



Speech by

**Mr R. QUINN**

**MEMBER FOR MERRIMAC**

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Hansard 9 November 1999

### **APEC TECHNOMART**

**Mr QUINN** (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.45 p.m.): Tonight the Premier entered this debate claiming that he moved to protect the reputation of the State by putting in place a venture capital seminar in the dying days of Technomart. To our side of the House, that is too little, too late. The Government should have known months ago that Technomart was in trouble. If we look at the Deputy Premier's ministerial statement from this morning, we see that the Government knew months ago that it was in trouble. The Deputy Premier stated—

"By mid August, however, Queensland Government officials had begun to develop some concerns about the level of delegates that seemingly were registered."

He went on to state—

"Mr Carroll wrote directly to the Event Chairman of PacRim ... requiring advice on confirmed delegates and anticipated numbers."

The correspondence was never answered. Apparently, that is where it ended. They got no answer and they did not bother to follow it up. It should have come as no surprise to this Government that very few delegates were registered by August. The reason was that the registration forms were not sent out until the end of September. On 23 September I received a registration form at my office. I suspect that every other member of Parliament got one as well. That was confirmed by a Computer World release which states—

"The registration brochures were only distributed overseas six weeks ago which is lunacy, they should have been sent six months ago..."

If honourable members look for the reason why there were only a handful of registrations in August when these problems became apparent, they will see that it is because the registration forms were not sent out until six weeks before Technomart was due to start. An international conference cannot be run on the basis of six weeks' notice. How do international delegates arrange their timetable? How do they arrange their air travel over here and book their accommodation within six weeks? That cannot be done. By August the Government had had plenty of opportunity to get this thing right, before the registrations went out. It knew they were in trouble, but it ploughed on. The Computer World release goes on to state—

"According to an experienced conference organizer, it should have been obvious at least a month ago that delegate numbers would not meet expectations and the event should have been scaled back at that stage."

This Government could have done any number of things to avoid the international embarrassment that not only the State but also the other major sponsors have had to suffer. For example, I cite the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University and Bond University. All of them put their names to this event. The damage done to them overseas has been incalculable. Those universities were depending on Technomart to enhance their reputation overseas. How do they look? We just heard the member for Burnett say that over the past 12 months international student numbers at our universities have fallen off. So they have. As a result of this, we should not be surprised if they again fall off. This has been a shambles. Around the world our

universities have had their names tagged to this event. Attracting overseas students is a \$500m industry.

**Mr Veivers:** They don't like it.

**Mr QUINN:** They do not like it.

Not only are the international reputations of the universities being affected, but what about all our children who are in universities now taking IT related courses? They were depending upon this sort of future growth in our economy to provide jobs for them. Where will they go in the future? Because of this debacle, there is no chance for increased jobs in the IT sector. Members should look at the program; not only did it go into the IT sector, it went into every other discipline. It refers to medical, health and biotechnology; agriculture and food processing; advanced manufacturing; aerospace; aviation; defence; earth science; environment and marine; computer science; IT communication; and multimedia, TV and film. Just about every industry has been influenced by this debacle. This was an international disgrace.

Time expired.

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