



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

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EDUCATION (OVERSEAS STUDENTS) BILL

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (5.25 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2018. While the bill is primarily an education bill with some useful measures in it, it has an unusual inclusion of a trade issue regarding Easter trading tacked onto it and without due recognition of that in the bill's title. I will focus my comments on the education issues, noting the contributions of those on our side about the government's mess on Easter trading.

It has been my pleasure, prior to my nine years in parliament, to have a career in education as well as international aid and development and chaplaincy work. Having been fortunate to receive a good public school education, including at three Queensland universities, my education career has included TAFE teaching in science, high school tutoring, tertiary level lecturing in multiculturalism, Aboriginal and Islander education and intercultural preparation courses for Australians travelling overseas in volunteers abroad type programs. I have also had the opportunity to travel widely overseas and to see where many of the international students originate from, particularly Asian students, and to find out what they hope to gain from a student exchange in Australia. Many Asian countries, like China, India, Japan and Malaysia, send their students to Australia because they can receive a good education for a reasonable price and in a safe place. It is a highly competitive sector and Brisbane and other Queensland cities must compete with other Australian capital cities as well as with the USA, Canada, Europe and the UK for the growing Asian student market.

As the local member for the Cleveland district seat of Oodgeroo, education has always been an important portfolio to me. Achieving local outcomes for our primary and secondary schools, our Redland City TAFE and other tertiary education providers is important. What is clear, however, is that this government is failing to provide the best education possible for Queensland students, with Queensland often lagging behind most other states year by year despite the excellent work done by our teachers and other educators and allied staff. Queensland is consistently one of the worst performing states in Australia, whether considering primary school students assessed through NAPLAN tests or the rate of students pursuing higher education according to a recent Deloitte report.

With respect to education, the bill does a number of things. It replaces the regulatory systems used in our state to monitor and ensure compliance for both Australian students attending overseas educational institutions and foreign students attending our institutions here in Queensland. This will align Queensland's regulatory systems with national guidelines in other states of Australia, including Victoria and Tasmania, which have established similar regimes. With numbers last recorded in November 2017, there were 5,678 students utilising international programs throughout Queensland. Ensuring each of these thousands of young people receive an education at the highest standard is very important to our future and to theirs.

Another purpose of the bill is to amend the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act to support the implementation of the new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems. While the new systems value school based assessment processes, they add external assessment tasks in order to ensure universality and conformity across Queensland.

In terms of the seat of Oodgeroo, Cleveland district schools have an excellent reputation for exchange study programs with foreign countries. The Cleveland district and Redland City provide a great location for international students, with exceptional exchange programs in both the urban and rural environments of the beautiful Redlands, which is only a short ferry ride across Moreton Bay to North Stradbroke Island. The relatively short distance to Brisbane City and the Gold Coast makes Redland City an ideal location for international students, and they come by the thousands.

One example is the exchange program run by Cleveland District State High School, which operates one of the CRICOS programs for registered international students. Having hosted international students for more than a decade, Cleveland District State High School puts on a great program that not only involves experiencing South-East Queensland but also includes a trip to Cairns to see the beauty of tropical North Queensland. In the first term of 2018, 42 international students are studying at Cleveland District State High School. Some are here long term and are intending to study at Australian universities when they complete high school, while others are here for short-term stays. Those numbers are expected to climb to more than 60 in the third term of this year.

Our students come from a range of different countries, including the Philippines, Norway, Brazil, Papua New Guinea, China, Italy, Japan, Austria, Germany, India and Vietnam among others. Within the Redlands, the majority of students live in homestay accommodation with Australian families. Our international students give glowing endorsements of the program and regularly say how much they have enjoyed the experience. Today, time does not allow me to elaborate on the many individual stories and reports that have been made by international students, but their experiences are overwhelmingly positive.

It is not just the international students who benefit from being here and seeing our amazing state. As stated on the school's website, the international student exchange program—

... broadens the perceptions of domestic students ... offering firsthand information about other cultures and countries previously gleaned only from textbooks or electronic media. The exchange of knowledge and opinions which occurs between domestic students and international students is a powerful one.

As parliamentarians, we are here discussing these amendments to the legislation because we are aiming to improve international student programs that benefit our students and broaden their perspectives.

While on the topic of Cleveland District State High School, it is important to note that 2,000 or so students, both domestic and international, will benefit from the new indoor auditorium currently under construction that the school community and I had been calling for over many years. The growth of the school community has put significant pressure on the school's facilities and will continue to do so as the population increases in the area. Cleveland District State High School will continue to need investment in buildings if it is to continue to keep up with domestic and international student demand.

Today in the parliament I again raise this need and ask the education minister to immediately approve the new buildings that are needed and under consideration at this time or risk substantial overcrowding in the current facilities. Approvals are needed now so that construction can begin as soon as possible. In the medium to long term, more land will be needed for the school's expansion, again to cater for current domestic and international growth, or alternatively a new high school could be built nearby. One option is for the government to consider the DPI land at Ormiston, which Cleveland District State High School could potentially share with the DPI.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order! Member for Oodgeroo, I bring you back to the long title of the bill, rather than the topic you are on now.

Dr ROBINSON: Certainly. I was just coming to a conclusion. The education measures contained in the bill are important and I support them in as much as they will assist in providing students in the Cleveland district and overseas students in exchange programs with a better education. I support the bill.