



Speech by

Mr R. QUINN

MEMBER FOR MERRIMAC

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UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST BILL

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.37 p.m.): The coalition has great pleasure in supporting the passage of the University of the Sunshine Coast Bill 1998. As the responsible Minister some years ago, I well remember the process that we put in place to move the college, as it was then named, to full university status. I will not go through the events of that time. Suffice it to say that there were a number of quite forthright and candid conversations between me and various members of Parliament who represent the community on the north coast, various community leaders and members of the university. At their request, and because I felt it was an appropriate time, I put in place the expert panel that carried out the review of the university and decided that it had all of the characteristics of a university. Subject to Federal Government funding guarantees, it recommended that it be moved to full university status. I am pleased to say that, after some negotiations with the Commonwealth, that has occurred. The Commonwealth has agreed to the funding guarantees, and the Bill we see before us now is the end product of those processes that were put in place.

As I said, the coalition is pleased to see the Sunshine Coast University come of age and achieve university status in its own right. I am quite sure that it will continue to provide high-quality education for students on the Sunshine Coast and those from other parts of Queensland and Australia in the foreseeable future. It has had an exciting period of growth, moving from an initial enrolment of some 500 students to, as I understand it, over 2,000 now. As it is in a growth area of Queensland, its future is assured.

The move to full university status was I think in part driven by the recognition that it needed the title "university" in its own right in order to compete more equitably and fairly in what is becoming more of an export-oriented business these days, and because of the need to attract foreign overseas students on a full fee paying basis, as well as local students. The title "university college" was somewhat of a handicap. I know that all of the community on the Sunshine Coast fully supports the move to remove the title of "college" and give it full university status. With those few words, the coalition supports the Bill and wishes the University of the Sunshine Coast all the best for the future.
