



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Thursday, 8 June 2006

CHARTERS TOWERS, ALPHA STATE SCHOOL

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (12.37 am): I would like to raise an issue that is important to a rural town, and I table this petition on behalf of 287 petitioners of all ages in the township of Alpha.

I also table a letter I have received from Michael Hall, a 14-year-old student at Alpha State School who courageously initiated this petition.

Michael says that from the beginning of this term the students were no longer able to buy their lunch from local businesses across the road from school. He said that for 40 years students from Alpha State School have been walking just across the road to purchase their lunches, supporting local businesses and learning real life skills such as budgeting and receiving change. Michael said that out in this part of the world they do not have the luxuries of buying KFC, McDonald's or Red Rooster and it is a rare treat when their parents go away and bring them back something.

I would like to stress that we are not talking about cities with trains, cars and buses running at frequent schedules; we are talking about a small community with a population of less than 1,000 people where everyone knows each other and supports each other. This is a rural town where the people can see the cattle grazing in paddocks and some parents travel in excess of 100 kilometres a day to take their children to school. While we appreciate and understand that the principals and staff of every school have a duty of care towards their students, the ultimate responsibility remains with the parents who have given permission for their children to leave the school grounds to purchase their lunches.

These students are not being truants, they are not being exposed to unnecessary risk, they are not amongst heavy transport running at frequent schedules such as in the cities; they are country students simply buying their lunch in a small rural community with no traffic hazards, no risk and returning to eat in the school grounds.

Michael, like many fellow students, travels in excess of 100 kilometres on a daily basis to attend school and believes in giving mums a break from preparing lunch. He also asks that the geographic position of Alpha be taken into consideration. He states—

Not many of us get to experience the likes of large towns or cities where it is taken for granted that we all should know and have experience with handling money and learning the social skills of communicating with everyday situations such as handing over and receiving money for simple items such as sandwiches or bottles of milk.

Michael is a 14-year-old but shows the maturity to understand the concepts that many people struggle to understand. In his letter Michael states—

I also feel that we need to support our small country businesses or they will cease to exist.

I trust that the Minister for Education will respond favourably to Michael and his schoolmates and assure them that they are trusted enough to purchase their lunch at lunchtime from local businesses as they have been for the last 40 years. The minister might also like to praise their initiative in submitting their petition and assure them that their voices will be heard.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition regarding Alpha State School

Tabled paper: Copy of letter, dated 4 June 2006, from Michael Hal addressed to whom it may concern.