



Speech By  
**Mark Robinson**

**MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND**

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Record of Proceedings, 12 May 2016

**EDUCATION, TOURISM, INNOVATION AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (11.39 am): I move—

That the House take note of report No. 12 of the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee tabled on 29 April 2016.

I rise to speak to the report of the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee on the inquiry into smoking and tobacco use at universities, TAFE facilities and registered training organisations. It was my privilege to be the deputy chair of the committee at the time of the inquiry. The committee worked its way through the various issues in a methodical and productive way, and agreement was reached on many things. I note the work of my colleagues the members for Albert and Gaven along with the chair, the member for Townsville, and the members for Pine Rivers and Maryborough. I thank all of the committee members, and I particularly thank all of the stakeholder groups—the universities, RTOs, TAFE, Treasury and others—who provided very useful information for the committee to deliberate upon. I make special thanks to the University of Queensland, QUT, Griffith University, USQ, QCU and JCU. I hope I have not missed any; I apologise if I have. I am particularly proud of my association, as a former student, with James Cook University's Nathan campus and the University of Queensland.

In terms of the recommendations of the committee, there was one main recommendation, and that was that the committee recommend the government work with education and training organisations and their peak bodies to advise and assist with health promotion about smoking and smoke-free environments, to support implementation measures and to reduce smoking on campus. Apart from that key recommendation, the government and non-government members could not come to an agreement. We had a lot of helpful and useful discussions, but the non-government members made a statement which is in the report. We believe that universities, TAFEs and registered training organisations have a moral responsibility to protect their staff and students from the effect of tobacco smoke, both direct and indirect. As such, our position is for the government to work with universities, TAFEs and RTOs over a two-year period to self-impose and regulate restrictions on their own campuses, after which their actions will be assessed and, if found to be inadequate, the government should then legislate.

In short, our view is that we need stronger self-regulation. Almost all of the other states have used strong self-regulation, and a number of them have been able to achieve smoke-free universities without having the big stick of regulation to force them to do so. We think much more needs to happen in Queensland to achieve that. Getting together with the vice-chancellors of these organisations and working that through is a far better way to resolve this than creating additional red tape.

When I was at James Cook University undertaking my undergraduate degree, I was a casual smoker. I gave it up when I was very young. I was able to stop, but I understand for some people it is an addiction. We really need that understanding to take university students with us, not just impose things. Having been a smoker in my youth, I empathise with those who are addicted and who, despite their best efforts, cannot kick the habit.

When we look at the move towards smoke-free universities, we need to move in a way that considers those who struggle with the habit. It is a blight on our society. We need to work harder to educate people on the dangers of taking up smoking, and we need to continue to work with universities to reduce smoking on their campuses, but we have to do it in a careful and considered way. For example, there are isolated cases where we need to take caution. Griffith University's Nathan campus has a lot of bushland areas. There is a smoking area students can access that is safe, but if we were to make it completely smoke free in a way that is not careful or planned we may end up with people smoking in the bush and inadvertently increasing the risk of bushfire. That is why we say we need to work carefully: stronger self-regulation and legislation as a last resort.