activities have been well received by the community, with over 2,729 student enrolments in Rescuing TAFE supported courses occurring in 2015-16. I am pleased to say that TAFE Queensland South West had the highest number of enrolments in this program out of the six TAFE Queensland centres in the state. TQSW includes the regions of Ipswich, Springfield, Chinchilla, Kingaroy, Nurunderi, Roma, Toowoomba and Warwick. Forty-five per cent of other enrolments at TQSW were certificate III, with the remainder being split between certificate I, II, IV and a handful of skill sets. With this in mind, we can see that a large proportion of this funding is giving students a head start in vocational education and it is also giving students a second chance.

I am pleased that of the TQSW enrolments almost 25 per cent of them were at the Ipswich campus. Of the regions in TQSW, only Toowoomba had a higher number of enrolments. Members might be wondering what qualifications were obtained in the Ipswich region. The range of courses and qualifications included a diploma of community services work; food safety supervision; certificate II qualifications in automotive underbody technology, electrotechnology, hospitality, kitchen operations, retail make-up and skin care, and retail services. The certificate III qualifications were in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care; business administration; community pharmacy; driving operations; early childhood education and care; horticulture; hospitality; information, digital media and technology; retail operations; rural operations; and warehousing operations. As we can see, the range of qualifications being delivered by TQSW in Ipswich is as diverse as the region itself.

I commend the Palaszczuk government for its forethought and planning in its working in employment policy and, in particular, the Rescuing TAFE funding that it has provided. I believe that it is programs like Rescuing TAFE that has led to a decrease in youth unemployment in the Ipswich region from 16.5 per cent in July last year to 12.4 per cent in July this year. This decrease in youth unemployment is reflected in other regions in the state including Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Toowoomba, which all reported improvements, with unemployment now lower compared to this time last year. TAFE is a wonderful pathway into tertiary education for many students in my electorate. I commend the Rescuing TAFE program to the House.