




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2018

EDUCATION (OVERSEAS STUDENTS) BILL

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (3.37 pm): Before I start, I want to congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker McArdle, on your appointment to the role of Deputy Speaker and wish you all of the very best over the next 2½ years.

I first want to thank the former committee, of which I was fortunate enough to be the chair, for going through this bill, but of course time lapsed and it was handed to the current committee. I also want to acknowledge and thank the current committee for the work that it has done on this bill given the short and very quick time frames. It is great to see that both sides of the House came to the same agreement that the former committee did in terms of this bill. There are several key objectives of this bill, and several members in the House have already gone through them so I will not spend a whole lot of time reading through the objectives. Broadly, the bill's objectives are around overseas students, changes to our senior assessment and tertiary entrance, technical amendments to the education act and amendments to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act. They are the key objectives that we are debating through this bill.

I want to focus mainly on the first two areas—that is, international students and the change to senior assessment and tertiary entrance. They are the key issues that I will focus on during my contribution to the debate this afternoon.

Probably very few members of this House do not know my history of being a teacher and principal for nearly 30 years. I say that often, because I am very proud of the time that I spent educating students, working with students and nurturing students through some of their most difficult times. Those of us who have had teenagers would certainly attest that some of the most difficult times are during—

Mr Powell interjected.

Mr STEWART: I take that acknowledgement from the member for Glass House. Some of the most difficult times but also some of the most wonderful and cherishing times of my life were when I was working with young men and women in schools. Each and every one of us have great schools in our electorates and we are very proud to mention them. I am not going to do a rollcall of the schools in my electorate that I work with, but I will say that teachers work exceptionally hard to get results for their kids.

We heard the member for Nanango, the Leader of the Opposition, say that the reason students from overseas come to our Queensland schools is the world-class education that they receive. It is a cutting-edge curriculum. We are at the forefront of leading not only Australia but also the world in a whole range of imperatives relative to our curriculum. The only way we deliver that high-quality education is through high-quality teaching and high-quality teachers.

I was really disappointed to hear the member for Kawana say that we have problems with teachers and bag our teachers, saying that there is too much focus on data and too much focus on individual students. I will tell members that the reason international students come to our great state and to the fantastic schools that each and every one of us have in our electorates is the high-quality education that focuses on individual students. It is not a broadbrush approach. In other words, we do not sheep dip kids and say, 'This is it. I've now taught you how to extrapolate parabolas.' It does not happen like that. The reason teachers drill down into the data, the reason teachers spend so much time looking at the assessment of individual students is to give the individual student the very best, the absolute world-class quality education that they deserve in every single one of our classrooms. Whether those classrooms are at Pimlico State High School, Brisbane State High School, or Longreach State High School, every one of those students deserves this quality education. We demand the best of our teachers, and that means teachers drilling down into that data not only to find out what the students are doing exceptionally well but also to find those areas that they need to work on to make sure that we get the best quality outcomes for each and every one our students, including our international students.

Why do international students come to our great state? We heard the Leader of the Opposition say that they come to our beautiful state, and why would they not? We are the best state in Australia. Certainly, I agree with that, but the reason international students come to our state is more than just for the culture and Queensland's natural beauty. Their parents send them here knowing that, when they go into our schools, they will not only get a high-quality education but also that our schools lay down the foundations and provide the future pathways for when these young men and women become the future leaders in their own country.

This education is about setting out a very clear pathway for trade and business at an international level. It establishes those networks and gives overseas students an understanding of not only our education system but also the way in which Australia operates. That is why international students come to our cities and we send our students to other countries—to make sure that they get that understanding, develop networks and ensure that they get the highest quality education they can, knowing that they are going to be future leaders who will establish international trade opportunities and create international business communities. That is why we do it. It is a long-term investment. I am proud to say that the more we do this, the better we can sell our great state and the better we can sell our outstanding educational programs that are delivered each and every day in our schools by our highly qualified and sensational teachers. I will back them every single day until the day I die.

The other change that we are seeing on the horizon—and we heard the member for Surfers Paradise refer to the foundation of this change—is the change to senior assessment. I can tell members that this change that we are implementing through this bill that we are debating is the biggest change that we will see to senior education since the introduction of VET qualifications in secondary schools. We have to get change of this scale—the implementation of going from school based assessment to having standardised assessment in various subjects across our state—right. We have to make sure that the i's are dotted, the t's are crossed, every single teacher has a 100 per cent commitment and understanding, and the students are thoroughly prepared for this change. We do not want to start the race with some of our students, whether they be at Ilfracombe, or at Charters Towers, with only half an understanding of this change. We cannot afford to have our teachers not know what they are doing. We need to get this right.

The reason the implementation of this change was pushed back 12 months was not a Labor initiative. That pushback came from secondary principals who said, 'We need more time.'

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr STEWART: I take that interjection from the Minister for Education. The principals said, 'We need more time to make sure our students get this right, to make sure our teachers have the skill set to get this right.' It is not about, as the opposition leader said, Labor getting this wrong. I do not care whether the schools in the Nanango electorate have this change right and they are ready to go; the state of Queensland is bigger than the electorate of Nanango. We have to make sure that every single one of our teachers has this right. That is what this is about: making sure that they have the skill set behind them, the understanding, and they are ready to go.

These changes are going to propel our students into the next level of education—preparing them to enter tertiary education, making sure that they have the skill set. We do not want to disadvantage any student, whether they are in a school with 40 or 50 secondary students or a school such as Bwngcolman on Palm Island, where there are 10 students in years 11 and 12. Every one of our students in each and every one of our electorates needs to be prepared. This delay is about working with the teachers, working with the principals, working with the students and working with their parents to get this change right. These changes will certainly set us up to be great leaders in education. I commend the bill to the House.