




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

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**UNIVERSITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (3.41 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the University Legislation Amendment Bill, in particular those amendments in the bill that relate to the University of Southern Queensland Act 1998. I would like to reflect a little on the governance arrangements, because the University of Southern Queensland is governed and administered in a very professional manner. As of the date of the redistribution, the University of Southern Queensland will be part of my electorate of Toowoomba South.

As the member for Toowoomba South, it is an exciting time for me to have this university within the boundary of the southern seat of the Toowoomba area because it has just welcomed its new vice-chancellor, Geraldine Mackenzie. Already Geraldine has made a wonderful entry into the Toowoomba community and is working hard to engage the University of Southern Queensland with the broader Toowoomba community. In doing so, Geraldine is supported by Chancellor John Dornbusch who, throughout an extraordinary career, has led Toowoomba's business community and is now leading this university through some challenging times, but he does so with good grace and professionalism.

It is an exciting year for the University of Southern Queensland. I thought that I would reflect on that a little. It has been 50 years since the university was first assigned to be a tertiary education facility. In acknowledgement of that fact a whole range of celebrations are going on at the University of Southern Queensland. I cannot go past Dellys Kelly, who may be well known to some on this side of the House. Dellys Kelly is acknowledged as the mother of the University of Southern Queensland. In 1958, while looking after her two young sons, Dellys decided that a city of Toowoomba's stature and promise needed somewhere to send its young people to receive a tertiary education. She packed up her FJ Holden, sent the kids away to a babysitter and headed to Canberra where she met with Robert Menzies, the Prime Minister of the day. Robert Menzies said to Dellys, 'You find 30,000 quid and you will get your institution of higher education,' never thinking that it would be possible. Dellys came home, raised the money in double-quick time, and before we knew it there was an education establishment association underway in Toowoomba. Not long thereafter Toowoomba had its own education facility of higher learning. Over the past 50 years, the university has gone through a range of stages. It is also 25 years since the University of Southern Queensland became a fully-fledged university. It is a double celebration of 50 years as a higher education centre of learning but also 25 years as the University of Southern Queensland.

In 1992 I had my first dealings with the university when I began playing cricket with the mighty Phoenix, the University of Southern Queensland cricket club, which has forged the reputation of being one of the finest cricket clubs in Toowoomba. I acknowledge the leadership of the university cricket club over the years of Ivan Walls and John Littleproud. Those names are etched in the cricketing history of Toowoomba and the mighty Phoenix.

In the 50th year of this university, I think it is appropriate that I reflect for a little while on some of alumnus of the University of Southern Queensland. They include my predecessor Dr John McVeigh. The University of Southern Queensland is celebrating its alumnus. Recently, I attended an event to

announce the university's 2017 alumni, Kev Carmody, the extraordinary Australian musician who wrote *From little things big things grow*. It was a real pleasure to see Kev honoured in that way. There has also been a range of celebrations at the University of Southern Queensland in the fields of engineering and psychology, as everybody takes the opportunity to reflect on 50 years of the University of Southern Queensland.

Other alumni of some significance who have attended the University of Southern Queensland include Walkley award winner Mark Willacy; disability advocate, well known throughout Queensland, the incomparable Sharon Boyce; playwright David Burton, who has perhaps written the finest play that has come out of Toowoomba called *April's Fool*, which details some extraordinary challenges overcome by families dealing with drug abuse; ABC weather reporter Jenny Woodward; and a good friend of mine, who is now CEO of a technology company in Brisbane, John Williams. I would like to knowledge John's role in my professional career.

It is also appropriate to reflect on some statistics of the University of Southern Queensland. Throughout the history of the university, over 100,000 students have graduated. Currently, 30,000 students are enrolled and over 75 per cent of those students are studying via distance education or online. The university has a very proud record in research, whether that be in pharmacology materials, engineering, agricultural science, or environmental science. It has a proud history of serving the regional community in which it operates. The university is well run, is profitable and has a strong balance sheet. It has challenges to overcome, but it has a strong strategic plan.

Those statistics are just numbers on a page. I do not think there could be any doubt that this regional university serves the people who live around it. More than anything, Toowoomba wants to keep its young people. With over one-third of Australians living in regional areas, we need to find ways in which to keep young people in the communities in which they live. I know from personal experience the role that the University of Southern Queensland has played in the lives of the members of my family. Although I was not a student, I have lectured at the University of Southern Queensland. My wife was able to study opera at the University of Southern Queensland. What a bizarre place to study opera: Toowoomba. My mother was a farmer's wife. When she was in her 40s she was able to go back to university and study education and go on to have a rewarding professional career.

There are opportunities for our young people. So many of them come to me and ask, 'Where should I go to university? Where should I study law? Where should I study commerce?' With the University of Southern Queensland I am in a position to say, 'Stay at home. You know you will get a job faster after graduating from the University of Southern Queensland than from most other universities.' The University of Southern Queensland outperforms most other universities. That is due to the support of the business community. I acknowledge that the chamber of commerce in Toowoomba held a special function welcoming the university's vice-chancellor. The business community in Toowoomba and the broader community—whether that be schools—work with the university to make sure that our young people have every opportunity to stay and achieve their dreams at a local level.

There is a second reason a regional university is so important, and so important in Toowoomba, and that is that it builds our diversity. There is no doubt that Toowoomba is a more welcoming and more diverse community than it ever has been before because of our university. Toowoomba is home to many nationalities. This is obvious in the nearest state school to the University of Southern Queensland at Darling Heights where nearly half the school population speak another language at home. The University of Southern Queensland gives us an opportunity to celebrate our diversity. The university and the local schools do an incredible job of doing that.

In closing, I acknowledge the contribution of my dear friend and one of my mentors, Professor Peter Swannell, vice-chancellor at the University of Southern Queensland between 1996 and 2003, who is currently battling ill health and has been for some time. Peter has made an extraordinary contribution to Toowoomba's University of Southern Queensland and to the community through his involvement with the Empire Theatre. I wish him and his wife Janice the very best as they attempt to overcome his health concerns.