



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
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Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: Last month, I travelled to Singapore to undertake a range of activities for the purpose of raising the profile of Education Queensland, demonstrating the Government's interest in this area and specifically supporting Queensland universities maintaining and developing their enterprise of maximising international student numbers. Singapore is Queensland's second largest source of international students and its largest source of students who travel to Australia to study. In 1998, 2,043 Singapore students chose to study in Queensland. This represents an Australian market share of about 14.5%.

The role of Government in regulating the operations of our institutions of higher education is highly regarded in many of our overseas markets, giving as it does an assurance of both stability and a level of quality assurance to incoming students. For this reason, Government involvement in, and support for, university activities offshore is regarded by our universities as a very significant contribution to their marketing activities and to the task of building their standing in market countries.

The Queensland University of Technology and the University of Queensland were appreciative of the participation and planned a program of meetings for the benefit of the higher education sector. Meetings were held with my counterpart in the Singapore Government, Minister Teo Chee Hean, and the Singapore Minister for Manpower, Mr Lee Boon Yang—

Mr Hamill: He is a good man.

Mr WELLS: Yes, he is a good man, as the Honourable the Treasurer says. Indeed, he is a graduate of the University of Queensland. Meetings were held with those two Ministers and the vice-chancellors and principals of Singapore's major universities, polytechnics and junior colleges.

Queensland places a high value on international education. The presence of international students in Queensland offers many short and long-term benefits to the State. It is vital that the Australian graduates of the future see themselves as part of the global community. Interaction with students from other cultures, and especially in our region, builds friendships, develops outward looking professionals for the future and helps develop an export culture in our own community. At the same time, the presence of international students represents a major export earner for Queensland, in the region of \$275m for higher education students alone and around \$500m for all sectors of education.

My discussions with both the Singapore Minister for Education, Teo Chee Hean, and the Minister for Manpower, Lee Boon Yang, focused on opportunities for future cooperation in work force and skills development, research and scholarship, and staff exchanges. Advice from the universities is emphatic that the increased profile achieved by our universities from such visits is translated directly into increased student enrolments. The promotion of education overseas is a highly competitive business and one in which other State Governments are actively involved. This is an area where the State can provide genuine support to the efforts of our institutions.

Later on this morning, I will be hosting a small gathering of international university students at Parliament House. They will be guests of this Parliament, and I invite honourable members to attend. I also table my report.