




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR ALBERT**

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### **JOBS QUEENSLAND BILL**

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (5.03 pm): I rise here this afternoon to make a contribution on the Jobs Queensland Bill. Firstly, I would like to thank my fellow committee members, the committee staff, the committee chair, the member for Townsville, and all those individuals who made a submission on this bill. From the outset, I certainly do have some reservations about this bill, especially when it comes to the lack of detail. The bill appears to be, you could say, a blank cheque which is handed out to whoever the government deems appropriate. Whilst I have these reservations, we do support the bill.

I would like to start by speaking about how building the economy of tomorrow must start today. We have a diverse state with multiple centres of employment in metropolitan and regional areas. This gives us a diverse employment market requiring different skill sets in different areas. Furthermore, we must look at the broad spectrum of reasons as to why there are statewide shortages in some sectors of employment. It is only through genuine consultation between industry, employers and government that these shortages can be addressed and training opportunities can be delivered. Training is an area of the economy that requires an enormous amount of investment, and every dollar must be spent wisely to ensure maximum return.

Globalisation will continue to impact and alter the make-up of our future workforce. This is evidenced by the number of technical and trade occupations falling by 19 per cent from 1991 to 2015. Additionally, other occupations such as labourers and machinery operators have decreased by 37 per cent and 19 per cent respectively in that same period. However, these declines do not negate the need for skilled workers in these areas. This notion is supported by the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, which has reported that there is a continued shortage of skilled technical and trade workers as well as professionals. For the 2014-15 period, we had a statewide shortage of motor mechanics, sheet metal trades, metal machinists and cabinet makers, but when we compare this to the needs in regional Queensland this blows out to a far greater list of trades, including civil engineering draftspeople and technicians, diesel mechanics, motorcycle mechanics, welders and the list goes on and on and on.

This leads me to my first dilemma I found within this bill. Originally, there was no requirement contained within the Jobs Queensland Bill for meetings to be held in regional areas or for there to be regional representation on the board. This has been addressed in the third recommendation, which I certainly do appreciate. It does highlight how important different skills shortages affect different regions in our very diverse state. To best understand the needs of regional areas, the statutory body should travel to these areas and hold meetings with local industries and employers to understand their local needs. The Queensland economy cannot be seen as a single entity; it is multiple entities with individual requirements that have their own supply and demand.

It appears the bill mysteriously lacks a focus on current workforce supply. This makes planning for appropriate workforce numbers a piecemeal and potentially inadequate exercise which will fail to deliver short- and long-term workforce needs. An example is if a qualified tradesperson—let us say, a sheet metal worker—finds it difficult to obtain work in the sheet metal area for a couple of years because

of a bit of a downturn in that market and they go into another line of work, just say hospitality, for a few years. In recent times, we could say there was a greater push in the sheet metal market for these individuals who have got these skills in this area, and they will not be added to the supply.

This certainly does skew the results and may lead to a result where a shortage appears to exist when it does not. Nothing is more soul destroying for individuals than leaving their vocational education and training provider to find that there is an oversupply of workers in that particular area. To be an effective body, Jobs Queensland needs to encompass a broad spectrum of information, thus creating certainty for the industry and job creation and, therefore, developing our Queensland economy. We cannot just think about what is needed now; we must also think about what will be needed in five years time. That is very similar to the previous LNP government's Ministerial Industry Commission, which was disbanded by this government. For the first time in this state the Ministerial Industry Commission, an independent advisory body, provided the industry with a say on skills that are needed now and into the future. This was a genuine partnership between industry and a government focused on collaboration to direct government investment into training. The Ministerial Industry Commission was a collaborative approach with people who founded businesses, industry boards, academics and prominent business boards. These leaders in their field were also partnered with the Queensland community to guide the state to a more prosperous future.

Upon reviewing the Queensland vocational education and training sector, or VET, the LNP government developed a five-year action plan, Great skills. Real opportunities. This concentrated on enhancing participation and productivity to give greater real world employment outcomes for those leaving vocational education and training and powering our economy. Instead of continuing with this commission which had runs on the board, the government decided to dismantle the Ministerial Industry Commission in June this year, thereby starting the whole process all over again.

This brings me back to my previous statements regarding my reservations about the bill. I have grave reservations when it comes to how the \$40 million allocated to Jobs Queensland will be spent. From the outset the committee asked the department for clarification and the response they gave provided no further information. I must say it was a slap in the face and an insult to the committee. The response states—

The establishment of Jobs Queensland was committed to under *Working Queensland*, one of the Palaszczuk Government's election commitments during the 2015 election. The allocation of \$40 million over 4 years to establish Jobs Queensland was confirmed through the 2015-16 State budget allocations. Through the Jobs Queensland Bill 2015, the Department of Education and Training is implementing this commitment.

This response is ambiguous at best. It gives no detail about where the money will be spent and what reimbursement the members on the board will receive or any other details. You could say it is like winning the \$40 million Oz Lotto.

I find it interesting, though, that the minister claims Jobs Queensland will be an independent body. However, through the statement of expectation the minister dictates how the body will report to the minister, that the minister gives written direction about what activities should be carried out by Jobs Queensland and that the minister gives directions of what must be included in the annual report.

The committee did make some recommendations, and I agree wholeheartedly with recommendations 2 and 3 in particular. In recommendation 2, the committee recommends the bill be amended to require that at least one member of Jobs Queensland is a person with direct experience in the education, training and employment sector. That is a no-brainer. In recommendation 3, the committee recommends that clause 10 of the Jobs Queensland Bill 2015 be amended to require the minister, in recommending persons for appointment to Jobs Queensland, to have regard to include persons of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and from regional areas—and I spoke before about regional areas. They will certainly have a focus on what is happening in regional parts.

In closing, whilst we support the bill, I have a lot of reservations about the money situation. When it comes down to it, there are no key performance indicators and there are no targets. I do feel it is like an open cheque and that does concern me greatly.