




Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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**EDUCATION, TOURISM, INNOVATION AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (11.45 am): I rise today to speak to report No. 12 of the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee. As chair of the committee, I acknowledge the work done by the committee and the secretariat during this inquiry. This inquiry was about protecting the safety of all Queenslanders. This parliament has worked hard to implement legislation to prevent smoking in public places. Looking at the impact this would have in universities, RTOs and TAFEs is logically the next step.

A number of submitters reported to the committee that they agree with this proposal. We also heard from universities. One of the biggest concerns from universities was whether this would impact on international students. Would the introduction of this legislation drive away international students whom we attract from a range of countries to undertake the high-quality education courses that we deliver in our universities? Would this detract from attracting those students if we were to introduce legislation along these lines? Emphatically every single university said that overseas students come to our universities specifically for the high-quality courses, high-quality teaching and high-quality educational outcomes. They consider that the introduction of a ban on smoking in universities right across Queensland would have no impact whatsoever on attracting international students.

One of the key concerns universities had was the timing of the introduction of this legislation. Their concern was that they needed time to prepare their students and their facilities to ensure they met the requirements within the associated time. I concur with the perspectives that universities and TAFEs provided to us. What they were saying was, 'Give us plenty of time so we can set up processes and clearly articulate to our incoming students so they understand the implications of this legislation should it be introduced.' We left that open to those particular universities to undertake that and introduce it in a logical time but also in a timely manner because we need to protect our students.

Government members decided that we would support the introduction of the legislation. That would take the responsibility away from universities, TAFEs and RTOs and show that this government clearly stands behind a ban on smoking in universities and TAFEs, as we have done in other public spaces as a result of legislation that we introduced earlier this year. By doing that, our clear message is that we care about the health of every single Queenslanders, whether they are smokers or nonsmokers. As the House heard in earlier debates this year, nonsmokers suffer from passive smoking on a huge scale. We heard that one in 10 people who are subjected to passive smoke will incur smoking related diseases.

As a result of those facts, the government members really wanted to push hard. As we have heard from the deputy chair of the committee, we could not reach agreement on that but it was the government members' preferred decision that we would support the government implementing and legislating that smoking should not occur on university, TAFE and RTO sites.

With that in mind, I thank all those who were involved. I thank the submitters who came along to the public hearings. I thank the committee for its work. I really look forward to this going forward so we can protect our Queenslanders to make sure they have a safe environment whether they are at work or at university and education facilities.