



Speech by

**Mr S. ROBERTSON**

**MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK**

---

Hansard 9 March 1999

**TRANS-TASMAN MUTUAL RECOGNITION (QUEENSLAND) BILL**

**Mr ROBERTSON** (Sunnybank—ALP) (3.09 p.m.): I rise to support the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (Queensland) Bill and some of the statements made by the honourable member for Burnett, in particular his response to the member for Lockyer's disgraceful contribution to this important debate. When I put my name onto the list of speakers for this debate, I noticed that no One Nation members intended to make a contribution. Although we hear a lot of bluster from One Nation members about the reduction in tariff barriers destroying the country, when push came to shove they did not show. Given the contribution of the member for Lockyer, it would probably have been a better option for One Nation not to have put any names onto the speakers list.

Today in this House, in respect of a vitally important issue, we yet again heard a contribution from One Nation without any basis in fact whatsoever. During his contribution, the member for Lockyer admitted that he does not want to know the true position or what the statistics show, because that does not suit One Nation's argument. Statistics can be cited proving that over the past 10 years since the CER was signed exports from Australia to New Zealand have increased by 300% and imports from New Zealand to Australia have increased by 250%. However, One Nation members do not want to know about those facts, because they do not suit their position.

As the member for Burnett said, I do not know how we can achieve a 300% increase in exports and at the same time not generate jobs. That defies logic. For example, I do not know how we can increase exports of motor vehicles manufactured in Australia from a value of \$2,719m in 1986-87 to \$11,300m in 1997-98—a 400% to 500% increase—and not create jobs in our economy. I recommend to the member for Lockyer an interesting quarterly publication by the Australian Bureau of Statistics titled International Merchandise Trade. That publication not only outlines our export and import performance country by country, it also examines and puts a value on every other category of Australian production and exports. The December quarter 1998 edition shows how our export performance has grown dramatically over the past 10 years. However, for its own very narrow and ignorant purposes, One Nation does not wish to talk up the victories and improvements in Australian export performance under both Labor and coalition Governments; it wants to talk us down all the time and tell untruths about the effect of tariff reductions.

**Mrs Lavarch:** They don't understand.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** As my friend the member for Kurwongbah said, they simply do not understand.

However, I do not wish to speak only about One Nation in my allotted time; I wish also to speak about another trade initiative that will prove to be extremely beneficial to Queensland. Entering into trade agreements is only part of the equation in improving Australia's and Queensland's export performance. It also takes imagination by both Government and industry to explore new ways to establish strong trading relationships. To this end, I will mention a new initiative by the Graduate School of Business at QUT, which has the support of Rotary, the Australian Industry Group, the Queensland Confederation of Commerce and Industry and the Department of State Development, to leverage trading opportunities over time from the international students who come to Queensland to study for their MBAs.

QUT recognised that these students, who come from all over the world—India, the South Pacific, China, other parts of Asia, America and Europe—more often than not come from families with significant business interests in their countries of origin. It also recognised that the experience of students while studying in Queensland was overwhelmingly positive. A couple of months ago, one of the lecturers at the QUT School of Business, Mr Ken Gilbert, approached me with the idea of placing these students with Queensland industry as a means to gain practical experience and establish contacts and partnerships which could be developed further when these students returned home. With the help of the Department of State Development this pilot scheme, although still in its infancy, can provide an additional means to promote Queensland overseas and create new trading opportunities.

I wish to read into Hansard a letter that I received from one of those students who comes from India. He was speaking about the value of this initiative, as he saw it, in establishing a closer trading relationship between his family's company in India and Queensland companies. He states—

"We thank you all for the concern shown, and for giving us the platform to present our products and ourselves. We have representatives in the areas of Textiles, Plastics and chemicals, Food Industry, Handicrafts, Minerals, Electronic goods. We have reasons to show that we are interested in building constructive trade relationship with Australia."

He goes on to speak about his interests in developing trade relationships with Queensland. Of his family's company, he states—

"... we have representatives who have their own manufacturing base in India, as also we have agents as representatives for Indian firms, it would be easier to negotiate and have face-to-face communication"—

as a result of coming to Queensland to study for his MBA. Yes, he is talking about exporting goods from India to Australia, but that is the nature of trade. Trade cannot be one way. If we want to expand our trade horizons, we have to expect that potential trading partners will want to do the same. I know it comes as a surprise to One Nation, but that is how trade works. He then stated—

"Some of us are interested to promote Australian products in India because of the superior quality or better technology, especially to cater to the needs of growing discerning customer profile."

He is obviously talking about the emerging middle class in India. He goes on to speak about some specific opportunities. These opportunities arise from the fact that this young man is studying an MBA at QUT. His family owns businesses in India and, interestingly enough, they also speak English. I appreciate that the fact that they may not speak English was a difficulty that One Nation expressed earlier in respect of closer economic ties. However, when he was talking about the land of the stranded diphthong, I perhaps was with him for a while.

The way forward for Australia is to pursue this initiative and use our contacts at whatever level and supplement them with international trade agreements. There is no other option. We cannot put up the walls again and hope that the rest of the world will go away. It does not work that way, and not one job will be created by taking the path that One Nation suggested today.

---