



Speech By
Kim Richards

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Record of Proceedings, 20 March 2024

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (2.25 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Education, Employment and Training Committee Report No. 36, 57th Parliament—*Inquiry into the Cairns TAFE upgrade project*, tabled on 30 August 2023.

The Education, Employment and Training Committee made a self-directed decision to do a public accounts examination of the Cairns TAFE \$18.95 million upgrade project at what is now a really fabulous, thriving and vibrant campus. That upgrade was done under the Advancing our Training Infrastructure initiative. We had the opportunity to tour the facility with a range of staff and we met a number of students on the day. We took submissions. We were briefed by officials. The project has generated a whole new vibrancy for the campus. It has allowed them to offer new courses and programs that are really important to people in Far North Queensland. It has also helped to increase the number of VET in Schools classes.

Over the past 18 months to two years, the committee has had a really broad-ranging look at the vocational education and training space, including through a second self-directed inquiry. On 10 June we held a forum in Cairns as part of our trip to visit the TAFE campus. We met with Mr Bruce Houghton, who is the principal at Bentley Park College. It was fantastic to see the school's involvement with the Cairns TAFE project. They all spoke glowingly about the partnership to deliver vocational education and training for students in the secondary school environment. We know that the investment in improving the TAFE campus has strengthened the ability of TAFE to attract new enrolments.

We saw the improved quality of the workshops and studio spaces, particularly in the Banggu Minjaany Art Gallery, which is absolutely fantastic. We had a very detailed tour of the upgraded mechanics workshop. Many cars were being repaired diligently by students who are acquiring those skills and training. Another part that appealed to many of us—I am not sure if it appealed to the member for Stafford, but I was pretty impressed—was the upgrade to the hair and beauty salons in the hospitality precinct.

Mr Sullivan: They did a good job on me.

Ms RICHARDS: They did. I recall they offered to give us all a little bit of a helping hand. We might have been looking a bit scraggly on the day. It was great to see local businesses getting involved through TAFE. It was very clear that our investment in projects such as this provide the opportunity for businesses, schools and students to come together to make sure we are delivering skilled people for the jobs that are needed in Far North Queensland.

In addition to the hair and beauty salons, which, as I said, were a very popular space, a lot of work was done on replacing air-conditioning chiller blocks, electrical switchboards and major transformer works. As I said, the art gallery was a wonderful space. They have installed new solar. I

have forgotten the name of the facilities manager at TAFE, but that gentleman spoke glowingly about the work they did with QBuild to deliver the project. He spoke about how proud he was of the value for money he was able to deliver. He has done a fantastic job and looks forward to doing more great work up there in Cairns TAFE.

From the committee perspective, we were extraordinarily impressed with the value for money received by investing in TAFE. We know how important Queensland TAFEs are in making sure that our young people have the skills to meet the jobs of today and the jobs of tomorrow. I commend this report to the House.