




Speech By
Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 3 November 2016

PETITION: MOTION TO TAKE NOTE

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (11.32 am): I move—

That the House take note of a paper petition from 15,016 petitioners requesting the House to support the Queensland government's efforts in lobbying the Turnbull LNP federal government to guarantee that the current School Transport Assistance Program for Students with Disabilities in Queensland will continue to be made available under the NDIS from 1 January 2020.

In addition to the 15,016 signatures on the paper petition there were also 5,119 signatures on an e-petition. The total number of signatures on the paper and e-petitions is 20,135. This is one of the largest petitions I have seen in my time in this House. It is right that this petition is the subject of the first debate in this House under new standing orders for petitions with over 10,000 signatures. This history-making petition and the 20,135 signatures emphasise the critical importance to so many Queenslanders of the current School Transport Assistance Program for Students with Disabilities. I am very proud that I am able to stand up with other members of this House to support kids with a disability in Queensland.

Located in the Morayfield state electorate is the Caboolture Special School. The Caboolture Special School is Queensland's largest special school, and I acknowledge the outstanding role the teachers, staff and supporters of this magnificent school play in the lives of so many local young people. For many years I have worked very closely with the special school community. I know the students and the staff very well. I also know that so many students and their families rely on the current School Transport Assistance Program for Students with Disabilities.

Disappointingly, I have heard some negative commentary from the opposition about this petition. I am sure that we will hear some more negativity from the LNP in this debate today. What this negativity highlights is a fundamental ignorance of the importance of this program and a heartless disregard for the severe consequences which will flow if this program is not continued beyond 2019 by the Turnbull LNP government.

For those who do not know, the current School Transport Assistance Program for Students with Disabilities is a critical part of a student's daily routine, and the bond between the bus drivers and the students is strong and genuine. Bus operators like Rob and Jane Stevens from Ace Buses and the Townsend family from Townsend buses truly care for the students. They know the students by name and the students know them. The bus drivers know each student's personality, they know the healthcare needs of each student, they know each student's disability and they have a genuine passion for ensuring that each student receives the support, attention and care they need as a result of his or her disability. It is this relationship that makes the difference for these students. Without this relationship, many students would miss an important part of their daily routine and many students would not be school-ready as a result.

Daria Ward attends Caboolture Special School. Daria's mum, Trinna, says that the program has been a godsend for her family. Trinna says that Daria loves the buses because the bus operators always greet her with a smile and are friendly towards her. Trinna says—

They miss her when she's not on the bus. They have a companionship, which means leaving her parents but in a safe way. It gives her routine and teaches her life skills, because she knows she has to be ready by a certain time ...

Like me, many Queenslanders—over 20,000 signatories on a petition—are deeply concerned about what the current School Transport Assistance Program for Students with Disabilities will look like under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. From 2020 the responsibility for the program transfers to the Turnbull LNP government under the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and the Turnbull LNP government is yet to provide any clear information regarding the program. As a result, many parents, school communities and transport operators have serious concerns about how the assistance program for students with a disability will be delivered post 2019. Anyone who cares to look into this program will quickly realise how important it is and how a user-pays system will not work. Please stand up for kids with a disability in Queensland and support this program.