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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Rural and Regional Newspapers

SPEECH

Monday, 9 November 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Date Monday, 9 November 2015	Source House
Page 12355	Proof No
Questioner	Responder
Speaker Marles, Richard, MP	Question No.

Mr MARLES (Corio) (11:25): Geelong has a number of weekly local newspapers, among them *GeelongNEWS* and the *Geelong echo*, which give us their snapshot of the weekly news in our town midweek, *GeelongNEWS* in respect of that news which occurs within Geelong centre and to the north and the *echo* in terms of the news on the peninsula. The *Geelong Independent* is a welcome addition to one's letterbox coming into Thursday-Friday, as we go into the weekend, for its take on what has occurred in Geelong during the week. All service our community tremendously.

But today I really want to talk about Geelong's daily newspaper, the *Geelong Advertiser*. I have a copy of today's paper here. It has been a part of our community for a very long time. If I can be indulgent: my first photo was in this paper in 1976, when I won as a tender eight-year-old the under-9 swimming championship at my local school. That a newspaper would cover such an event as that says a lot about what regional newspapers are all about. From that moment onwards, in the way in which I grew up it was always an incentive to see if you could get your name in the *Geelong Addy*. It was the incentive to kick a goal in the junior footie, because then you would get your photo in the *Addy*. A bit later on in my life a good round in the weekend golf comp might land you in the *Geelong Addy*. More recently I have flipped through the pages of that newspaper—indeed, on this very day—to try to find my name in relation to whatever particular issue is going on.

I look at my children, particularly my older two, Sam and Bella. They read this newspaper in a way that they do not read the *Herald Sun*, *The Age*, *The Australian* or the *Financial Review*. They flick through it with the hope that they might see their name in the way I did when I grew up but also so they might see a photo of their friends in a variety of different ways. Reading the *Geelong Advertiser* is an entirely different experience from reading any other newspaper, because it is our newspaper. It tells our story.

Warren Buffett encapsulated this perfectly when he said:

If you want to know what's going on in your town – whether the news is about the mayor or taxes or high school football – there is no substitute for a local newspaper that is doing its job. A reader's eyes may glaze over after they take in a couple of paragraphs about Canadian tariffs or political developments in Pakistan; a story about the reader himself or his neighbours will be read to the end. Wherever there is a pervasive sense of community, a paper that serves the special informational needs of that community will remain indispensable to a significant portion of its residents.

Those words are absolutely true in relation to the *Geelong Advertiser*.

The *Geelong Advertiser* was founded in 1840. It is Australia's second oldest masthead. It was established by a Scots immigrant, James Harrison, who is perhaps Geelong's most famous son. James Harrison, as the original promoter and editor of the *Geelong Advertiser*, also gained fame as the inventor of the modern fridge. Indeed, he came up with that invention by his observations of the way in which alcohol evaporating on typeset made that typeset cold.

The *Geelong Advertiser* is a really significant part of Geelong. It has had many owners through the years. Today, it is owned by News Corp and it employs more journalists and photographers than any other local media outlet within our region. In that sense, it is the custodian of Geelong's story. I think, when you examine what it is that makes Geelong Geelong, there are a few critical institutions—the Geelong Football Club is an obvious example, perhaps Deakin University, you might say, is one of the critical organisations within our city—but I think there is none that is more important than the *Geelong Advertiser*. Without it, our story would not be told, and without our story being told it would be hard to characterise the same sense of identity. We might just be another outer suburb of Melbourne. But what makes us distinct is that we have a voice, and the *Geelong Advertiser*, for 175 years this month, has been the voice of Geelong.