



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

ADJOURNMENT

**Leichhardt Electorate: Ellis
Beach Surf Life Saving Club**

SPEECH

Thursday, 13 October 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Thursday, 13 October 2011
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Questioner
Speaker Entsch, Warren, MP

Source House
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Responder
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Mr ENTSCH (Leichhardt—Chief Opposition Whip) (11:17): I recently received an email from a young constituent of mine. It read as follows:

Dear Sir, My name is Sophie Alcorn and I am nine years old. I would like to inform you about the lack of safe road crossings at Ellis Beach Surf Club/ shops. Yesterday my friend and I tried to cross the road near Ellis Beach shops. We stopped in the middle of the road then we tried to cross the next lane. My friend was accidentally hit by a car. She bumped the bonnet and bounced off. She hurt her two knees and got gravel rash on one leg. She had to go to hospital in an ambulance to make sure everything was ok. We all felt sad that my friend was hurt and knew that we were very lucky. I think that it is important to have a zebra crossing or pedestrian lights to make it safer for everyone to cross the road. Can you please help me fix the problem? Each Sunday there are lots of children at the beach for nippers. I don't want any of them to be hurt or have any of their friends hurt if it happens again. Yours Sincerely, Sophie Alcorn.

As a member of parliament, you get lots of letters and lots of emails with people raising all sorts of issues but when you get something from a nine-year-old who has taken the time to sit down, put pen to paper and raise that issue, you really need to take notice of that and treat it with a level of seriousness. I took the time to ring Sophie and congratulate her for making the effort to raise the issue. She said to me that her young friend was very fortunate that she was not badly hurt, but she was very concerned that the next time she might not be so lucky. I also explained to Sophie that advocacy like this—people who are prepared not just to complain about a situation but to raise it as an issue and pursue it with people like me—is one way of achieving an outcome.

Since then, I have spoken to the Cairns Surf Life Saving Association, which is based at Ellis Beach. They told me that this has been an ongoing problem for quite a considerable period of time. They said that every Sunday from May through to November during the surf lifesaving season the Ellis Beach Surf Life Saving Club hosts Nippers. Up to about 100 of these kids compete and the clubrooms and what have you are on the opposite side of the highway. This is the main highway to Port Douglas and on Sunday it can be very busy. It is not just that the kids are crossing the road backwards and forwards; they are carrying their gear, surfboards and everything else that they need as they participate in events. There have been numerous close calls over the years and there is no doubt that there is a desperate need for not only a zebra crossing but a set of traffic lights, even if they are used just on a Sunday, when you have this large congregation of people crossing the road and a lot of tourists using the highway who are not so familiar with our local area. I think it is very important.

Sophie is nine years of age and has been a member of the Nippers for quite a few years. For her to take the time to raise the issue is very impressive. I have written a letter to the state Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure, Craig Wallace, raising the issues that Sophie has and asking him to give serious consideration to this. The investment in a set of traffic lights and a pedestrian crossing really would not be that great. I have been pleased to get a response from Sno Bonneau, who is a local councillor and has come out and been very supportive of this initiative and will support me on it. Doug McKinstry, who is the president of the Cairns Surf Life Saving Club, has told me he is very aware of the risk and also congratulated Sophie on her initiative.

I am hoping that the letter that was initiated by young Sophie Alcorn will see some outcome and at the end of the day we get the opportunity to open these traffic lights and pedestrian crossing. I think we should acknowledge Sophie Alcorn and the outstanding work that she has done. I know that her mum and dad are very proud of her and I would encourage any young people who identify issues not to just sit back and talk about them; take the time to send an email, because it can make a difference.