



Speech by

Tony ELLIOTT

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND; GATTON COLLEGE

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (6.33 p.m.): It gives me much pleasure to rise in support of the motion moved in relation to the establishment of an international centre of excellence in agriculture at Gatton college. I have had a lot to do with Gatton college over the years. Before I came to this place I played in the A-grade Rugby Union competition on the Darling Downs. I had a lot to do with a lot of the students at Gatton college. I am very well aware of their tremendous fears and concerns. Those on the other side of the House are thinking of undermining a wonderful historical campus at Gatton.

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr ELLIOTT: They are very negative. I am surprised at their negativity because, quite frankly, we all should be working together to ensure that Gatton can be what it should be. I put to members opposite there is no other relevant site anywhere in Queensland that is suitable in the way that Gatton is. Where else could we find 2,000-plus acres of magnificent agricultural soils with the sandstone ridges that it has to build on? It has excellent areas for building. It has wonderful soils. It has all the facilities we could possibly want in order to run a facility such as this.

Quite frankly, a lot of this comes down to jealousy. Gatton college is older than the University of Queensland. It has had its centenary. Obviously there are a lot of people at the university who feel threatened by the Gatton college history. I think we should put all of that aside and just look at what is there and what could be there in the future. Surely we are all here to ensure the continued viability of Gatton as a campus and a potential centre of excellence.

I am amazed that the Minister for Education would get up here and carry on in the way that he has. I know that the Minister for Primary Industries does not share his vindictive attitude. All those people who do have a positive attitude towards this project should be working together to ensure that these facilities are brought to fruition.

We are talking about some \$30m to upgrade the facilities at Gatton. Surely it is not beyond us to put pressure on the Federal Government and to work with the State Government and with the campus through its board, college council and so on. That is just a starting point. The college has the potential to be anything anyone could want it to be.

I turn to the suggestion that this site and this college do not have sufficient animals. They have a massive number of their own animals there. They have the ability to run large numbers of animals there for the purposes of veterinary students.

Mr Palaszcuk: The big animals are west of Toowoomba.

Mr ELLIOTT: Yes, but that is no distance away. People only have to go on top of the range. There are a whole lot of studs on either side of the Lockyer Valley. There are studs up on top of the range. There are so many horses. At the top of the downs is probably the largest conglomeration of horse studs and horse numbers just about anywhere in Australia. It is an absolute nonsense to suggest that those numbers are not within reasonable distance of Gatton. I suggest to those people who are concerned and who do not want to go and work at Gatton because they are able to commute easily to the university facilities—

Mr Hayward: You have hit it on the head.

Mr ELLIOTT: I think I have hit it on the head, as the member said. I suggest that it is not too far for people to drive. There are large numbers of people who travel from Toowoomba to Gatton. Quite frankly, if you live within striking distance of the University of Queensland it is not much further to drive back to Gatton. I am sure that in time we will see the advent of the rail extension all the way to Gatton.

People will be able to take an electric train to Gatton. Surely it is not much to ask those people to be prepared to go to Gatton and to work there. I urge support from everyone in this Chamber tonight to ensure that Gatton sees the establishment of this centre of excellence.

Time expired.
