



Speech by

**Mr DOUG SLACK**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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Hansard 21 July 1999

### **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NUMBERS**

**Mr SLACK** (Burnett—NPA) (10.26 a.m.): When the coalition Government came to power it identified a lucrative industry which had the potential to yield more annual income for the State than our wheat exports. It did not rely on fickle commodity prices or high rainfall periods. It took advantage of existing world-class facilities as well as our State's natural lifestyle attributes. I am referring to our education export industry which, in 1995, represented only 15% of the national share of the market.

The previous coalition Government launched an aggressive marketing campaign which spread the name of Queensland as Australia's premier education destination over the Internet, at world expos, at ministerial trade missions and in the form of glossy publications. By the time the coalition left office, international student numbers had almost doubled from 13,000 to 25,000. This represented an increase of over 17% of the national market and contributed some \$500m to the economy in 1997.

The onset of the Asian downturn did little to deter the department or the newly formed International Education Advisory Board from the stated target of achieving 20% of Australia's education market by the year 2000. They recognised that diversification efforts were bearing fruit and that many Asian families would turn away from traditional but relatively expensive American and English institutions in favour of the Australian education market. This trend was borne out in ABS figures in the 1998 year. Those figures show that Australia's percentage of international students continued to grow significantly last year.

Unfortunately, Queensland's student numbers stagnated. There is little to be gained by blaming the Pauline Hanson factor since the damage overseas was shared equally by all Australian States. All Australian States had to contend with that factor. There is, however, good reason to ask why key personnel have been diverted away from the overseas students campaign in the office of State Development and Trade at this most crucial time. What is this Government prepared to do to regain the momentum?

Time expired.

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