




Speech By
Jimmy Sullivan

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Record of Proceedings, 20 March 2024

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (2.41 pm): I rise to support the committee's report. I do so as a proud former member of the Education, Employment and Training Committee. I would like to join the chair, the deputy chair and other members to commend this report to the House.

As has been reflected by members who have spoken before me, this was a genuine cross-party committee which included the member for Hinchinbrook. I thank the chair and the deputy chair for setting that tone early on. I think this was really important work that we could do.

To be blunt, we tried to save the parliament some money. We included the specific investigation of the Cairns TAFE upgrade as part of our broader investigation into vocational education and training in regional Queensland, which included a visit to the maritime specialist centre, which the member for Theodore has just spoken about. We travelled to Thursday Island as well as regional south-western Queensland, which was really important.

In terms of the Cairns TAFE upgrade, I am so proud to be part of a government that has delivered that investment into that really important training facility. As the chair reflected, they really got bang for their buck. It is a world-class campus. They stretched the money to include high-end quality technical things such as electrical trade training with multiple hubs and multiple stations for the high-end electrical tickets that they need, the hairdressing and make-up station and the hospitality area, which is semi-commercial. They have really good partnerships with local businesses, which was wonderful to see.

They also made small touches like extending the roof cover over the mechanical engineering and car mechanical area so they could train in all weather. We all know what the weather in Cairns is like. Whatever the weather, they could keep the sun or the rain off them depending on the day. These simple things mean they could extend the number of students and the number of courses they have. Really simple things like that make a really big difference.

They also had good input from students and staff alike to create an interconnectedness between the courses. That reduces the silo effect that sometimes can happen on any campus but particularly in the VET area. There were common spaces, and it did have the feeling of a genuine campus where people could feel welcomed and interact with each other. I think that is really important for people. Whether they are young students straight out of school or coming back out of the workforce, it is important that they have that sense of belonging at a campus like that.

As previous speakers have said, the Cairns campus is the hub for Far North Queensland, so it is really important that we get it right there, and I really do think we did. I congratulate the TAFE staff. I congratulate the project manager and their partners. I also reflect that it was a good sign that the TAFE CEO and CFO came along on our regional trips because they wanted to see firsthand what it is like on the ground and engage in all of our meetings.

I have already thanked the chair, the deputy chair and other members of the committee. I want to give a particular shout-out to the secretariat because they had particular challenges. We deliberately tried to make sure we had community engagement in all of the places we went. Unfortunately, the air travel at the time posed some challenges. I am not saying that as a First World problem. I am not talking about the discomfort to us; I am talking about having to delay or postpone public hearings where genuine witnesses were trying to participate and we were trying to include that participation. Rob and the team did everything they could to try to make sure we achieved that. Through no fault of his own, it was a bit of a matrix, if I can put it that way. He worked his guts out. We really thank him for that.

We did manage to achieve genuine community input, from TI to out west and everywhere in between. Again, I thank the committee members for their genuine approach to this. Specifically to Cairns, it is a wonderful facility that I think will be a real legacy for Far North Queensland.