




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Central Queensland University

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (11.18 am): I take this opportunity to share with the House the strong desire of my community to pursue the options of expanding the opportunities that Wide Bay TAFE Bundaberg campus and the Central Queensland University can bring. My electorate clearly identifies with CQU and welcomes the prospects of becoming a centre of excellence for education. The Central Queensland University is now on track to become Queensland's first dual sector university with the initiatives in Central Queensland. The opportunities for my region would change the face of postschool education and training in our region forever. Becoming a dual sector university would transform the lives of so many people in the region by providing them with seamless access to the full range of postschool education and training options and allowing them to skill up for the unique workforce needs of the region.

We have seen a real and concerted effort of this government to provide training that leads to real jobs and real opportunities, and we need to improve our academic and technical capacities. This can be achieved by offering all levels of postschool education and training 'under one roof' to better meet our communities' unique workforce and skills needs. Whilst there is great news for the workforce in the Central Queensland region, encompassing Gladstone, Rockhampton and Mackay, with their merger we are potentially missing the chance to provide this opportunity to the Bundaberg and Burnett regions.

Under a dual sector delivery model, students from all backgrounds will have access to better education and training pathways, improved facilities and job placement opportunities, more streamlined articulation into further study and more study options than ever before. Staff would benefit from new career development opportunities, students will enjoy greater options and choice when it comes to their education, and alumni will benefit from new partnerships and professional development opportunities. Importantly, the wider community will benefit from better accessibility and openness, and industry will benefit from a larger pool of highly skilled graduates from a wider range of disciplines.

Students in a dual sector university will be able to select study options at various different levels ranging from pre-apprenticeship to postdoctorate. This supports lifelong learning and encourages the workforce to pick up different skill sets at different points in their career. This will extend across a comprehensive and diverse selection of courses and programs in discipline areas such as business and commerce, trades and apprenticeships, health and fitness, aged care, nursing and midwifery, childcare and education, humanities, hospitality, science, performing arts and engineering. These programs and courses are relevant to our region and will help to meet skills shortages in the area and make Bundaberg and Burnett sustainable communities.

For instance, a healthcare assistant who gains a certificate III from a dual sector institution will be less intimidated to come back to that institution later in their career to undertake a bachelor's

degree in physiotherapy. Equally, a physiotherapy graduate may come back to the institute to undertake a certificate IV in business management to assist them with setting up their physiotherapy practice. Students studying engineering may be able to gain technical skills like welding somewhere along their career pathway. Along with this, CQ University aims to be Australia's most engaged university and in achieving this they will build and promote partnerships and facilitate connections with a wide range of organisations and communities at a local, national and international level.

We in the Bundaberg region are keen to become part of the opportunities that a merger between Wide Bay TAFE Bundaberg campus and CQ University would allow. In highlighting the strong educational aspirations of our region, it is important to reflect on the needs of those disadvantaged who live in the region. It is important that areas like the electorate of Bundaberg or the electorate of Burnett that have unfortunately ranked higher in the scan of disadvantage than other areas in Queensland continue to work towards flexibility and innovation that allow for creativity and responsiveness for educational outcomes. In closing, I just want to stress that we do want to become a centre of excellence for education in the Bundaberg and Burnett electorates and I think it is very important that these mergers be reflected on and pursued.