




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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UNIVERSITY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.15 pm): It gives me great pleasure to make a short contribution to the debate of the University Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. The bill removes the capacity for universities to make statutes; requires universities to have a policy for the election of staff and student representatives; removes certain limitations; improves the integrity of the membership of university governing bodies; implements governance reforms for James Cook University; and makes technical amendments relevant to some universities.

This bill gives me a great opportunity to recognise the excellent work of the Central Queensland University—CQU—in the Central Queensland region. With a campus in Emerald, CQU continues to play a pivotal role in tertiary education in our region. I would like to especially mention Blake Repine, who is the new associate vice-chancellor for the Central Highlands region. Blake is responsible for identifying, developing and leading strategic growth opportunities for CQUniversity within the Central Highlands region. One of the areas that he really wants to get involved in, and something that I am happy to help him with—he has my full support—is CQUniversity getting into agriculture. We have probably one of the best agricultural campuses available for CQU in the Emerald irrigation area and we have great grazing country around the Central Highlands. CQU already offers a Bachelor of Agriculture, which enables students to develop the cutting-edge knowledge and skills that are required for employment in today's technology driven agribusiness, cropping and livestock industries. Students benefit from practical based training that provides the basis for the application of theory. Practical based training in the Central Highlands is very important. We have one of the best opportunities for CQU to participate with the Emerald Agricultural College, which has one of the best irrigation farms in the region, with beautiful soils and access to water. I encourage CQU to continue to provide students with the opportunity to invest and learn in agriculture through a Bachelor of Agriculture. There is a Diploma of Agriculture in the first year that also fits in neatly with the Emerald Agricultural College and the Longreach Pastoral College, where students who may want to get into agriculture and dip their toe in the water can continue on to fulfil a degree in agriculture through the Central Queensland University, so I think that is fantastic.

I am glad that the Minister for Health is here, because he too would understand that the Bachelor of Nursing at CQU is important to ensure more nurses in western and regional Queensland. Blake Repine, along with the QCU board and the chancellor, is looking to invest in health for the bush, because if our nurses come from the bush they are more likely to go back into regional areas and they play a critical role. I congratulate CQU on that initiative.

I congratulate the James Cook University for their fantastic effort and desire to ensure that their medical faculty is also placed in regional and rural Queensland. The six-year undergraduate program is geared to make sure that it attracts applicants from rural, remote and Indigenous Queensland while also targeting recruitment at local high schools. As I said, if we can grab medical students from towns such as Longreach, Emerald, Yaraka or Stonehenge, whether they are studying medicine, nursing or allied health, they are likely to go back there to ply their trade once they finish their degree, and I think that is incredibly important.

What is really impressive is the new James Cook University clinical teaching facility in Longreach, which is designed to bring top-quality training and telehealth services. The facility in Longreach Hospital is a collaboration between JCU's Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health, which does excellent work in outback Queensland, and the Central West Health and Hospital Service. The building has been fitted out with state-of-the-art technology to enable audiovisual teleconferencing and remote training so we can have that training on the ground. It is used by everyone from undergraduates to people going through our GP registrar program. I think that is fantastic as it means doctors, nurses and allied health workers will not have to leave Longreach or the central west to get extra training. Basically, we are bringing the trainers to the west, which means a huge difference to the town. The centre will expand the region's capacity to host clinical students, including medical students, as well as support ongoing clinical training for the existing workforce.

The central west health board has donated both the relocated building and its site. The new facility is operational after recently receiving a \$90,000 grant from the Commonwealth. It is also important to note that the new building has complemented JCU's 10-bed student accommodation at the Longreach Hospital campus.

We are starting to get some real opportunities and objectives into rural health in Western Queensland. That is thanks to James Cook University and its commitment to the medical faculty and to CQU, which, with its nurse degree, will be able to look at some placements in the Central Highlands. I have also received some interest from the Blackall-Tambo area. They are looking to participate in something similar to that with either CQU or JCU. I think it is fantastic that we have two proactive universities in regional Queensland which make a significant contribution to regional Queensland.