




Speech By
Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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EDUCATION (OVERSEAS STUDENTS) BILL

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (12.38 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2017. As the House would recall, this bill was introduced into the previous parliament in August of last year and reported on by the former Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee in September 2017. The former committee recommended that the bill be passed with three further amendments. The bill lapsed when the parliament was dissolved on 29 October 2017 prior to its second reading. The current version of the bill replicates the content of the lapsed bill but also contains a number of further amendments. These amendments address a minor drafting change to replace a heading in related education legislation; correct a drafting omission in recent amendments to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act; and include two new subclasses, 66(4) and 66(5), to address one of the recommendations of the former committee. These new subclasses limit the use of a document or information obtained when the protection against self-incrimination is abrogated to proceedings; about the false or misleading nature of the information and document; or for the purposes of the prosecuting of offences under the regulatory regime.

Given the substantive similarities of the bills and the limited time frame for reporting, the committee did not call for submissions on the bill but had regard to the submitted evidence and report of the former committee. The Department of Education and Training also provided the committee with a written briefing on the bill and attended a public briefing, both of which greatly assisted the committee to get across the content of the bill and the new amendments. I thank the department for their assistance in this regard.

The bill before us modernises the regulation of providers of courses to overseas students, establishes a new legislative regime for the regulation of providers of international student exchange programs, and supports the implementation of the new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems. I appreciate that the policy objective and legislative function of these amendments has been canvassed in this House by both the former minister Kate Jones and Minister Grace Grace at introduction and again just now in her second reading. As we are further assisted by both the former and current committee's report, I will not seek to restate their application now in any great detail but, rather, make a few brief comments about the central tenets of the bill.

The current Queensland Education (Overseas Students) Act, or EOS Act, is not reflective of contemporary practice, does not reflect the current role of the director-general as the designated state authority, the current expectations about the shared responsibility for regulation of providers of education to overseas students, and nor does it provide the director-general with any powers to monitor compliance with the Commonwealth act and national code, which is an expectation under the national framework. The new regulatory regime proposed by the bill will better reflect the role of both the director-general as the designated state authority, ensure better alignment with the national framework and shared responsibility for compliance, and improve Queensland's compliance framework and administrative practices by introducing internal review rights and improved information sharing arrangements.

Hence, the bill contains common-sense amendments that both update and strengthen the co-regulatory system that exists between Queensland and the Commonwealth for the regulation of education and training to overseas students. The bill also introduces a statutory regime to regulate international secondary student exchange organisations that reflects the existing administrative regime and policy intention of the national guidelines for the operation of international secondary exchange programs in Australia. Introducing such a regime will provide regulatory oversight commensurate with the level of risk associated with such exchanges and, importantly, safeguard the welfare of international and Australian secondary exchange students. With international education and training in Queensland estimated to contribute \$2.8 billion in export revenue and support 19,000 jobs in 2015 alone, Queensland accounts for 16 per cent of Australia's international student numbers. It is our second biggest service export. The bill seeks to protect the strong reputation that Queensland, and Australia more broadly, enjoys as a destination for quality and safe international education and training.

Finally, I would like to touch on the reforms contained in the bill to Queensland senior assessment and tertiary entrance processes, the most significant in this regard in over 20 years. The new senior assessment arrangements will combine the flexibility of school based assessment, set and marked by classroom teachers, and the comparability of external subject based assessment, set and marked by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the QCAA. This, in addition to the transfer of responsibility for tertiary ranking from the QCAA to QTAC and the use of ATARs in place of OP ranks, will result in greater nationally consistency. Having completed my education in the only two jurisdictions in the country that do not or previously did not employ some form of subject based external assessment, and in the case of Queensland, which has used a different tertiary ranking system from the other states and territories, I can attest to the benefits that a nationally consistent approach and more seamless transfer of student results between jurisdictions can provide. These significant reforms, estimated to affect more than 50,000 year 12 students each year, are the result of extensive consultation with education stakeholders and have been informed through the work of the ministerial senior secondary assessment task force with members from the Catholic, independent and state schooling sectors, parent groups, secondary principals associations, teacher unions and tertiary institutions. I look forward to continuing to liaise with local education stakeholders as the new system is embedded.

In closing, the committee was greatly aided in its examination of the bill by the work of its predecessor committee, the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee. The former committee's public consultation process and thorough scrutiny of the provisions of the earlier bill helped to ensure that this committee was well placed to understand and develop a position on the bill in the given time frame. I take this opportunity to thank former chair, Scott Stewart, and the members of that committee, including my colleague the member for Maryborough, who continues his valuable contributions this term on the same committee. I thank my fellow committee members for their contributions to this inquiry, our first as a new committee. I also thank our committee secretariat staff and Hansard reporters for their assistance. It was the view of the committee, assisted by additional clarifying information provided by the department, that the new amendments contained in the bill appropriately addressed the concerns of the former committee. Accordingly, the committee made one recommendation, that the bill be passed, and I commend the bill to the House.