



Speech by

## Rosemary Menkens

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Hansard Wednesday, 1 November 2006

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### ALLIGATOR CREEK, NOME AND CUNGULLA, PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—NPA) (10.11 pm): Alligator Creek, Nome and Cungulla are rural residential areas south of Townsville with a rapidly growing population of predominantly families with young children. This area is not serviced by a local school. Parents have been lobbying successive governments for a local school since the 1980s. The previous coalition government had committed to these good people a primary school. The furniture for that school was even waiting on rail wagons in Townsville in 1989. However, when the government changed at that election, all plans for a school at Nome were scrapped and have been given no consideration since then. The land was acquired and is still owned by the Department of Education.

Currently there are around 140 children travelling to Townsville every day from the area to attend state schools, and this figure does not include those who attend private schools. I believe these would be sufficient numbers to warrant a primary school being built.

In response to lobbying from concerned parents, I invited the shadow minister for education, Stuart Copeland, to attend a public meeting at the Alligator Creek Bowls Club to hear constituents' concerns about their young people, some of whom are as young as four years old, who are forced to sit on a bus for over an hour on an already congested area of the Bruce Highway. This is a distance of up to 35 kilometres each way.

The coalition believes there is a demonstrated need for a school for this area and it made an election promise to my constituents that a coalition government, if elected, would proceed with plans to build a new school. I ask the minister for education to request his department to revisit the need for a state primary school at Alligator Creek in view of the demographic changes that have taken place in the past 10 years and the huge population growth that is being experienced.

Townsville City Council zones this area as rural but the education department considers the area as fringe urban, which does appear to be quite a discrepancy. I understand this current departmental zoning of this area precludes the area from fulfilling the criteria as having sufficient numbers to warrant the building of a new school. This is a rural area. It is zoned rural by council. There is no sewerage. These people are not supplied access to the town water supply. It is not fringe urban but actually a rural area. I believe these residents are being unduly discriminated against as a result.

A school in a rural area is much more than an educational centre. It is a community centre; it is an area of pride that local P&Cs will develop and support. I have written to the minister on this issue and I do ask him on behalf of the constituents in this area to assess the educational needs of the area with a view to providing them with their own local school.