



Speech by

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EDUCATION [MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS] BILL

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (5.55 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill brought to the House by the Education Minister, Anna Bligh. The bill, as the minister has outlined, makes a number of changes to streamline university governance, to facilitate the prep school trial, to align education legislation with NCP requirements, to regulate private training for overseas students and to extend the inquiry power of the Board of Teacher Registration.

In speaking to the bill today I want to focus on higher education and the enormous impact that the advent of higher education through UQ Ipswich has had on our community. Ipswich is well known for having always had a fantastic tradition of education. Ipswich Grammar School, established in 1863, is the oldest high school in Queensland. St Mary's and St Edmond's Catholic colleges, Ipswich Girls Grammar School, Bremer TAFE, Ipswich West, Ipswich Central, Raceview and Silkstone primary schools are all over 100 years old. It really has been largely because Ipswich was traditionally a hinterland for a significant rural area that we have as such developed a significant education centre, along much the same lines as Toowoomba. Our community is well known throughout the state and indeed Australia for its tradition of education excellence.

A number of these institutions to which I have just referred met recently to extend the knowledge of that excellence throughout Australia and the world. They met to establish an education cluster which will allow our region to market itself widely as a centre of excellence in education. It could, I guess, develop Ipswich's somewhat infant education export sector into quite a big industry for us in the future.

Despite this tradition of education, until only four years ago Ipswich was the only provincial city in Queensland without its own university. This changed those four years ago when, with the intake of just 500 students, the University of Queensland Ipswich campus was opened. The process of securing UQ Ipswich for our community was a long and very difficult task. The University of Queensland began looking to establish a regional campus in the early 1990s. However, there were many in the university who did not think to even consider Ipswich or who looked somewhat down their noses at establishing such a western suburbs icon all the way out at Ipswich. Through the excellent work of David Hamill in particular—with good support from the member for Ipswich West, Don Livingstone, and others—a tremendous campaign was mounted to have UQ come to Ipswich. When the campus opened in 1998 those long-held dreams of Ipswich's fantastic primary school, high school and TAFE cluster finally having a university were realised.

UQ Ipswich now has almost 3,000 students receiving the quality education for which UQ Ipswich is renowned in the beautiful environment of the restored Challinor Centre. Since its sad past as a mental institution, Challinor has been completely transformed, its buildings restored and its grounds manicured. Teaching at UQ Ipswich is innovative, with cutting-edge courses in communication, behavioural sciences and e-commerce as well as some excellent social research being done through the community service and research centre.

The worth of the Community Service and Research Centre's work is well understood throughout the Ipswich community, where through programs such as the Goodna Service Integration Project some really innovative work on how community and government can better work together to deliver services has been done. The work is also being recognised with the Graduate Certificate in Social Science, a course that I am currently studying, currently being one of just two finalists in its category in the Australian Awards for University Teaching. Those awards are by far the most prestigious awards for teaching in Australia. If UQ Ipswich, such a young and developing campus, can secure an Australian award for university teaching, it will very much reinforce the education standards of UQ Ipswich and reinforce the belief that excellent education can be provided in new and in regional campuses.

While I believe the process will inevitably take some time, UQ Ipswich is gradually being integrated into the Ipswich community. Its presence gives local people, young and old, a meaningful opportunity to be educated in their own community—something that is absolutely central to building a smart city. The regional dispersal of education if done well is one of the most effective ways of ensuring equitable access to education. It is also one of the most effective ways of ensuring that in smart economies the regions do not get left behind. While there remains more to be done, we are doing well in Ipswich at connecting the university and the community. These are the opportunities that UQ Ipswich has given us. I commend the bill to the House.