



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (10.28 a.m.): I wish to speak about the official opening of the Sunshine Coast University last Tuesday night. It was a great night not only for the university but also for the Sunshine Coast specifically and education generally. More than 120 people participated in the academic procession and more than 2,000 people attended.

I have seen this university grow from a concept in a planning committee in 1994 to the current reality and, on Tuesday, celebrating the achievements of the first graduates. Two independent councils have served since 1994, first under Tony Fitzgerald as Chancellor and then under Ian Kennedy, who was installed as Chancellor the other night. The councils have been strongly unified, committed to success and supportive of the directions that have been taken by the university's administration.

I would like to draw particular attention to Professor Paul Thomas, the Vice-Chancellor of the university. Without his driving force it would not have been possible for the university to achieve what it has achieved. I would also like to praise the members of the councils. They are community people from all walks of life and have done a great job. On Tuesday night four doctors were installed at the university as well as many fellows.

Over \$60m has been expended on capital works and operating costs in the first four years. It is a small amount by university sector standards but a significant and increasingly important contribution to our regional economy. The university is clearly emerging as one of the largest employers on the Sunshine Coast with 360 people on the payroll. The university has around 2,700 students in some 30 named degrees in three faculties, from undergraduate to doctoral degree level, and is increasing its international student numbers gradually.

The university has been able to attract new staff with the appeal of a new university as an inducement. The academic qualifications profile is one of the best in the country. A great many staff enjoy the Sunshine Coast as a place to live. The university library won international accolades for its design and for being the best Australian public building in 1997.
