



Speech By  
**Hon. Di Farmer**


**MEMBER FOR BULIMBA**

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Record of Proceedings, 28 March 2023

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Training and Skills**

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (2.21 pm): Workforce shortages is one of the most critical issues facing our economy. It affects every region and every sector. It is why we have the Queensland Workforce Strategy. It is why we invest over \$1.2 billion in skills and training in Queensland. We have to make sure we have a pipeline of workers with the skills not only to fulfil the promise of our economy but also to provide the services to which every Queenslanders is entitled. The discussion today about housing is a case in point. We know that if we are going to address those critical housing needs we need skilled construction workers in this state. That is why we have over 24,000 construction apprentices going through our system this year—the highest number ever.

Our investment must also include the public provider of VET, because we know that wherever you are in Queensland you need access to that. It is why we invest in public VET infrastructure like our \$100 million upgrade and new facilities program. I seem to be opening a new facility every month. It was Townsville this month, it was Toowoomba last month and it is Hervey Bay next month—and the list goes on. We are over halfway.

If you are talking about skills and training—about the need for construction workers in a critical industry like housing or about nurses, hospitality workers, mechanics, pastry chefs, IT workers or all of the other sorts of workers we need—and then you talk about the LNP, you need to be very afraid. Although labour shortages are one of the critical issues facing us—it is what every employer talks about—the LNP have not mentioned labour shortages once in this chamber—not once. They have never mentioned skills and the training, which is so critical. The only mention they made of skills and training before the last election was the skills task force, the very thing the Newman government set up in order to demolish TAFE.

We know that those opposite are planning on cuts, like they did when they were in government. We know that they are planning that because the member for Chatsworth told us. The Leader of the Opposition told us about their debt reduction strategy. Every single member of the House needs to be very afraid. They sacked staff, they cut \$170 million in funding and they closed campuses in their electorates—in Ridgeway, Ithaca, Maryborough, Tewantin and Ipswich. They were going to cut 11 in Far North Queensland. They were going to cut five in Fraser and the Sunshine Coast. They were going to cut five in the western corridor. They were going to cut three on the Gold Coast. None of their members ever stood up for it. They were going to cut 10 in the Brisbane metro region. They were going to cut SkillsTech campuses from six to two. They are the ones who train our construction workers.

We know what their plans are for infrastructure—every single one of them. Are they going to put up their hand up and say, 'Please save my TAFE. Please make sure I have workers for nursing homes, for schools, for aged care and for disability support workers'? We do not hear any of them saying those things. It is in the LNP's DNA to cut, sack and sell. It will be groundhog day in Queensland if the LNP ever gets back into government, because all they do is cut, sack and sell.

The Leader of the Opposition has outlined some of the list: CopperString—we are training the workers for CopperString; the satellite hospitals—we are training the nurses; the ambulance stations—we are training the paramedics; the transport infrastructure projects—we are training all of those people as well. There is \$10 billion and they have—

**Mr Head** interjected.

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Order, member for Callide. Order, member for Buderim!

**Ms FARMER:** We want to make sure that we have the housing to meet the needs of the people who are telling us the terrible stories we are hearing. It is the reason we are having this round table today. We are talking about all of the things we are doing to address this issue in Queensland, and training workers will be a critical part of it. Not one of those opposite has even mentioned workforce. This government knows about workforce. We know what we need to do. We know that we need to train workers. We know that we have to invest in infrastructure.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Ms FARMER:** Those opposite love going to the graduations, but they never want to put their hand up to say, 'I'm saving TAFE. I'm saving those workers. I'm making sure we can meet the needs of our community.' There has not been one single word. We are looking after Queensland.