



Speech by

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BOEING ENTERPRISES; STAY-GREEN SORGHUM; UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (12.13 p.m.): I would like to speak about three topics of importance to Toowoomba and the Downs: the Boeing Enterprises USQ connection, stay-green sorghum, and USQ's Hong Kong campus. Each of the Darling Downs' leading traditional and non-traditional industries will reap huge benefits from two major partnerships that have been forged recently by the Beattie government. Recently in Seattle, the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy, Paul Lucas, met with the commercial arm of Boeing Enterprises. The aviation giant has expressed a keen interest in working with Queensland and in particular Toowoomba's USQ to further fibre composite development. Darling Downs' farmers are also set to benefit from a recently signed agreement between the Queensland government and three United States universities that are pioneering the development of stay-green drought resistant sorghum. I will outline briefly to the House both of these partnerships and the benefits that the Darling Downs and other areas of Queensland will reap as a consequence of this government's initiative.

Minister Lucas's meeting with Boeing holds huge potential for the Darling Downs' latest and most exciting non-traditional industry. Boeing Enterprises uses fibre composite in the wingtips of its latest aircraft. It is wanting to expand its market. It heard about the work that USQ and Wagners and others are doing with fibre composites, namely their fibre composite bridge, and it is keen to learn more. In common with USQ and Wagners, Boeing has considerable experience with fibre composites, and I am sure that the three parties would learn a great deal from each other from the collaboration of research and ideas.

It is aware of the Beattie government's \$10 million investment into the fibre composite centre of excellence at USQ and it is interested in different applications of fibre composite in civil construction. Therefore, clearly, even before our centre of excellence has been built, Toowoomba is being recognised as a leader in the field of fibre composite technology.

Mr Lucas: It is nice to see a positive member on the Darling Downs.

Mr SHINE: I take that interjection. Not only is our region's reputation growing but so, too, is the potential of this industry. That means that in the long term we are creating more job opportunities in this region and investing more in our local economy.

One of the Darling Downs' more traditional industries, sorghum growing, should also be preparing to reap the benefits of a research partnership between the Beattie government and US universities to develop drought-resistant sorghum. A \$2 million research program will investigate ways of making sorghum drought resistant through determining and testing gene function. It is a partnership between the Beattie government's DPI Agency for Food and Fibre Sciences at Warwick's Hermitage Research Station and the Texas Tech University, the Texas A&M University and the University of Missouri.

This research has huge potential for our region and could alleviate a great deal of economic and emotional heartache that has developed over the last drought-stricken decade. The estimated annual economic benefit of stay-green sorghum would be about \$34 million in the Queensland and New South Wales grain belts. The technology could also lead to a yield increase of 10 per cent and enable more agricultural land to be sown.

This is a really wonderful example of the Smart State philosophy. We are not going to let drought drive our farmers off their farms. Rather, we are adapting to the environment looking for new, innovative solutions to solve the problem of drought in our region. The potential for this revolutionary research to extend beyond sorghum and into other cultural industries such as rice, wheat and corn is very promising. The DPI will contribute \$1 million to the program with the Grains Research and Development Corporation contributing \$300,000 and external partners providing \$700,000. I congratulate the government on both of these partnerships. They hold the potential to create hundreds of jobs, give regional Queensland the boost that it desperately needs, and will contribute significantly to the spreading of the Smart State philosophy.

Smart State education is reaching further than ever before, thanks to the ingenuity of educational institutions and the strong commitment of this government. Our most recent example of this happened early last month when the Premier officially opened a new entry point for Toowoomba's University of Southern Queensland in Hong Kong. The new entry point will be a joint information centre that will operate with locally based Times College. The significance of this information centre is simple. It will allow the university to offer its university preparation program to more than 2,000 Times College students, who will then be able to apply to enrol with the university. That means that students will have the opportunity to study all of their USQ degree in Hong Kong, part of their degree in Hong Kong and part in Australia, or all of their degree in Australia. This wonderful partnership means more export dollars for Australia and more jobs for Queenslanders as a result of this push to export our education services.

The influx of international students into Queensland is overwhelming. About 17,000 foreign students come to study in Queensland every year. The entry point that USQ has established in Hong Kong will go a long way to increasing this figure—a goal that I know both USQ and the government share as part of the Smart State strategy. Some of the other projects that USQ is undertaking in Hong Kong to retain its firm hold over the region's students wanting to study in Queensland include a sister school relationship with a local high school.

Time expired.