

Hey everyone,

My name is Thomas. It feels kind of weird speaking today because I'm a little nervous, but it's really good to be heard and supporting Daniel's great work

In a few moments I will give you a brief outline of what living in a rural community and being gay is, but before I do that I'd just like to personally thank the mayor for launching the tour because I think it will help to stop homophobia in schools.

I live on a country farm where there's no public transport to go into town with your friends and there's not much acceptance I suppose you could say towards young people in the area, so that's why Gasp and Jami have been so supportive. Everyone in the group are really awesome people, but just stuck behind the barrier of fitting in with society, but perhaps this book will change that and make it easier.

Now I'm going to share some personal stories with you about my teenage years so I'll apologise in advance in case I get a tear in my eye

Because I live so far out of town on a rural property, I had to get a school bus into town. The first few years were awesome because I haven't come out to people yet, but I remember I still got really bullied at school because I had a disability and because I was considered to be different from everyone else, but now when I look back, apart from the bullying and the late nights doing homework and the boring geography classes where I would be asleep on the desk, school was pretty good.

What was bad about it was the homophobia I experience. On the school bus, I remember getting a coin thrown at my head and the boys told me oh you faggot, you will never be anything, but in a way, I was determined to be more than what they would have ever been.

Sorry, lost my track of thought

I'm nearly finished so I'm sorry for taking so long

One of the other things I wanted to say today was that I'm pretty well known in the Geelong area and that my sexuality doesn't change who I am. I don't normally come out to a whole group of people, but it's who I am and I can't help if I'm that way

One more thing before I finish. I would personally like to thank Daniel for writing the book because it's really important. I think I speak for everyone here in saying that you're awesome and it's people like you who can really change the world

Thanks so much for listening. I have a background in advocacy so I can talk for hours but I won't do that today