



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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EDUCATION [MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS] BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (4.04 p.m.): The Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2002 amends 11 acts relating to different areas of the Queensland Education portfolio. We must acknowledge that in amending the university legislation in the past there were somewhat impractical and at times costly arrangements in the processes for filling casual vacancies on various governing bodies of Queensland universities. We will see these amended and this will enable more efficient and cost-effective appointment processes that will maintain consistent representation on governing bodies through swifter processes.

The Queensland University of Technology Act 1998 and the University of the Sunshine Coast Act 1998 are also being amended to clarify that part-time and full-time academic and general staff are eligible for election to the relevant university council and to vote for the election of staff to the council. The Education (Overseas Students Act) 1996 is being amended, which will see recognition of Queensland's commitment to the coordinated regulation of the education and training industry for overseas students through the interaction of complementary state and Commonwealth law to ensure that the education and training export industry continues to bring benefits to Australia.

Previously members have spoken about the positive aspects of utilising education as an export industry. Although they might not seem complementary, this is a win for the Australian people involved and the Queensland education industry and also those who travel from overseas. I take on board the concerns of the member for Logan, who said that sometimes it might seem as though they are merely exporting dollars to an education system overseas. But they are importing a great wealth of knowledge. Those of us who met with scientists and others recently through Science Week and similar will acknowledge that many of the scientists and tertiary educated people we met with also have to travel overseas to gain tertiary qualifications and experience. Not only do they benefit from education; they experience other cultures, their delivery processes and so on.

As a child of five years old I was lucky that my father was in the Royal Australian Air Force and we travelled to Malaysia. I started my schooling in Penang. I benefited through learning of other cultures, which has stood me in good stead throughout my life. On the Sunshine Coast we have numerous schools that take on board students from overseas. The critics should look at the facts. To my knowledge, they never take on board overseas students at the expense of Queensland or Australian students. For example, if 2,000 people can be catered for in a school and if there are only 1,800 local enrolments, the school might take on 200 overseas students.

The Kawana Waters State High School is involved with the Shandong Province. It has been marvellous for the community that I represent on the Sunshine Coast. Kawana Waters State High School is a very well respected high school. The Chinese students lift the standard and also provide an opportunity for local Sunshine Coast residents who attend the school to interact with people from overseas and learn about and benefit from other cultures. I commend Jo House and all her staff, who work very hard. I know the minister is in regular contact with Kawana Waters State High School in making sure that it is of benefit. The small amount of money made through these overseas students benefits not only the Education Department but also the community, because they live within our community. The money goes back into the education system and improves the school. That is one of the benefits, which I am very proud to mention.

Mountain Creek State High School is also in my electorate of Kawana. I am quoting now from 'The Creeker' which is the school's booklet. In part it says—

'Multiculturalism' isn't just a concept at Mountain Creek State High School in 2002. It's a way of life. With 15 fee-paying international students on campus in semester 1 this year, the school has created its own melting pot of cultures.

Students from Japan, Germany, Brazil, Bolivia and Nepal, plus our own multicultural mix of school families, help create new challenges in understanding, acceptance, tolerance, and friendship that only serve to enrich us all.

They are very good words. A lot of Sunshine Coast people would never have the ability to travel the world, and here they are meeting people from half a dozen different cultures from all around the world.

The education and training export industry brings great benefits both to this state and to the nation. In 2000, the Commonwealth Parliament passed a new act setting out the Commonwealth's requirements for education services for overseas students. The amendment to the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 is being progressed in the interests of maintaining the harmony of state and Commonwealth law. The successful interplay of these regimes is intended to foster the continuing success of the industry by ensuring that education and training services for overseas students are world class and to protect the investment of overseas students pursuing Australian educational qualifications.

The state electorate of Kawana is somewhat of an educational node. Not only do I have numerous great high schools, both private and public; I also have primary schools, a TAFE college and a university. They are all getting together to make sure that they utilise this area as an education node. I know that the minister is aware of this. I commend her and her department for bringing forward this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.