




Speech By
Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2018

EDUCATION (OVERSEAS STUDENTS) BILL

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (3.01 pm): I rise today to talk to the Education (Overseas Students) Bill. I would like to congratulate the member for Nudgee on her election as chair of the committee and also the member for Currumbin, who is the deputy chair of the committee. It is great to work with two fine women on the committee. I am sure we will get through some great work along with the other members of the committee. I would also like to say thank you to the former chair, who is sitting beside you, Mr Deputy Speaker, who has been appointed the Deputy Speaker. It was a pleasure to serve on that committee in the 55th Parliament. I am pretty sure that we learnt a lot from the Deputy Speaker. No doubt he is fulfilling the role of Deputy Speaker quite well being an ex-principal with experience in trying to keep some of the classes in line. I wish him all the best for his future as the Deputy Speaker of this House.

It is great to get up and talk about the Education (Overseas Students) Bill because we know how much overseas students bring into the economy of this great state. We have talked today about hearing that 16 per cent of the overseas students come to Queensland to be educated. They play an important part in making sure that we get money coming in for the economy throughout Queensland and also for ensuring our good name, the good name of Queensland education, is spread overseas.

The Labor Party is known for its education. I can say that the former minister for education was an absolute gem and I know the now education minister, the member for McConnel, is going to fill those shoes very well. I have had some great discussions with the new education minister, and her passion for education is second to none in this House. I am so pleased to serve on that committee. We talk about our side of the House compared to their side of the House in relation to education. Our side of the House believes strongly in education. I was so glad to be reappointed to the education committee because of our commitment to making sure that everyone in this state is entitled to an education.

There is one thing I always tell students when I address them. Last week at Maryborough West State School, which is a very fine school in my electorate, I told them, 'People can take everything off you, but they cannot take one thing and that is your education. They cannot take it away from you.' It is so crucial with the way our economy is changing with the digital interruption coming that education should be at the forefront of what we are doing as a government throughout this state. I know how great it will be with this education minister. After having conversations with her since she was appointed to that position, I am very confident that Queensland is heading in the right direction and we have the right Minister for Education. I would like to thank the Minister for Education, the member for McConnel, who has sometimes taken my late-night phone calls regarding schooling in my electorate. I am sure the previous minister has also taken some calls from me of late about schools, and she acted on them also.

As I said, education is really important for moving forward throughout the digital interruption and getting students ready for the next generation of jobs that are coming through. We know that about 10,000 new jobs will appear on the horizon over the next few years. That is why it is so crucial that

education is funded correctly and that we have the right legislation in place. When we look at the explanatory notes to this bill I see some of the changes coming through such as the new definition of mature age students.

One provision in the bill that I am very happy about is the ability to exclude from schools people who come in and cause trouble. I have a few schools in my area that desperately need upgrading because parents and citizens have changed. When I was a young man going to school, parents and citizens at school did not come in and carry on like a lot of them do today. I think the way we are heading in society is a tragedy in that the people who are trying to educate the students are treated that way. It is pretty sad that we are heading that way: some schools have to turn their admin buildings into fortresses. Every teacher I know—and I know a lot of teachers—are really committed to their students. I know teachers that work long hours—and we often hear the public say that teachers only work X number of weeks a year or so many hours. However, I would like them to talk to some of the teachers I know, because they start at six o'clock in the morning and some are still going at 11 or 11.30 at night getting the next day's lessons ready. Teachers are a very committed part of our community. I am so glad that I know so many and am so glad to be on this committee.

In the 56th Parliament the Palaszczuk government will be building on what it spent on education in the 55th Parliament to ensure that the kids of this state are educated properly and into the future. If I look at my own electorate I see we are putting \$4½ million into a performing arts hall and \$10.4 million in desperately needed upgrades at Maryborough State High School. We have a great principal there called Principal Done. He has turned Maryborough State High School into a leading school in the district. This year that school experienced one of the highest increases across Wide Bay of year 7 students, which was a pleasure to see.

I see the Attorney-General, the member for Redcliffe, is in the House today. The other day it was great to be at Maryborough State High School when she addressed the legal studies class. I know they were very thrilled and excited to hear the Attorney-General talking about her role, how she became a politician and the study she did prior to becoming a politician. Later I was talking to some of the students downtown. They were pretty excited that the Attorney-General shared her life path with them. I thank the member for Redcliffe, because it was enthralling even for me to listen to how she moved through the education system over a number of years. Education is very important to the electorate.

I also see in the bill that we are modernising things and we have changed the word 'kindergarten' about which I am very excited because we are moving forward, and it is 2018. I could not make the committee's public hearing. However, I was present for the first briefing. We got some great help from the education department. I would like to thank the education department because they came and gave us a thorough briefing on this bill. It was one we would expect from a department like the education department, which is full of very good professionals who made sure that all members of the previous committee were abreast of the changes to this act. We received some great service from all the people who came to participate in those public hearings. It was a worthwhile experience listening to what was happening with education and how the Palaszczuk Labor government is moving education forward in this state.

In relation to shop trading hours, I see the opposition huffing and puffing. As they say in my electorate, empty vessels make the loudest noise. That is what the people in Maryborough tell me about the opposition. The LNP proved that at the 2017 election, because once again they are back on the opposition benches when they thought they were going to be on the treasury benches. It is good to see that we are changing the legislation so that people in Longreach, Roma and areas like that can trade over Easter. I congratulate the minister for acting so swiftly and making sure that these regional communities have shopping over Easter.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: Listen to them, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McArdle): Order! I call the member for Maryborough.

Mr SAUNDERS: Listen to them. That is the most noise they have made. That is the most noise we have heard. All we hear from those opposite is carp, carp, carp. I have never heard a positive thing, and they have not learned from the 2017 election. The member for Thuringowa is right: they have not learned a thing. Let's be positive and talk about Queensland. Let's talk about the good things and promote Queensland instead of sitting there going on and on. That is why your vote went down. That is why you are finished, and that is why in seats like mine the primary vote went up by 21 per cent because they are absolutely over you. I told you that the people of Maryborough would never forgive you—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I really do not need your protection from the lightweights on the opposite side, but I can tell you that they will never forgive the LNP in Maryborough. Having said that, I would like to commend the Education (Overseas Students) Bill to the House.