



Speech by

KERRY SHINE

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (12.10 p.m.): I wish to raise the valuable contribution of the Darling Downs' own university, situated in Toowoomba, the USQ, towards the government attaining its goal of Queensland becoming the Smart State. This state government has always recognised the integral part played by its universities in that endeavour. I noted that the Premier was reported in the *Courier-Mail* as saying that universities were a crucial element in delivering a Smart State and said that the government had committed more than \$94 million to capital works projects at Queensland's eight publicly funded universities since 1998.

We have ensured that there is a strong bias within that funding towards projects that add value to our Smart State agenda. I believe that an important aspect of the USQ's success in marketing itself, particularly in South-East Asia, is Queensland's multiculturalism. Anyone here who heard or has read the maiden speech of the honourable member for Capalaba knows what is meant by multiculturalism. Students who come here feel welcome. The Premier has described that as one of this state's great strengths.

Australia earns considerable foreign currency as a result of the export of the USQ's courses: 13,000 students of the USQ are off campus studying by distance learning, including 3,000 offshore; 5,000 students study on campus, of whom 900 are international students from 40 nations. Part of the university's success in gaining widespread overseas support is the recognition that the university provides one of Australia's most progressive university preparations and degree programs for international students. Courses are offered in the following faculties: arts, business, commerce, education, engineering, surveying and science in levels from certificate and associate degree to masters and doctorate.

Recent attainments of the USQ include the joint winner of the *Good Universities Guide's*, Australia's University of the Year 2000-01 for demonstrating leadership in developing the e-university; winner in the organisational category, Queensland Government Multicultural Studies Award, and in 1999, inaugural winner of the Award for Excellence as a leading dual mode university, that is, students can study on campus or through distance programs, or a mix of both, in the world by UNESCO's International Council for Open and Distance Education.

This university's importance to the city of Toowoomba and the region of the Darling Downs, Lockyer and South Burnett is immense. Its presence not only promotes the opportunity for those people who live in that area to attend it, and thus enjoy the advantage of, in a very real sense, being part of the Smart State but also its annual economic injection into the region's economy is in excess of \$114 million a year with a multiplier of about 1.8. From a statewide perspective, Queensland's universities earned more than \$275 million in export revenue.

Despite all of the university's accomplishments, of which I have mentioned only a few, and notwithstanding its economic value to the Toowoomba region and the state, the USQ receives the lowest public funding per equivalent full-time students of all the non-private Australian universities. The Commonwealth government gives it an operating grant of about \$69 million, but that includes about \$23 million contributed by students through their HECS payments. Therefore, the USQ gets less than 45 per cent of its resources from the Commonwealth. This is promoted by the federal coalition as increasing self-reliance.

This situation causes the USQ to look elsewhere for necessary funds, at least while the Howard government remains in power. The Beattie government has been most supportive of the USQ: capital works, as I mentioned at the outset; rural nursing; and land use studies. I know that the university hopes that its world leadership in fibre composites design and development will soon be recognised. I know that the USQ praises the Beattie government's Smart State initiatives and offers encouragement and a way forward for this government to better utilise the university sector as an engine room for the better.

Time expired.
