



Speech by

**PHIL REEVES**

**MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD**

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Hansard 22 July 1999

**UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND; GATTON COLLEGE**

**Mr REEVES** (Mansfield—ALP) (6.50 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise to support the amendment moved by the Minister for Education regarding Gatton agricultural college. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, Professor John Hay, has publicly reaffirmed the university's commitment to the continued development of Gatton college. In 1989—its last year of operation as an independent college of advanced education—the college had 1,850 students enrolled in its courses. Ten years later, as an integral college of the University of Queensland, the college has 2,800 enrolled students—an increase of more than 50% over the decade. None of these extra students has been funded by the Federal Government. Members opposite should be pushing their Federal counterparts to put their money where their mouths are.

It is the university's desire to enhance the future of Gatton college; it has no intention of closing it down. In these days of declining Commonwealth funding, the university could not permit its numbers to run down to the extent that it becomes an uneconomic activity.

Agriculture, as we used to know it, has changed and has become a more scientific field of study involving a high level of technology. This is not as attractive as it used to be to students whose family background was on the traditional farm. Nevertheless, Gatton college occupies a unique place in the Queensland education system.

Members opposite who were responsible for producing the Queensland coalition press release need to go back to university and study theology. That media statement reads—

"Mr Palaszczuk has joined the Premier and Education Minister Dean Wells in writing off the future of Gatton College and now, just like Judas, is trying to wash his hands of any involvement," Mr Borbidge said."

I think Mr Borbidge should undertake some theology studies because in fact it was Pontius Pilate who washed his hands of the whole affair. I think those opposite need to study the subject a little further and should check their facts if they are going to make such statements.

Nevertheless, there is a whole range of career options open to those with an interest in the new realm of agriculture. It is the plan of the University of Queensland to focus on the attractiveness and employment prospects of this new emphasis.

The University Senate will consider the options paper on the deployment of university resources to the Gatton campus within the next few months. There is an underlying current of support to make good use of the facilities and resources of the college to produce graduates with the skills to benefit regional and rural Queensland. The college has been doing that for years.

The coalition media statement attacks the Beattie Government for calling summits to support compulsory student union membership. Student union membership is of great benefit to Gatton college. Gatton college has had many good sporting teams over the years. I know that it has quite a good Rugby League side. Without student unionism the college would not have the ability to fund the sporting teams which compete with other universities in south-east Queensland.

Gatton college has a proud history. The college will continue to operate under the Beattie Government as long as the Federal Government gets behind the college and supports it. Instead of sending out these media statements, the Opposition should be attacking the Federal Government over its treatment of the university system. The Opposition should be attacking the people who are causing the downgrading of the university system, namely, the members of the Federal Government.