QUEENSLAND’S TAFE chief has quit abruptly after the public provider was sidelined from a review to determine the future of the state’s vocational education and training system.

Deb Daly, who had intended to finish up at the end of the year, brought her resignation forward six months after being left off the Skills and Training Taskforce announced last week.

Ms Daly, who finishes up today as head of the Education Department’s training and tertiary education division, had clearly expected to be included on the taskforce.

“I had planned to make my work with the taskforce my last contribution to a sector that I feel truly passionate about,” she said in a message to staff this week.

“Reading the writing on the wall, I can see that the government is looking in other directions for a way forward for the VET sector that may not involve the department as much as I had originally thought.”

The 12-person taskforce includes two private college representatives but none from TAFE. The only public education representative is department head Julie Grantham who has no direct vocational training experience.

Training Minister John-Paul Langbroek said the terms of reference included TAFE reform, and that including TAFE representatives would have created a conflict of interest.
This didn’t apply to private colleges because they weren’t “explicitly the subject of the terms of reference”, his spokeswoman said.

According to the terms of reference, the taskforce’s role is to advise the government on “the actions needed to improve the operations and outcomes of Queensland’s VET sector”.

The industry-dominated taskforce features appointees from seven employers' groups including the peak bodies for mining, tourism, housing, retail and horticulture. Ms Daly said the government had sent a clear message about its intended “solution for the VET sector”.

“Right across all levels of government in Australia we have been trying to solve the same problems, by asking the same sorts of questions of the same sort of people over and over again,” she said.

“Our state government has decided that this time they are going to look elsewhere for the answers. Industry will play a major role in the reformation and revamping of the Queensland VET sector this time around, with the department playing a support role at the side.

“My view is that this is not a bad thing.”

Ms Daly declined to discuss her resignation with the HES, saying her message had been intended for staff only.

A former board chair of TAFE Directors Australia, Ms Daly has 22 years' experience in vocational training and is well regarded in the sector.

Michael Thomas, industrial services director with the Queensland public sector union “Together”, said she would be a loss.

“She was happy to play a part in a review … but didn’t want to spend her last six months sitting on the sidelines,” he said.

Mr Thomas said she wouldn’t be the only TAFE employee leaving today, claiming hundreds of teachers and back-room staff would be among thousands of public servants expected to lose their jobs.

Premier Campbell Newman, who last week said the state had “20,000 more public servants than the people of Queensland can currently afford”, has so far honoured a pre-election commitment to avoid forced redundancies. But the commitment doesn’t extend to temporary staff, many of whose contracts expire at the end of the financial year.

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