



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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RURAL AND REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (9.06 pm): I bring to the attention of the House a very important issue that has caused a lot of grief in western Queensland, which is the loss of the bus services between Townsville and Mount Isa. Mr Speaker, as you would be aware, very little is offered in the way of public transport in western regions, unlike the metropolitan areas where bus, train and taxi services run at frequent schedules.

The Greyhound bus company has cut its services from 24 to 14 services per week due to the fact that the government will subsidise only night-time services and not the most vital daytime services. The western towns of Balfes Creek, Homestead, Pentland, Torrens Creek, Prairi, Hughenden, Richmond-Maxwelton, Neila, Nonda, Julia Creek, Cloncurry, Mount Isa and Tenant Creek are now left with inadequate levels of public transport services.

It has reached the point where our elderly are forced to wait at bus stops at all hours of the night when travelling to Townsville for specialist medical treatment and doctors appointments. Another concerned group is boarding school students and their parents who drive long distances from their properties to town in the middle of the night so that they can pick up or drop off their children. There are also concerns that tourism is diminishing. Travellers are missing the opportunity to see those towns attractions during daylight hours.

Those bus services are the lifeblood of rural and regional Queensland. They are absolutely vital for the survival and the existence of our small towns. Without the services, those regions will perish. That is why it is important to have the services restored and upgraded.

We already know that the south-east corner is facing infrastructure problems because it cannot contain the influx of people pouring into the region. If the government does not support services and infrastructure in rural and regional areas, people from those communities will leave the area in droves, putting greater pressure on the metropolitan areas. For this very reason it makes economic sense to maintain services in our rural and regional areas. That is why the people of north-western Queensland are calling on the state government to support and assist in increased daytime subsidies to get those services up and running again.