




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (2.33 pm): I rise to speak in respect of report No. 36 of the 57th Parliament on the Education, Employment and Training Committee's inquiry into the Cairns TAFE Upgrade Project. The Cairns TAFE campus is a critical training hub for Far North Queensland. It is the region's largest TAFE area, servicing a student population of more than 8,000 students. The overall purpose of the upgrade project was to modernise the campus to ensure its ability to meet the current and future training needs of students and their employers in Far North Queensland. We looked at the upgrades of the specialised training areas including: the installation of a new freezer room; the refurbishment of the maker space; upgrades to the automotive workshop; installation of a new solar power system; the cultural museum; upgrades to the hair and beauty and hospitality precinct; and the supporting infrastructure, including the electrical switchboards and transformer replacements. As a committee, we were satisfied that the project was necessary and value for money. The project allocation was \$18.59 million. Overall, the project was delivered under budget at a cost of \$15.65 million. It was designed and delivered in an appropriate manner, improving access to high-quality facilities for students and employers in Cairns and Far North Queensland. The committee made one recommendation. That was that the Legislative Assembly note the report.

Through the upgrades, TAFE was able to offer several new courses. It was able to increase the numbers of classes available on campus which, in turn, attracted more new enrolments. Improvements to campus navigation made it easier for students and members of the public to find their way around the campus. These upgrades generated increased training and employment opportunities for local residents during the construction phase as well.

With TAFE being the training hub for Far North Queensland, the committee encourages the government to explore what else can be done to ensure existing facilities continue to meet the needs of their communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The staff were very keen to show the committee around the campus and were very proud of what they had achieved in the upgrades across numerous areas. I thank them for their hospitality. It was pleasing to note that the department advised that most trade packages were delivered by QBuild. For those trade packages that required technical expertise not available via QBuild, the department found suitable suppliers via the tender process managed by QBuild staff.

The department advised that in its view QBuild performed exceptionally well on the project. The supervision of all work was of the highest standard and the majority of projects were handed over defect free. I would also like to thank the other members of the committee. We had a good time travelling around looking at these facilities. It was a really enjoyable trip. It is so important that we look after our TAFE services. When we consider that we have Fee-Free TAFE, free apprenticeships et cetera, it is essential that we provide our young people with the opportunities they need to have successful careers into the future. I commend the report to the House.