



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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CAIRNS INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (12.18 p.m.): I rise to draw members' attention to an important event for Cairns that will take place on Tuesday, 31 August. This is the official launch of the Cairns International University. This is an opportunity for Cairns that will prove very significant as the years pass. It will result in the further expansion of education services in the region of far-north Queensland. Although that will be particularly beneficial to young and older students who live in the region, the particular significance of the international university is the fillip that it will give to opportunities for overseas students to study in Cairns.

Overseas students have been coming to Cairns for a long time. It has been quite common for high school students from Papua New Guinea to move to Cairns for the extras in educational opportunity that our Australian system offers. Those students have attended mostly private schools in the area, although some have attended public high schools.

Over the past five years in particular, tertiary opportunities for overseas students have expanded, particularly in the area of English language studies. It is said that on most nights there will be approximately 400 overseas students in Cairns. They come for intensive courses—some three months, some six months, some longer—in the English language and, of course, to enjoy many of the other benefits of far-north Queensland. They contribute in many important ways to Cairns, particularly through their multicultural contributions. It is one of the idiosyncrasies of Cairns these days that, as one drives around the city streets, one will see students of all shapes, sizes and skin colours and hear all kinds of accents. Of course, most of those students will be using bicycles to get around the city. The students are a welcome addition to the population of Cairns. Many overseas students move away from the English language schools and take advantage of home-stay programs. They stay with local families to learn a little bit more about the Australian way of life. They also contribute financially to the city. Particularly through this area of educational tourism, we have an opportunity to diversify the economy.

The expansion of the export of education in Cairns is in large part thanks to the cluster of both private and public education providers that have recognised that, by joining together, they can strategically increase the opportunities for each of their businesses and for all of us in Cairns. Their joint marketing endeavours are already proving successful for Cairns and for their businesses. The opportunity provided by the establishment of the Cairns International University to extend the types of courses available, the kinds of study and even the length of study that overseas students can undertake in Cairns will indeed be a boon.

Why should students from the great cities and fine countries around the world come to Cairns to study? They come for the things that many of us throughout Queensland take for granted. They come for the safe city that Cairns is. They come for the fresh air and the clean water that we do take for granted. They come for the spectacularly beautiful environment and the good living that we have. Cairns also has the advantage of being easily accessible through the international airport. And let us not forget that we have a high quality education product in the area.

All of this does not come about in five minutes. I am pleased to give recognition to the Department of State Development and its earlier version, the Department of Tourism, Small Business and Industry. Some five or six years ago, the department, through the Minister Jim Elder, undertook a feasibility study into international university level education in Cairns. As a member of the Cairns City Council, I happened to be present at the release of the feasibility study. I give recognition to Bill

Cummings, one of the local business identities who was and is still involved with the Cairns International University project and who realised this tremendous opportunity for Cairns. Unfortunately, however, the study fell on relatively deaf ears. When I left that meeting, I walked behind several professors from James Cook University who were shaking their heads and saying, "It will never work." We are indeed on the threshold of proving those particular professors wrong.

A considerable number of events have occurred during the past five or six years. In fact, James Cook University Cairns Campus has gone ahead in leaps and bounds, particularly in the provision of undergraduate studies, developing particular expertise in politics and psychology, and also in the research and environmental fields. The Rainforest Cooperative Research Centre is already well on the way to being recognised as a world leader in rainforest research. I give particular recognition to Professor Nigel Stork, who leads the unit, and also to a member of this honourable House, Lesley Clark, the member for Barron River. Lesley Clark was a lecturer at the university and a member of the university council and is now the university's local member of Parliament. She is a continuing and committed supporter of James Cook University. With Cairns International University, we have the opportunity to complement that level of tertiary education to provide different kinds of courses such as short courses and graduate courses for overseas students.

It has been hard to get to this point. Of course, it is the establishment phase of a project that is the most difficult and needs its champions. Therefore, my salute goes to the chairman and directors of Cairns International University for their efforts, and the time that they have put in, and for all those involved in the raising of the money that has underwritten this private sector initiative. I am a fan of private as well as public education. By working together, we optimise opportunities for all Australians and we increase our opportunities to do business with overseas students.

I am proud to say that the Beattie Government is a part of this launch. Through the Deputy Premier, Jim Elder, and the Department of State Development, land in the City of Cairns has been reserved for a year to allow the Cairns International University to really get off the ground as, indeed, we all hope that it will. Other considerable benefits will flow to Cairns from this project. Having a university right in the centre of the city will contribute to one of my favourite projects, the revitalisation of the Cairns City centre. One important theme of the revitalisation program is increasing residential opportunities in the city. Therefore, having so many students in the city will not only increase the ordinary business of the city but will also contribute to a diversification of the residential base and an increase in the overall number of people living in the city.

There will be considerable multiplier effects flowing from the benefits that the university will bring to Cairns and the regional economy. It will offer additional opportunities in other areas of competitive advantage for Cairns. Through providing courses in areas such as information technology and tropical health, we will be working together to expand the regional economic development diversification project that is an essential tenet of the directions for the future of Cairns.

The aim of this proposal is to eventually cater for 3,000 students at the Cairns International University, provide on-site accommodation for up to 300 students, provide employment opportunities for up to 450 staff and reflect an \$83m investment in Cairns. It is a promotion of private education, it is a promotion of the diversification of the economic base, it is a promotion of Cairns and it is a great way of bringing Cairns to the attention of people around the world. I hope that as the years pass we will, indeed, become known as "Cairns, that university town in the north."
