



Speech By  
**Jann Stuckey**

**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2018

### **EDUCATION (OVERSEAS STUDENTS) BILL**

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (12.45 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2018. It was introduced by the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations on 15 February this year on the first full sitting day of the 56th Parliament and subsequently referred to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee. This bill is one of several that lapsed when the 55th Parliament was dissolved and has been reintroduced, albeit with added amendments. In my capacity as the very proud member for Currumbin and deputy chair of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee, I congratulate all members upon their election to the Legislative Assembly. It truly is an honour and a privilege to serve the people of Queensland in this House. I also congratulate the member for Nudgee on her election as chair of this committee. Education lays the foundation for our children's future job prospects and is a critical part of their self-development and self-esteem. Children today live in a world with many challenges different from those when I raised my own children. As legislators, we have an even more significant role to play and a responsibility to do all we can to ensure that they receive a sound education in a supportive environment.

The Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee of the 55th Parliament, which previously reviewed the 2017 version of this bill, agreed that the bill should be passed in its report to the parliament on 28 September 2017, which included four recommendations. The new committee came to the same conclusion that the bill be passed but without the other three recommendations. As I mentioned, the 2018 bill introduced on 15 February required the committee to report back by 2 March this year, a time line of just 16 days. I understand the need for the government to have legislation on the *Notice Paper*, but surely it is important for new MPs to have the opportunity to deliver their maiden speeches as a priority. They cannot debate legislation until they have done so. Take out the month of April and it will be May before many members have a chance to speak for the first time. Given the short time frame and the fact the bill had already been investigated through the committee process, our committee had time for only one public hearing, held on 22 February here at Parliament House. I place on record my thanks to the departmental officers for their attendance and the briefing notes.

The explanatory notes state the policy objectives of the bill are to create a new regime for the regulation of providers of courses to overseas students and international student exchange programs; provide the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority with functions to administer new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems commencing for students entering year 11 in 2019; to make minor and technical amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000; and, lastly, to amend the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 to provide that larger retailers in regional areas without Sunday or public holiday trading be allowed to open on the public holiday on Easter.

The minister has advised of two key differences on the lapsed bill, incorporated as additional amendments. One related to recommendation No. 4 of the former committee which sought to limit the future use in proceedings of a document that is required to be kept and produced by a person under clause 66 unless the proceeding relates to the false or misleading nature of the document. This recommendation was addressed by departmental officers in a briefing note which stated the recommendation was too restrictive, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the regulatory regime. However, new subclauses (4) and (5) were added which addressed some of the former committee's concerns around use in proceedings of specific documents.

The second were amendments to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 which were intended to address an inadvertent omission made when the act was amended in 2017. This is due to the government's omission of a provision permitting non-exempt shops to continue to trade on the Easter Saturday public holiday in regional areas without Sunday or public holiday trading.

At the briefing on 22 February in reply as to why Easter Saturday was missed in the earlier legislation, the committee was told that Easter Sunday was 'just missed' when the act was amended last year. Just an oversight? Just missed? What has been exposed is a sloppy Palaszczuk government and a sloppier minister. Who could forget her having to make 300 amendments to the Racing Integrity Act in 2016? If it had not been for the National Retail Association bringing the omission to the attention of the government, then we would have had a right royal hot cross bun bungle on our hands.

I have to say that I was puzzled by the title of this bill, as the honourable member for Kawana indicated, because it also includes amendments to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act, yet it is not reflected in its title, the Education (Overseas Students) Bill 2018. Labor has shoved this important issue for regional towns into this bill, but in its attempt to cover up its inadmissible mistake it has only named the bill the Education (Overseas Students) Bill. Normally a bill of this composition would be titled the 'Education (Overseas Students) and Other Legislation Bill 2018' or similar. I wonder if this is a new trend and will become the normal practice for the Palaszczuk government to hide its incompetence. The trading hours debate has been going on for many years, so such an omission is very disappointing.

The 2017 bill attracted only three submissions which were all mostly supportive. They were from Independent Schools Queensland, Independent Education Union of Australia's Queensland and Northern Territory branch and Australian Catholic University. Independent Schools Queensland noted the following—

Whilst it could be questioned as to the need for regulatory legislation at both the Commonwealth and State levels, the Bill recognises the national regulatory framework and provides the required powers for the State to monitor the compliance of providers.

In relation to international exchange students, it said—

The Bill legislates for a new State regulatory regime in respect of international exchange students.

Currently such exchanges are undertaken under the National Guidelines for the Operation of International Secondary Exchange Programs in Australia.

It continued—

Given that these guidelines appear to be working well in respect of the comparatively small number of students involved in these exchanges, it might be questioned as to the necessity for such comprehensive new legislation.

The Independent Education Union, also supporting the bill, wrote—

We are however, concerned by the proposal to amend the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Act 2014 to allow the authority to purchase external assessment for senior subjects ...

It continued—

Although we recognise that this may not be the intention of the draft legislation, our concern is that the amendments open up the possibility of for-profit business entities supplying assessment items for use with students in schools.

The overseas student program provides many benefits to schools across Queensland, and none more so than for Palm Beach Currumbin State High School—also known as PBC—and Elanora State High School where there are around 100 international students from a broad range of countries such as Germany, Brazil, China, Japan, Norway, France and Italy. The main aim of the international program is for students to be fully integrated into the school environment to improve their language skills, learn about the Australian culture and experience the Aussie way of life by living with their host families. In the recent boundary redistribution PBC was moved into the Burleigh electorate, but two-thirds of the students live in Currumbin so I am still actively involved in the school, and Elanora High remains in the electorate.

Education Queensland International has been running student programs for many years and has successfully operated at PBC for over 12 years. There are two major intakes of students at PBC—at the beginning of the year in January and again in July. PBC accepts between 35 and 40 students per semester. There are currently 11 schools on the Gold Coast hosting international students all belonging to the Education Queensland Gold Coast alliance based at Keebra Park. Elanora State High School hosts approximately 40 full-fee-paying students at any one time. Students enrol at the school from one term up to 2½ years and live with local Australian homestay families, which not only enhances cultural understanding but is a significant contributor to the local economy. An increasing number of international students in state high schools are remaining in Australia to complete their tertiary studies.

I am very proud of the quality of care and the teaching delivered at all of the schools in Currumbin, whether they are state primary, state high schools, our special school or our independent Catholic school. In recent weeks I have attended numerous student leader badging ceremonies and was incredibly impressed by the level of commitment and maturity displayed by these young individuals and their teachers. Well done, one and all.