




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2018

EDUCATION (OVERSEAS STUDENTS) BILL

Second Reading

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (12.13 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

I rise to speak in the resumption of the debate on the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2018. The bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 15 February 2018 and referred to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee for consideration. On 2 March 2018 the committee tabled its reports supporting the passage of the bill. I would like to thank all members of the committee for their consideration of the bill. I note the chair of the committee, the member for Nudgee, acknowledged the assistance that the report of the former Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee on an earlier version of this bill provided to the committee. I also take this opportunity to thank the department representatives who assisted the committee with their consideration of the bill. The committee made a single recommendation that the bill be passed, and I am pleased to note the bipartisan support the bill has received.

The bill replaces the Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 with modern legislation that reflects the national framework for the regulation of providers of courses to overseas students and introduces a statutory regime for the regulation of international secondary student exchange organisations. The bill also includes amendments that will support the introduction of Queensland's new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems which the Palaszczuk government committed to introduce for the cohort of students entering year 11 in 2019, which is not too far away. The development of these reforms has been guided by representatives of all three schooling sectors—parent groups, secondary principals associations, teacher unions and the tertiary education sector.

The changes include the introduction of external senior assessment, which will complement school based assessments and a transition from the current tertiary entrance system based on the overall position tertiary rank, or the OP rank, to a new system using the Australian tertiary admission rank, or ATAR. Under the reforms, the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre, QTAC, will be responsible for calculating and issuing student ATARs. These reforms are the biggest change Queensland's senior secondary education and tertiary entrance systems have seen in decades. I am proud to be the education minister who will oversee the introduction of these changes.

In relation to other matters contained in the bill, on 31 August 2017 amendments to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 commenced which served to simplify and standardise opening hours across areas of Queensland. In the course of making these amendments, an existing trading hours provision permitting non-exempt shops to trade on the Easter Saturday public holiday in regional areas without Sunday or public holiday trading was inadvertently omitted. This would have meant larger retailers such as supermarkets and department stores in such regional areas would have had to close for four

consecutive days over the Easter long weekend. I want to emphasise that this had no impact on small business in these areas. Those small businesses would have been able to trade 24 hours a day, seven days a week over that period. For clarity, this omission related only to large supermarkets and department stores. Areas affected by the omission include Mount Isa, Goondiwindi, Chinchilla, Kingaroy and others.

Mr Bennett interjected.

Ms GRACE: There were a number of them. I take that interjection from the member for Burnett. There was never an intention to stop trading on the Easter Saturday public holiday in those areas. Can I emphasise that this went through all stakeholders. There was immense debate in relation to this issue. Those opposite would not support the legislation because they supported small businesses and did not want to see an advantage to larger retailers, which is somewhat ironic and the song by Alanis Morissette keeps going through my head when we talk about this issue. This issue was not picked up by any of the stakeholders, not by those opposite, not by the National Retail Association, not by the parliamentary committee, not by the department—no-one. It was an innocent omission.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Pugh): Member for Kawana, you are warned under the standing orders.

Ms GRACE: This was an innocent omission that was not picked up. As soon as we were alerted, we committed to immediately rectify the oversight before Easter 2018 in order to provide early notice and assurances to businesses and consumers in the affected areas that existing Easter Saturday trading arrangements remain in place. Isn't it ironic that those opposite who are supposed to be standing up for small businesses were not going to support this bill? We stand for small business.

I know there was not much good news around that time. The member for Kawana wanted a little bit of good news and to have a bit of fun—there was not much fun in those ranks opposite after the election—so he decided to make a big deal about where he purchases his hot cross buns. He may wish to purchase his in Coles, Woolies and the larger department stores. However, I suggest he put his money into small businesses and that he buys them at a local, small bakery. I think they taste a lot better. They would have been open on that day doing a roaring trade selling their hot cross buns. However, the member for Kawana clearly wants to buy them in Coles and Woolies. They taste all right but I would prefer to spend my money in a small business bakery. I would buy them there any day. Isn't it ironic that there he is, the bastion of the large businesses, but beforehand they were not supporting any of these amendments because it meant an unfair trading advantage would be given to the larger retailers? I digress—I am having a little bit of fun—just to put the irony of the situation on record in the House.

These arrangements were never intended and they will be corrected. The bill seeks to correct the omission by inserting the provision—it was a bracketed provision—in the act which specifies that non-exempt shops in areas without Sunday or public holiday trading may open on Easter Sunday. Members will be happy to know the large retailers will be able to open. We had scenes of tumbleweed going down the streets because—Lord help us!—Coles and Woolies were not opening. It was an unintended omission and a bit of fun by the member for Kawana. However, I cannot escape the irony of the situation.

The amendment will commence on 30 March 2018 in time for Easter this year. I commend the bill to the House.