




Speech by  
**Bill Byrne**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

Hansard Tuesday, 31 July 2012

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## **CENTRAL QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY, ENGINEERING LABORATORIES**

 **Mr BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (9.04 pm): I rise to speak about an exciting new development in higher education in Rockhampton, the Central Queensland University engineering laboratories. Central Queensland University has a long, proud history of producing quality engineering graduates for the Central Queensland community. In fact, the Australian *Good Universities Guide* rates CQU engineering graduates as the most sought-after employees in the country, with the highest starting salaries among any graduates from any discipline from any university. For over the past 20 years, CQ University has pumped out more than 3,000 graduates from its engineering school, of whom many are helping to drive the current resources boom in Queensland.

However, after 20-odd years and 3,000 graduates the sprawling engineering laboratories at the Central Queensland University campus had started to show their age. The equipment and the facilities were starting to get a bit tired and the university had its reputation as a world-class engineering educator to maintain. So it undertook very big refurbishments. It was not just a simple paint job with new equipment; it was a complete gutting and rebuilding of thousands of square metres of lecture facilities, teaching spaces and technical laboratories over three floors of three enormous buildings. The university invested \$9 million from its own funding into the refurbishment and received an additional \$1.8 million from the federal Labor government's Better Universities Renewal Funding. I acknowledge the role that federal MP Kirsten Livermore played in securing this funding.

The results of this \$11 million rebuilding project are simply world class. There are brand-new, state-of-the-art laboratories for fluids, thermodynamics, thermofluids, geotech, concrete and structures, and electronics. There is a new lecture theatre, a postgraduate area, a materials testing area, an acoustic test cell, a soils store and a multipurpose project based learning laboratory. Those who have visited Rockhampton in the warmer months would appreciate the brand-new, innovative air-conditioning system that is so energy efficient that it is actually incorporated into the curriculum.

What the Central Queensland University has done for the region and its economy through its engineering school has been underestimated. My colleagues who represent seats in regional areas know that to retain the best minds locally you need to train the best minds locally and not see them lost to cities forever. CQ University has moved on from simply training and retaining local graduates; it is now attracting kids from outside the region—from Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney and all over Australia—to come to Central Queensland University to study engineering.

Engineering is not the only course that has begun attracting school leavers from all around the country, but it is an important one for my region. I can only imagine Central Queensland's potential should the CQ University replicate these laboratories on the Mackay campus when the merger with the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE goes ahead.

*(Time expired)*