



Speech By  
**Jessica Pugh**


**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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**STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL  
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (3.20 pm): We know that space is the future. That is why, as a member of the committee, in making recommendations in the report on the inquiry into a space industry I felt that it was imperative to include recommendations relating to education. We know that our school students should and will benefit the most from this inquiry. I think everybody should know that female students are terribly under-represented in the STEM subjects that lead to careers in the space industry. I will touch on that later, because that situation simply needs to change. We know that our amazing teachers have a lot on their plate, but I believe that teachers, parents and the community as a whole have a role to play in addressing this issue.

As I said, space is the future, but it is also the past. The member for Condamine alluded to that special day when he went home from school to watch the landing on the moon. As a member of the committee, I was surprised to learn that, when that landing occurred 50-odd years ago, Australia was at the cutting edge of the space race but that, since that time, we have dropped away. This report and its recommendations should go some way to addressing that situation—certainly for Queensland because, as other members of the committee have mentioned, we have some competitive advantages that uniquely position us to once again get at the cutting edge of the space race. There are jobs to be had from the space industry—in agriculture, in defence, in education and in manufacturing—and Queensland is uniquely positioned to capitalise on all of them.

As I said, we need to make sure that our students are educated for the jobs of the future and, in particular, ensure that young women are fairly represented in the space industry in the future. I would like to thank the schools in my area, particularly Corinda State High School. Members of the committee may remember that that school was repeatedly brought up as a school of excellence by various witnesses who appeared at the committee's inquiry. That school is doing a wonderful job in STEM subjects. It has a science excellence program. More than one witness independently mentioned Corinda State High School, which made me feel very proud. It is a great local high school.

I would like to thank Allan Yates, who is a teacher at Springfield. He is also married to my electorate officer. He is the head of STEM at his junior high school. Allan can very proudly boast rates double the national average of female students in all three of his science classes—in biology, chemistry and physics. That is a massive achievement. Allan has a real passion, a real skill for getting young girls engaged in STEM. I thank Allan for answering a lot of my questions about how we can better engage young women in STEM subjects.

I also want to thank the staff and students of Corinda State High School for their expertise through their science excellence program. I want to share the experience of Ms Lam, who last year graduated as dux of Corinda State High School. I am talking about the smartest person in the school last year. Ms Lam is now doing a science degree. She studied chemistry, biology and physics. I wanted to get

her experience of what it was like being a very intelligent young woman studying those subjects. She said to me that she felt a really strong pressure to succeed in those classes, because she was very aware that she was not just viewed as a student; she was viewed as a female student and that there would be possibly a perception that she was not up to scratch and that her gender might be a reason for that. Ms Lam also wanted to reassure me that this pressure did not come from her male peers; she felt that it was internal. This young woman, who is incredibly bright, the dux of the school, had no reason to feel that way. It concerned me how many non-dux level females we might be losing because they feel that pressure.

I also want to thank Dhruv Singh, who was also an OP 1 graduate of Corinda State High School. Last year, he was a UQ science ambassador. He accompanied me on several excursions the committee made. His advice was absolutely invaluable. His enthusiasm for space was infectious. On that note, I also thank Nick Green and Meg from PFi, two Mount Ommaney locals who were also wonderful witnesses at the committee's inquiry.