



Speech by

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Hansard 30 July 2002

EDUCATION AND TRAINING, SUNSHINE COAST

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (12.23 p.m.): On Thursday, 11 July this year I attended the Sunshine Coast Schools Industry Links Scheme. In the next 10 to 15 years, the Sunshine Coast region will increase in population to approximately 480,000 people, or close to half a million people. We must realise that education is an industry and that it means jobs. Given the implications of this growth in population, we as a community must assess what we need to do to ensure that we grow in the ways that we want to grow and to which we aspire, to enrich our community to become not only a Smart State but, indeed, a smart community.

Much was discussed at that gathering, including how we can develop an inclusive learning economy for the Sunshine Coast, the new exports and resources that will add value so that the Sunshine Coast region prospers, and what relationships and partnerships need to be fostered in order to achieve a dynamic learning community, a Smart State and, indeed, an educational node, which does exist on the Sunshine Coast within my electorate of Kawana.

I commend both the Minister for Education and the Treasurer—who are present in the House—for the foresight they have shown in creating a clean and green industry on the Sunshine Coast—education! Sponsors for the Building Learning Communities on the Sunshine Coast include the local Maroochy council, the University of the Sunshine Coast—situated in my electorate—the Queensland government through Education Queensland and the Department of State Development, and the Kawana Waters State High School.

I am proud to represent the Kawana Waters State High School. For some time now I have been very interested in the international program in our state high schools, of which Kawana Waters State High School is an active participant. International students generate a vital income for our community. However, they are extremely beneficial for a number of other reasons, including the fact that mixing with overseas students breaks down a lot of barriers not only in the community of students but in the general community in which we live—our society in general.

When I was five years old I was lucky to begin my education in Penang, Malaysia, as my father was transferred overseas. To live in another country and attend school there is not only beneficial but very eye-opening. The principal of Kawana Waters State High School, Jo House, her staff and the students should be applauded for welcoming overseas students from the Shandong Province in China, as well as from other countries around the world, including South America.

While singing the praises of Kawana Waters State High School, I will also mention the constitutional convention held on 1 March. The Kawana Waters State High School coordinated a one-day Queensland schools constitutional convention for the north coast zone, including all schools, both public and private, from Clontarf in the south to Bundaberg in the north. A series of zone conventions occurred across Queensland to facilitate the selection of 20 delegates, who attended the national schools constitutional convention in Canberra. One of the keynote speakers was the Minister for Education, and I commend her for her attendance, which was very much appreciated. Other keynote speakers included Dr Brian Hoepper, a lecturer in professional studies at QUT, and Professor Pat Weller from Griffith University.

I will table the program for the convention that outlines the number of students in attendance. I will also table a speech from the Mountain Creek State High School representative, Trenton Ebner, who is also the outgoing school captain. The Mountain Creek State High School changes its school captain halfway through the year so that the seniors can concentrate on their study for the remaining six months. I will also table the Kawana Waters State High School district showcase winners, including the very proud district winners of the showcase 2002 awards for excellence. The school also boasts some great sporting achievers, including Chris Flannery, a former student and now a well-recognised State of Origin player for the future.

The forum on education and training reforms was recently held at the Mountain Creek State High School at Lady Musgrave Drive, Mountain Creek on Thursday, 18 July. Matters discussed included the paper on proposals to make senior school fit better with further education, training and work, including the option of raising the school leaving age to 16 or 17 years of age; trials in 50 schools of a full-time preparatory year for children before they enter grade 1, with 30 starting in 2003 and 20 starting in 2004; and, a greater long-term investment in information and communication technologies, including 3,000 computers, faster replacement of old computers and more teachers.

All sessions were well attended, and there was some great input from the students at sessions which I attended. I also commend and appreciate the parliamentary secretary, Neil Roberts, for attending on the day. As we all realise, our future in education is a vital one. We are approaching the largest reforms that we have seen in 40 years. Change is not necessarily better simply for change's sake, but when we change we must change for the better.

Time expired.