



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENTS**

**Central Queensland University**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (2.48 pm): I want to continue to highlight the Central Queensland University as a longstanding and well-respected institution delivering remarkable change to the communities which it serves—my own community being one of them. CQ University is the only higher education provider in a 1,000-kilometre stretch between the Sunshine Coast and all the way to Townsville, which represents about half a million hardworking aspirational Queenslanders. The university's commitment to its communities in this diverse region sees it run a dispersed, multicampus university model which prides itself on its engagement with local industries and the community's power of place.

The challenges the university faces under this model, which would not be found in a large metropolitan area, do not deter it from offering personalised student support and quality higher education that is far superior to any city campus. This is a testament to the university's guiding ethos to work with its communities and for its communities, to help transform the lives of those driving our local economies.

The university's continued investment in new courses and infrastructure to meet skills needs identified by our local communities has made a tremendous difference to critical industry needs where others have failed. In particular, recent new allied health offerings, engineering, law, accident forensics and agriculture courses will soon see local graduates entering our region and staying in our region, covering the skills gaps that our communities have cried out for for a long time. These graduates join the generations of nurses, teachers, accountants, social workers and business leaders that CQ University has been producing for our region for decades.

However, I feel that the university's greatest contributions still lie ahead. In particular, I see the upcoming merger between the university and many campuses of the CQ TAFE to be a game changer for the region. The creation of Queensland's first dual sector university was an initiative brought to CQ University by the industries of Central Queensland and is something that CQU pursued relentlessly over the last four years until finally receiving the approvals from both the state and federal governments. In July this year the merger will bring together vocational and higher education streams for the first time ever in Queensland's history, ending the institutional apartheid that has prevented generations of local kids from cherry picking the best elements of the learning spectrum required by our diverse and unique industries. Students will be better trained and ready for the existing and emerging jobs in the region.

Although this is outside the footprint of my electorate, I do get excited about the opportunities in the Wide Bay-Burnett region for the CQ University's Bundaberg campus to be the natural partner for our local TAFE campuses, working closely together to expand the educational pathways and opportunities for the local workforce. CQ University is a university of access, participation and support. No university has a higher proportion of low SES students, regional and remote students, mature-age students and Indigenous students. In my opinion, no university has done more to work with its communities to transform the lives of students on the scale that CQ University has achieved.