




Speech By  
**Julieanne Gilbert**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (12.36 pm): I rise to add to the debate in favour of the Further Education and Training (Training Ombudsman) and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. The vocational education and training, VET, sector is a vital part of the training and education sector in Queensland and, in fact, for the whole of Australia. The member for Ipswich last night reminded us of her fond memories of TAFE. I also have fond memories of TAFE when I completed my senior secondary school certificate at TAFE before attending university.

The VET sector trains a huge number of our workforce. The VET sector nationally brings in \$52 million of overseas revenue to the Australian economy. Education in Australia is one of the four top economic drivers, and in 2013 education was the fourth largest export. Employees seeking work in 2015 with a certificate III qualification were 86.6 per cent successful. This is a great rate. Our training sector is an economic driver for the economy and a path that many of our workforce take to gain employment. The sector must be protected from shonky providers. The quality and reputation of the industry must be protected.

Vocational skills are the cornerstone of our regional economies. These are the skills that drive the construction, engineering, hospitality, and health and community service sectors. They nurture our artists, our hairdressers and our childcare workers. These are the skills that keep our region strong and allow them to grow. The government has been proud to support our TAFE network because this network changes people's lives—from young people who are looking for their first opportunity to enter the workforce, to women re-entering the workforce and to those people using TAFE to transition into higher education, as I did.

Over 85 per cent of TAFE graduates are employed at the completion of their studies. Because this sector is vital to us, we are proud to reintroduce the Training Ombudsman. It will be their role to ensure the many training providers who operate in this state provide a quality service. We want to make sure they offer enough training to allow students to learn the skills they need. We want to make sure they explain the full costs of their training that Queenslanders are signing up to. We want to make sure that all skills training is of a high quality because, if they do not, they will not be operating in our state.

The establishment of an independent Training Ombudsman will not only preserve but also reinvigorate the VET sector in Queensland. During my time as an organiser with the Queensland Teachers' Union, I spent time with TAFE teachers and students listening to stories of fly-by-night providers who promise a qualification without delivering the training required to develop skills to perform in the workplace. There was one provider waiting outside Centrelink offering IT courses to be delivered in a couple of days compared with a TAFE course taking 10 weeks. Students with their government training funds signed up for the course. They signed up for the course because they told me they wanted

to get into the workforce faster. At the end of the course, they found that they had a certificate and no skills. Their government payment for training was wasted. The only time the students got near a computer was when they printed out their own certificate of completion.

Another provider in Queensland was offering a cheap rate on a welding course—a course that would get workers straight into the workforce on building sites, in factories and engineering workshops. Welding is a skilled profession and it can be a dangerous line of work if you are not adequately trained. The training company used cardboard welding irons and rods for the students to practise on. They did not get to go near any heat at all. The danger students entering a workplace with this type of training place on other workers and themselves is unimaginable.

When TAFE Queensland trains students they use quality, well-trained and qualified teachers. They use appropriate training tools and resources to ensure that students are work ready, can undertake the role they are employed to undertake with confidence, and not be a safety risk to themselves or others. This is the standard that all registered training organisations, or RTOs, should be providing. They have an obligation to provide quality training.

When talking to hospitality teachers about the cost of a TAFE course and the amount of time it took to complete the TAFE course compared to another RTO, they had a simple explanation. When TAFE teachers teach students to fillet a fish, each student has their own fish to practise on. A rival RTO has one fish, the teacher fillets the fish, the students watch and they get ticked off as being able to fillet fish.

Students need to have an avenue where they can take complaints if their VET RTO is not delivering. Under this bill the Training Ombudsman can receive complaints about the provision of quality of VET by RTOs, supervising RTOs and employers employing an apprentice or trainee; matters relating to apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland including decisions of the chief executive regarding training contracts and declaration of, and normal term for, an apprenticeship or traineeship; compliance with the FET Act by apprentices, trainees, employers and supporting RTOs on compliance matters; matters relating to RTOs that have a prequalified supplier agreement with the Department of Education and Training; and prescribed decisions, for example, certain decisions made by the chief executive of DET under the FET Act such as decisions to register a training contract and the decision to issue a completion certificate for an apprenticeship or traineeship.

The VET sector is an important economic driver to the Queensland economy. It is also important for our state to have a well-trained workforce that will continue to support our economy. RTOs taking money unjustly from students by not delivering the promised skills and training need to be ousted. The Training Ombudsman will be a one-stop shop to which students, parents, providers and others can turn to navigate the varied and complex VET system, make complaints and be assisted to resolve disputes.

In closing, I would like to thank all of our hardworking VET teachers in TAFE and in private RTOs who are doing the right thing by our students. I congratulate Jo Pyne, a passionate TAFE manager in North Queensland. I would like to thank all of these people for their service in vocational education. I commend the bill to the House.