



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

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UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND; GATTON COLLEGE

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries) (6.19 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to second the amendment moved by the Minister for Education. The Gatton college, formerly the Queensland Agricultural College, has established an enviable record as an education institution over more than a century. I strongly endorse the amendment moved by the Minister for Education. I do so because I recognise the importance of Gatton college not only to the local communities but also to agriculture.

The local communities want an unequivocal commitment from the university to Gatton college. They deserve that commitment. It must be a clear commitment. The absence of a clear commitment from the university has caused unnecessary uncertainty in Gatton and the surrounding areas. It is a matter about which I have spoken at length with the Mayors of Gatton, Councillor Bernie Sutton; Laidley, Councillor Shirley Pitt; and Esk, Councillor Jean Bray. I have also spoken to the member for Lockyer about this and, of course, with the University of Queensland, in particular the Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Hay.

I make no apologies for the fact that I am a strong advocate of Gatton college. I believe that the University of Queensland must commit itself to developing the college as a centre of excellence for food and fibre production. My department already has developed a number of partnerships with the university in this regard. I will return to these partnerships later. The decision regarding future activities is a matter for the University of Queensland. That is why I am seconding this amendment and that is why I believe all members of this House should support it.

Earlier this year the Department of Primary Industries and the University of Queensland released for public comment a report on a Queensland animal health institute concept. Stakeholders were advised at that time that there was in-principle agreement that the proposed Queensland animal health institute be located across three sites: at Gatton, Toowoomba and St Lucia. The stakeholders were also advised that the proposed joint venture was between the University of Queensland and the Department of Primary Industries, with CSIRO invited to join either as a full partner or on a project by project basis. Submissions received during the public consultation period are being examined. Again, this highlights the need for the University of Queensland to make an unequivocal public commitment to the college.

My Department of Primary Industries has strengthened a number of synergies it has had with Gatton college in recent times. DPI has developed important partnerships with industry and Gatton college, including the Australian Tropical Dairy Institute and the Australasian Pig Institute. The Australasian Pig Institute is a joint venue between the Department of Primary Industries, the University of Queensland and the Queensland Pork Producers Organisation. This partnership positions the institute well to enhance the profitability and sustainability of the pig industry through integrated and focused research, development, education, training and extension.

I would like to briefly refer to the Rangelands Australia proposal, which was unveiled at the international Rangelands conference in Townsville. The Department of Primary Industries has supported this proposal with cash and in-kind support to take the concept to a business plan stage. The concept covers the Northern Territory, South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland, with a central node to be at the Gatton college. The business plan has been recently completed, and I intend to take it and discuss it with the Federal agriculture Minister, Warren Truss, and other State agriculture Ministers at the next ARMCANZ meeting early next month. Therefore, I fully endorse the comments made by the Minister for Education and urge all members in this House to support the amendment.