




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

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QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.20 pm): I note at the outset that I also graduated from QUT, as it was known by the time I graduated, with a business degree. In so doing, I got to know many members of this august chamber. That makes me very passionate about the governance outcomes of my former university. I did not know that the member for Capalaba was at the university at about the same time as me. During my time at QUT, I was very privileged to get to know quite well the current Attorney-General and the member for Keppel, who both came through the university at about the same time as me. I did not find the Attorney-General to be nearly so scary as the member for Capalaba apparently did.

As the member for Warrego said, it is a wonderful university that turns out top quality graduates. It is very clear today that members right across the House—whether we attended ourselves, our children are attending or our parents or grandparents attended—are all very proud of the opportunities that higher learning has afforded us or our families. I think it is safe to say that QUT has changed the landscape of Queensland learning.

I also put on the record that my Aunt Barbara was employed for a very long time at QUT, including during my time as an undergraduate there. She worked as a librarian at both the Gardens Point campus and the Kelvin Grove campus for 18 years according to her LinkedIn profile, and I have made sure I got the dates right. She gained her undergraduate degree at UQ, but she came across the river, she saw the light and she completed her masters at QUT when I was finishing my undergraduate degree.

We have spoken about the previous iteration of QUT. Before QUT was QUT, it was QIT and I am very proud that my grandmother, Margaret Esther Ewers, attended its precursor, the Kelvin Grove Teachers' College. She came from regional Queensland. Her teacher studies were abbreviated due to the war effort, as she was studying teaching during the war. However, she returned to university post war to complete her degree based on her years spent teaching. Our family has a very long and proud attachment. I got some of this information from my family only today because I did not realise my nan had attended QUT but I am really proud of my nan for her persistence in pursuing higher learning. By the time she went back to university, she had five children and she was working full-time so I think that was a tremendous effort. I know she would not have been the only one but it is wonderful to see that QIT gave her and my family that opportunity.

I should also mention that in my previous role at Restaurant Two we did some work for QUT. We catered for an annual fundraising dinner for the QUT philanthropic wing. One of the board members who is mentioned in the report was the host, and I mention this in the interests of full disclosure. The QUT philanthropic committee had a special interest in providing financial support to financially disadvantaged students and students who faced additional challenges in attending university. They may have been the children of refugees, single parents or raised by a single parent themselves, so they had additional challenges that warranted additional support that was provided by that special committee that was chaired and managed by Peter Howes. He played an instrumental role in that and I thank him for it.

These dinners were hosted at Old Government House, which had recently been refurbished. I got the opportunity while I was working to listen to the stories of the scholarship holders and to hear about the impacts these funds had on their lives. It was a timely reminder to me that I was really lucky during my time at university studying my degree because I got to live at home with my parents. There were a lot of young people from regional Queensland who went to QUT and financially supported themselves, so I certainly take my hat off to those young people from regional Queensland. I believe the member for Keppel would have been one such young person who had to do that.

As I said, the alumni fund dinners were hosted at Old Government House. The member for Surfers Paradise referred to the fact that it had been refurbished by a previous state government grant, which I believe was a grant of about \$5 million. Unfortunately, because of the heritage listing in that grant, they were not able to put in a kitchen facility so we had to cater dinners for 50 people with no kitchen. We had a microwave and two trestle tables and from that we had to magic up dinner, which was lots of fun. It was quite difficult but we managed. I am very embarrassed to say this, but there was one night when I was serving—we were light on for wait staff—and I may have had a mild collision with the back of a head as I took the plates around. He forgave me and I still got to go home that night.

Mr Ryan interjected.

Ms PUGH: Lucky I had already graduated or I might have been in a bit of trouble indeed, member for Morayfield. I did apologise. The facilities at Old Government House beautifully complement some of the more modern and up-to-date facilities that QUT installed after I graduated—such as The Cube, which is world class. They are the kinds of facilities that attract our international students, and we know how important international students are for a university. As the member for Chatsworth said, we had the ‘sandstone seven’ but by the time I was looking at university options I certainly viewed QUT as being right there on par with UQ—

Mr Power: UQ is hopeless!

Ms PUGH: They are your words, not mine, member for Logan. I was going to say that so far we have managed to leave the UQ-QUT rivalry somewhat out of this. Member for Logan, I will let you make that contribution. I have no willingness to go there or I will be in trouble at home.

It is good to note that there is bipartisan support for this bill, and that support has extended to the entire process of how the bill has been managed. I note the contributions from the deputy chair and member for Southern Downs as well as the chair and member for Redlands. They had glowing words about each other. I do not know whether it is the early Christmas spirit, but it is certainly nice to hear that bipartisan support.

Mr Lister: No, it's a love that will last forever.

Ms PUGH: ‘A love that will last forever’—put that on the *Hansard* record. That is lovely to hear. I refer now to the Minister for Education. If anybody can bring people together, I would say it is the Minister for Education.

Mr Power: I love the Minister for Education.

Ms PUGH: Indeed. I think everybody loves the Minister for Education. She is so good they named her twice. The Minister for Education takes very seriously the importance of consulting and ensuring that we have fulsome consultation through the committee. It is a very important process to run things through a robust committee system. In this particular instance, all of the members of the committee are very satisfied with how the process was run. It is fantastic to see that bipartisan support.

Our universities rely heavily on the revenue from international students, which I mentioned earlier. Everybody in this House knows that our universities were hit really hard during COVID—as were the financial fortunes of the international students who did come to Queensland to gain an education.

I simply wanted to acknowledge briefly the contribution of Riverlife Baptist Church in my electorate which did extensive work, basically opening a soup kitchen for the international students who live in my area to make sure they had not only financial support but also emotional support. That is really important because they were away from home, away from family and away from friends, and the studies they had come to complete were also abbreviated. It was a very lonely time. I really thank Riverlife church for stepping up in that space. We know that this bill reduces the number of council members from 22 to 15. It has bipartisan support, so I can safely say that I commend this bill to the House.