



Speech by

**Hon. D. WELLS**

**MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA**

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Hansard 18 May 2000

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Education Delegation to China and Malaysia**

**Hon. D. M. WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.56 a.m.), by leave: On Monday, 17 April I attended a reception in Brisbane given by the Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak, the Honourable Datuk Amar Dr George Chan. The purpose of the reception was to promote a conference of the alumni of Australian universities to be held in Sarawak from 24 to 27 August 2000.

During the course of his speech at the reception, Dr Chan mentioned that more than half of his Cabinet were educated in Australia. He said that, whatever might be said or done in the future at the level of international relations, those educational links built very deep ties of trust and understanding between our nations that nothing could change.

This, better than anything else I can think of, illustrates the value of international education. It is true that dollars are important, but the ties of friendship and the moral influence for our nation which is generated by our international education program are of incalculable value. Those who undertake part of their education here develop individual friendships, an understanding of our culture and an empathy for our people that nothing could match.

It is in this context that I report to the House on a recent education delegation to the People's Republic of China and to Malaysia. The importance of this visit to the education sector was marked by a strong presence from representatives from the Queensland higher education sector on the delegation.

Representatives of the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University, the University of Southern Queensland and the Central Queensland University took part in the delegation. The Sunshine Coast University also had a presence via an Internet link. Two representatives of my own department, one representing the higher education sector and the other representing schools, also travelled with me.

This Government places a high value on international education, as it brings many short and long-term benefits to the State. It is vital that Australian graduates of the future see themselves as part of the global community. Interaction with students from other cultures, especially in our region, builds friendships, develops outward looking professionals for the future and helps develop an export culture in its own community.

According to recent figures, the State of Queensland gets great value from the sale of education places to international students. The money they spend while they are in Queensland injects around \$500m and 5,000 jobs into the State's economy every year.

Each of the university representatives travelling with me made tangible agreements with Chinese authorities. Further details of these will be announced as they come on line. During the trip I witnessed the signing of an articulation agreement between Nanjing Polytechnic College and QUT. Agreements were reached between QUT and Tongji and Jiaotong University to cover joint postgraduate degrees. There are also agreements between the University of Queensland and Jiaotong to offer postgraduate degrees.

Other universities made key links that will very likely develop into joint programs or other such formalised links. China offers Queensland a rich and relatively untapped educational export market. It is the world's largest export education market, with 53,000 students studying abroad in 1998 and very

significant in-country potential. Australia's market share in 1998 was 4.3% and has tremendous growth potential, particularly in the area of cooperative research projects.

Malaysia is the most important market for both Australian and Queensland education providers, with over 15,660 students studying in Australia in 1998, of whom 5,345 were in Queensland, predominantly in higher education. As with China, Malaysia's export education sector has enormous growth potential.

I lay on the table of the House a fuller report of my work in China. I would also like to take the opportunity to invite honourable members to attend a picnic lunch today.

**Mr Palaszczuk:** Teddy bears?

**Mr WELLS:** No. I have arranged for international students studying at universities in Queensland to visit Parliament House for a picnic lunch. I invite honourable members to join me and those fine young students on the lawns of Parliament House.

**Mr Borbidge:** Is the Minister for Public Works going?

**Mr WELLS:** Even the Leader of the Opposition might find that somebody from his electorate who is a guest in this country is visiting Parliament House today.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Before calling the Minister, I acknowledge in the public gallery parents, teachers and students of the Acacia Ridge State School in the electorate of Archerfield.

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