



Speech by

## Mr BRUCE LAMING

### MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

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Hansard 6 September 2000

#### DEAF AND HEARING IMPAIRED; ALOPECIA

**Mr LAMING** (Mooloolah—LP) (11.29 p.m.): I am pleased to rise to inform the House of the successful outcome of a recent joint venture project to aid the deaf and hearing impaired. I am advised that this was an Australian first. On Thursday, 17 August the Quota clubs of Mooloolaba and Nambour presented captioned hospital procedure videos to the Director of Nursing at the Nambour General Hospital. The function was held in the auditorium, where members of Quota International, Better Hearing Sunshine Coast and the Deaf Society were present to witness the handover by the President of Quota International of Mooloolaba, Mrs Joy Haywood, the President of Quota International of Nambour, Mrs Kay Lancashire, and the Lieutenant Governor of the 34th District of Quota International, Mrs Janice Woolrych, who spoke of Quota's work within the community.

The ceremony was signed by an interpreter from the Deaf Society for guests who were hearing impaired. This was an enlightening experience for those with normal hearing. A captioned video was screened depicting a surgical procedure. In time, the Quota clubs, in conjunction with Better Hearing Australia and the Deaf Society, hope to extend the captioned video library. The General Manager of the Australian Caption Centre, Mr Alex Varley, was present to acknowledge the contribution made by Quota, as Nambour Hospital is the first in Australia to receive these innovative videos. This was followed by an informed morning tea at which members learned of some of the difficulties and hurdles faced by the hearing impaired and the work of the Captioning Centre.

As the Captioning Centre has now opened an office in Brisbane, members are welcome to view the procedures used to complete these videos, news items and so on. An approach was made by Mr Varley to the various Government departments several years ago seeking financial assistance to have all videos in all hospitals captioned, but this was rejected at the time by the Government of the day as being too costly.

Quota was sparked into action when a Better Hearing Sunshine Coast member was in hospital and needed to view a surgical procedure but was unable to obtain full benefit from the video due to his hearing loss. The 34th district governor at that time, Clare Balston, a member of the Mooloolaba club, brought to the club's notice what could be achieved after she and the patient received guidance from the Captioning Centre. Because of Quota's commitment to the hearing impaired, this proved to be an ideal project, originally costing approximately \$2,500 for six videos. This initiative is being followed up in other hospitals in Australia with Alex Varley's guidance. Videos already captioned by such clubs and other organisations are available for purchase by hospitals throughout Australia. I take the opportunity that this occasion presents to request that the Health Minister give serious consideration to what level or source of funding assistance might be available to this worthy cause.

The second matter that I wish to raise tonight is also a health matter. It is to do with a well recorded but not widely known condition called alopecia. A lady constituent of mine has been afflicted with this condition, which causes substantial hair loss to the point at which a wig needs to be worn. Although she has written to the Minister, no financial assistance has been offered, despite the fact that wigs are expensive and they do wear out.

A number of years ago, my constituent began to suffer from loss of hair and was eventually forced to wear a wig. This loss was diagnosed by her medical practitioner as being caused by alopecia. At the time she was, at the age of 64, still working. She is now retired and she and her husband are on a war veteran's pension, which is their sole income, and as such cannot afford the continuing cost of

wigs as they wear out. The Health Insurance Commission informed her that wigs are not rebateable by Medicare, and she has been informed that under the State Government's health program only persons who have cancer can claim an amount towards the cost of wigs. She wrote to the Minister to ask that consideration be given to providing assistance to those who suffer from alopecia and that the same rebate or allowance be given towards the cost of wigs that they are forced to wear. Those with alopecia are prone to skin cancer, particularly in this State. My constituent has had two cancers removed from her head already but has been advised that she is not able to be included in the program.

This lady needs to wear a wig for the sake of her health, and it is not merely a cosmetic consideration. I suggest that for a woman to be going out in public with a bald head causes much stress and loss of self esteem, making the sufferer likely to venture out only when absolutely necessary. It would also be highly embarrassing. A wig is really is a psychological as well as a medical necessity. Tonight I call on the Minister to review the Government's policy on alopecia so as to ease the suffering of people afflicted with the condition.

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