




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2018

EDUCATION (OVERSEAS STUDENTS) BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (4.14 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker McArdle, I commend you on your appointment as Deputy Speaker. It is a sterling choice. You are certainly a person who has been around this parliament for a long time and has a lot of dignity, and you are well liked throughout parliament.

I rise to speak to the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2018. From the outset, like all members in this House I want to pay tribute to teachers right across Queensland. Teachers play an incredible role in our children's lives. They have such an important task, whether they are teaching kindy, prep or grade 1 right through to grade 12. They are the ones who play a major role in shaping our children's future. Whether children go on to tertiary education or a trade, teachers are teaching and moulding tomorrow's leaders. We must recognise that teachers have the most difficult job but a job that would give them a lot of joy.

Seeing students go from primary school through to high school and achieve their dreams, whether it be a tertiary education to become a doctor or nurse or a trade to become a mechanic, it must give teachers great pride that they played a significant role in that. I pay tribute to all teachers right across Queensland. They play a significant role.

This bill is to create a new regime for the regulation of providers of courses to overseas students and international student exchange programs. This is important in the seat of Gregory. We have an opportunity to increase our overseas student intake in education facilities right throughout Queensland. Our agricultural and pastoral colleges have been providing courses to overseas students. In the last couple of years we have seen students coming in from Indonesia to learn about the beef production techniques we have in Australia, from the yard through to the slaughter yard. We have been able to capture the opportunity to teach students from Indonesia at the Longreach Pastoral College and the Emerald Agricultural College.

The Longreach Pastoral College will play a significant role in educating overseas students. The Longreach Pastoral College was opened in 1967. There is a fantastic story behind the reason we opened the pastoral college. Significant people in the town of Longreach, such as Sir James Walker and others, wanted to have a university of the outback. That vision was back in the 1960s. They wanted to have a university of the outback. They were able to meet with the Premier of the day and government representatives to start that process. In 1967 the Longreach Pastoral College opened. It has provided an excellent educational facility for outback and regional people.

In 1971 the Emerald Agricultural College was opened. This is another significant contributor to our education system. We are starting to see overseas students attracted to regional and rural areas. Normally overseas students are attracted to the east coast for a variety of reasons such as transport, airports and accommodation facilities. We have fantastic educational facilities in both Longreach and Emerald to continue to attract Indonesian students.

We must also look to tap into South-East Asia and see whether we can attract more overseas students into these educational facilities. As the member for Townsville and the opposition leader, the member for Nanango, said, the reason we have overseas students wanting to come to this country and this state is that we provide a first-class service. They take that education back to where they have come from or stay on here. They have an excellent opportunity to fulfil their dreams in whatever career they choose.

This bill also provides the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority with functions to administer the new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems commencing with students entering year 11 in 2019. From 2020 Queensland will move from the current overall position or OP tertiary rank to the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank or ATAR, which all other states and territories use to rank eligible year 12 students for university entrance.

This is incredibly important. I would also like to acknowledge the fantastic academic achievements in regional and rural Queensland, especially in the seat of Gregory. Last year members might remember a story about Longreach State High School having one of the top OPs in the state. For a school that has gone through seven years of drought and is struggling in the current climatic conditions, Longreach State High School can still produce excellent academic qualifications for university. I pay tribute to all of those involved in the Longreach State High School. They are a fantastic community, dedicated to the community and to the town. I especially pay tribute to those students who come along and fulfil their academic potential and put their best academic qualifications forward. Longreach State High School did well.

As the member for Gregory, I am very lucky to have 54 schools in the seat of Gregory. Only last week I went to one of the small schools in the electorate—Arcadia Valley State School. Arcadia Valley is in the most south-east part of the electorate. It is north of Injune and south of Rolleston. It is a beautiful school. Arcadia Valley is what they like to call God's country when it comes to cattle production. It was the first of the brigalow blocks to be opened up. The school has doubled in size since last year: it has gone from four students to eight students. It is one of the very few schools in Queensland that has been able to double their size in one year. I congratulate all of the students, the teachers and of course the parents. Only a couple of weeks ago I went to the captains' ceremony at Blackwater State High School, which is another proud school.

We have to make sure that we have the right ranking system and tertiary entrance system available for all students across Queensland. If we can match up with the rest of the state it will make it easier for students to go into the tertiary education that they want to go into. I really welcome this. Let us hope it is a smooth transition from OP to ATAR, making sure that our students get the best opportunity.

Finally, tacked onto this bill is the amendment to trading hours. As a consequence of an omission all non-exempt shops in areas without seven-day trading must be closed on the four consecutive Easter public holidays—Good Friday, Easter Saturday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. The main areas that would be affected are in regional Queensland. The two areas that would be most affected in the electorate I represent are Blackwater and Longreach. It would have a devastating impact on those towns. Blackwater is just getting through a massive mining downturn. It is a town that is slowly but surely getting back on its feet, and small business is suffering there. The last thing we would want to see is an administrative error that affects the shops there—we have a Woolworths and an IGA. Also, Easter is when the tourism season starts in Longreach. Can you imagine people packing up their caravan and driving out to Longreach in their four-wheel drive from Brisbane or Sydney only to find everything shut? What a great welcome mat that would be for people in our tourism industry.

We need to support our small businesses in regional and rural Queensland. We have to give them every opportunity to stay open. As I said before, the tourism season starts at Easter in the outback. As all members know, the outback needs tourism. Tourism has become our third commodity. We have beef, we have wool and we have tourism in the outback. Tourism is an important part of our economy that puts disposable cash into the town. We have to make sure that the welcome mat is out and we have businesses open at Easter to make sure that tourists stay in Longreach and do not head off somewhere else or turn around and head back to the east coast because there is nothing open in Longreach. It is important for regional Queensland.

I would like to give a shout-out to the Heatley Secondary College in the member for Thuringowa's electorate. I had an opportunity to go there and one of the most amazing things I saw was the adult college. There are some great opportunities there for people in my area when it comes to audio and visual technology in the digital age. I would love to talk to the Minister for Education about this. Outback Queensland needs to be able to tap into those opportunities at the Heatley adult secondary college.