




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2018

EDUCATION (OVERSEAS STUDENTS) BILL

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (5.57 pm): I, too, would like to speak to the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2018. At the outset, having been married for 25 years to my wife, who has taught for 25 years, I give a special call-out to all teachers—those who teach international students as well as those who teach domestic students.

Mr Watts: Make us all look bad.

Mr MINNIKIN: Absolutely. International education, as has been said by previous speakers, is an extremely important part of our trade opportunities. It contributes to Queensland's overall economy. Indeed, in my fair electorate of Chatsworth, I am very proud to have San Sisto College, which is a girls' college. They often have overseas students attend that college. They do an absolutely wonderful job as ambassadors not just for the nations that are visiting but for the students who are members of the San Sisto fraternity. They do a wonderful job. Sadly, another college that I formerly had in my electorate of Chatsworth until the redistribution late last year was Whites Hill State College, which now resides in the electorate of Greenslopes. Whites Hill State College also has a proud tradition of welcoming overseas students. My final point before I get into the substance of this bill is that I was very proud, not too far from this august chamber, to teach and tutor international students myself at QUT many, many years ago.

The substance of the bill itself is one of our largest service exports, contributing just under \$3 billion a year to our overall state economy—that was back in 2015—in terms of export revenue, supporting 19,000 jobs. Academic excellence, competitive living costs and a safe and healthy lifestyle is what makes Queensland an ideal place for international students to study. In fact, late last year—a matter of days before the state election—I was very honoured during caretaker mode to attend an international students forum. It was a joint bipartisan approach with the current Speaker, Mr Curtis Pitt, who represented the government in relation to the international students awards.

It really brought home to me on that particular night, literally just before the state election late last year, just how important international students are not just to our economy, as outlined earlier, but also in terms of the fabric of making those lifelong connections. It was very endearing to hear that many of them wanted to come back in the future to visit Australia and bring back their family and their friends. They also wanted to take away little touchstones from our culture as well and to intersperse it with their own. I think that is a truly wondrous thing.

I note from the background that on 15 February the Minister for Education, Minister Grace, introduced the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2018 into the Queensland parliament. As many members would know, the bill was referred to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee for consideration, and that report was due on 2 March. The committee recommended that the bill be passed. I also note that the LNP position is to not oppose this bill. There were no other recommendations.

The provisions and objectives of the bill are largely consistent with the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2017—from last year—which was examined and reported on by this committee's predecessor, the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee. That bill was yet to be debated when the previous parliament was dissolved and, therefore, lapsed on dissolution. The bill's specific objectives, if we look at the education component, were to create a new regime for the regulation of providers of courses to overseas students and international student exchange programs; to provide the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority with functions to administer new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems commencing for students entering year 11 in 2019.

It also goes on to make minor and technical amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000; and, lastly, amending the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 to provide that larger retailers of non-exempt shops in regional areas without Sunday or public holiday trading—in other words, seven-day trading—be allowed to open on the public holiday. I will return later to spend a little bit of time on that objective of the bill.

Minister Grace has advised of two key differences to the lapsed bill incorporated as additional amendments: firstly, in response to a recommendation of the former ETISB committee, amendments to ensure that information or documents obtained by the regulator of authorised compliance officers under a 'help requirement' cannot be used in proceedings other than for offences created by the bill or about the false or misleading nature of the information or documents as intended to better safeguard rights against self-incrimination; and, secondly, the bill's amendments to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990, and, again, I will come back to that one.

In relation to overseas students, as has been said by previous speakers, schools providing education to overseas students are regulated through a cooperative legislative model between the Commonwealth and the states and territories. The cooperative model includes the Commonwealth legislation and the national code, the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018. Currently, schools must meet requirements of the Commonwealth and the Queensland legislation and they must be registered on both the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students, known as CRICOS, and the Queensland register.

Very importantly—and we on this side of the chamber note—the bill attempts to modernise Queensland's legislative framework to achieve closer alignment with the national framework. In particular, the bill removes the duplicated requirements for separate Queensland registration, better reflects the matters the director-general needs to consider under the national framework when considering whether to approve a school for the CRICOS qualification and also enhances the director-general's powers for monitoring and compliance.

The legislative regime also established by the bill will continue to reflect the consistent national approach to regulation of student exchange organisations. On that particular point, I also note that previous speakers have spoken about particular student exchange programs in their electorates. I am very proud to note that the Carindale Rotary Club, which I am very proud to represent in this chamber, has probably one of the stellar examples of that in the greater Brisbane area.

I also know that the senior assessment and tertiary entrance system will also be modified. From 2020 Queensland will move from the current OP position. I fondly recall some of the speakers from both sides of the chamber talking about when they first entered school and about receiving one of the very first OP marks. I guess I do need to be carbon dated because I am from the era of the TE system, which goes back even before the OP system. I was waiting for an interjection from Minister Grace to say, 'Indeed, member for Chatsworth, you wouldn't know it from looking at you,' but there was no interjection forthcoming. I can proudly say I can see the TE system morphed into the OP system, but now we are going to align with the rest of the states around Australia and introduce the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank.

Mr Bleijie: Did you do that on a slate?

Mr MINNIKIN: I also note that, because he has attention deficit disorder, sometimes the member for Kawana would dearly like me to take the interjection. As tempting as it is on this occasion because of the fine interjection it was, I will have to respectfully decline because I have other matters to consider before me in my remaining two minutes. The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank, the ATAR, which as I have said already all other states and territories use, ranks eligible year 12 students. It is a very sensible amendment.

I enjoy a robust relationship with the minister, but I have to say it is absolutely ridiculous that here we are talking about a specific bill referred to as the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2018 and yet snuck into this particular bill when we look at some of the talking points are actual amendments to the trading hours. It absolutely defies all wisdom and convention that we see this when we look at the vast number of resources and staff at the minister's disposal. Yet again, if we are talking about education and looking at the course work in front of me, I would sadly have to give it a big fail. It is absolutely abysmal. Here we are literally with four seconds to go—the mark is a big fat 'F'. Better luck next time!