



Speech by

## Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR WARWICK

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Hansard 22 July 1999

### UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND; GATTON COLLEGE

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Warwick—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.43 p.m.): It is my pleasure to rise to support the motion moved by the honourable member for Crows Nest and Opposition Primary Industries shadow Minister with regard to providing support and recognition to the University of Queensland Gatton campus, and also calling on this Parliament to establish an international centre of excellence in agriculture.

I think it is fair to say that each and every member of this Parliament has a deep appreciation of the wonderful job that has been done by the Gatton college over a long period. It is affectionately emblazoned upon the minds and in the hearts of many people throughout Queensland, particularly many people in rural and regional areas, and, I think it is also fair to say, on the minds of many people in the metropolitan areas of Queensland, because many of them have been through that particular institution and have studied there or know somebody who has.

I had the very great pleasure, at a young age, of being selected from the Year 7 class at the Yelarbon State School—and there were not many students in the Year 7 class at the Yelarbon State School—to go to the Gatton college for about a week as part of an immersion process for students from small rural schools. I had the opportunity to appreciate the work which was done there. As a young person who grew up on a farm, I probably thought I knew the practical aspects—and I did—but I had an opportunity to see the theoretical aspects of agriculture, such as crop breeding and animal husbandry, and the way in which those theoretical aspects are transformed into practical aspects in a way in which I had not previously seen them. Emblazoned on my mind is a very deep appreciation of the work that they have done there over a long period.

People are coming to members who represent rural constituencies—such as my colleague the honourable member for Toowoomba South, the Opposition spokesman for Primary Industries and the member for Cunningham—all the time expressing concern about the future of the Gatton campus. People who have been through that college are very, very worried about that. They are calling for clarity and for support for the Gatton college from the legislators of this State.

I recognise that some of those issues are beyond our control, but this evening there is an opportunity for this Parliament to state very clearly and concisely, through the motion moved by the honourable member for Crows Nest, the sorts of things that we can do. There is also the opportunity for vision from the Government about the sorts of things that we could do, as well. When we were in Government we were looking very seriously—and it was at a very advanced stage—at establishing an animal health institute at either Toowoomba or Gatton. That involved the consolidation of the vet lab facilities of the University of Queensland, the CSIRO and the Department of Primary Industries. I think that that would have been a good innovation.

There is also an increasing awareness of and drive towards biotechnology. The State Government has an opportunity to work towards establishing greater opportunities at the Gatton college. Biotechnology, as everyone in this Parliament would appreciate, is where a lot of the future in agriculture lies. There is no doubt about that. We have seen some fairly significant changes in that sector over the past few years, and we are going to see a lot more changes. That has enabled our primary producers to keep in front—even though it is very, very tough—of rising costs and falling

commodity prices. I believe that there is a great opportunity for further innovation and further investment in that sector well into the future.

When in Government, the coalition very clearly stated its intentions and put its credentials on the line when it established the Queensland Centre for Climate Applications in Toowoomba, which complemented what was being done at Indooroopilly. There is a wonderful building out there, and they have some of the world's leading climatologists. They are at the cutting edge.

That is the sort of vision that we in this State can have. The coalition certainly had it. I believe that it behoves all members of this Parliament, particularly members of the Government, to forget about their amendment and to support this very, very positive motion moved by the Opposition tonight, because it expresses very strong support for the Gatton college. It expresses that we should be doing all we possibly can to develop an international centre for excellence there. That is something that we can do practically and viably, and I believe that it deserves the support of all members of this Parliament.

Time expired.

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