




Speech By  
**Joan Pease**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

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

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (4.52 pm): I rise to speak to the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. I would like to begin by thanking the chair, my fellow committee members, the committee secretariat and stakeholders who made a submission. I would also like to acknowledge that the recommendations were unanimously supported by all members of the committee. I would like to reinforce the comments that the chair made about the member for Everton and that this is no longer the LNP's position. I find that of great interest.

The establishment of the Training Ombudsman supports the Palaszczuk government's commitment to making the Queensland VET sector the strongest and most productive in the nation. It ensures that industry has access to an appropriately skilled workforce. Through Jobs Queensland, consultation with industry and stakeholders will ensure that these future growth areas can be identified. Already the Palaszczuk government is acting on its commitment to develop an appropriately skilled workforce to meet future industry growth through the reintroduction of the successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative. We have enacted components of our Rescuing TAFE plan, which incorporates a repeal of the Queensland Training Assets Management Authority Act 2014 and the establishment of Jobs Queensland. All of these initiatives have been very well received by the community.

Currently, Queensland's consumers of VET do not have access to a sector-specific independent complaints mechanism for VET matters. Given the broad and diverse range of stakeholders within the sector, it can be challenging for VET consumers to identify the most appropriate avenue for lodging concerns, as there is no clear pathway to raise concerns about systemic issues in the VET sector. The VET sector does a great job and the sector wants and needs someone to advocate for them.

**Miss BARTON:** I rise to a point of order. Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek your guidance and your ruling with respect to the time on the clock for the member for Lytton. I appreciate that she was a member of the committee at the time of the inquiry. However, she has been discharged from the education committee. My understanding of the standing orders is that current members of the committee are allocated a period of 20 minutes, not former members of the committee. I am concerned that this sets a precedent when we have had recent changes of committee membership.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Linard): Thank you, member. I will seek some further advice. In the meantime, member for Lytton, if you would like to continue.

**Ms PEASE:** I certainly will. As I have said, the VET sector does a great job and the sector wants and needs someone to advocate for them. An independent Training Ombudsman will improve consumer and stakeholder awareness and strengthen the quality of VET in Queensland.

ASQA and other key industry stakeholders support us in establishing a Queensland Training Ombudsman. Funding of up to \$5 million over three years has been allocated to establish and operate an independent Training Ombudsman in Queensland.

The interim Training Ombudsman has already been providing Queenslanders with immediate assistance and has established an online and telephone presence to support complainants and has begun the important work of developing relationships with other regulatory agencies. The interim Training Ombudsman has already been involved in resolving issues raised by Queenslanders in relation to the VET sector, including issues referred by members opposite.

One of the key functions of the Training Ombudsman will be to receive complaints about the provision and quality of VET by registered training organisations and assist complainants to have their issues addressed by the most appropriate agency. The Training Ombudsman is available to apprentices and trainees and also employers, trainers and other significant stakeholders. The Training Ombudsman will be able to support complainants to seek a resolution of their issues by mediating the matter with other relevant parties. That will also help to get real outcomes for students and providers alike.

Where a resolution cannot be reached, the Training Ombudsman will be able to assist complainants to take the matter up with the appropriate agencies. Those agencies may include the Department of Education and Training and other Queensland agencies such as the Office of Fair Trading as well as the national VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority. The Training Ombudsman can investigate claims regarding the quality of training provided by an RTO that receives government funding under the Certificate 3 Guarantee or User Choice programs and make recommendations to DET about whether to continue the arrangements or to take action under the funding arrangements to address these concerns.

Although DET has strict requirements on prequalified supplier RTOs and closely monitors the provision of VET by funded prequalified suppliers, having oversight from the Training Ombudsman will be a significant measure in ensuring that Queensland government funding is targeted to only quality VET providers into the future. The Training Ombudsman can make recommendations to the minister about systemic issues relating to the quality of VET in Queensland, which may include ways to improve DET's systems, policies and processes in relation to prequalified suppliers, matters relating to apprenticeships and traineeships and strategies to improve the quality of VET in Queensland.

The Training Ombudsman will be supported by the Office of the Training Ombudsman and its independence from government control is enshrined in the bill. The bill ensures that the Training Ombudsman and no-one else controls the staff of the office. The Palaszczuk government continues to deliver on its promise for the VET sector in Queensland. The Training Ombudsman will provide a dedicated and, importantly, independent one-stop shop for the VET sector and VET sector related issues with a high level of individual support to VET stakeholders. I commend the bill to the House.