




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 21 April 2021

MOTION

Schools, Free Meals

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.51 pm): I am just going to contribute briefly. I have not even prepared a speech, which is very unlike me. However, when any of the crossbench members put forward a motion, I feel it is important to acknowledge not only the effort but also the intent. I totally get what is being said here. Within my community, there are 1,750 meals provided every week for our schoolchildren from Foodbank. The volunteers run down to Brisbane and take it back but, as our volunteer base diminishes—and COVID especially has diminished that base—we have a vulnerability, and that is why this needs to be a bigger conversation going forward. The minister was right when she said that we have to stop applying bandaids because that makes us vulnerable. We have to get to the key causes of why these children are going to school without breakfast and lunch. That is really important.

Each year we have what is called Santa's Classy Helpers who put together an amazing Christmas for all these children who are identified. We walk with the parents to select the foods and the gifts for their children for Christmas. The information we glean from this is that the vast majority do not know how to cook. That is also a key contributor about food preparation. I have gone to the Minister for Education regarding things like the future schools movement within our schools. These are the types of things we need to discuss without being defensive. We need to be proactive. There is no blame in this, but there are ways we can move forward without finding the quick solution. Yes, our children need to have their bellies full. We have good programs and we have amazing volunteers who do an awesome job, but I think we need to dig deeper into the causes. It could be through a process where the children make their own lunches at school as a start so they learn those skills about food preparation as they are growing up.

Ms Grace interjected.

Ms BOLTON: Yes, we do we have classes in that, but I think it is the consistency of all schools doing it. It is like Healthy Harold. The issue is that it is not getting to every school because it is a choice of the principal. We need to have a bigger conversation. Even though I cannot support the motion this time, I support the intent and the endeavours going forward.