



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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CHRISTOPHER PRICE; HOPE FARM

Mrs PRATT (Nanango—Ind) (6.57 p.m.): I wish to bring to the attention of the House a chain of events that started with the tragic death of a young boy in my electorate. It is a story of tragedy, love, hope and help. A very special young boy, Christopher Price, was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia when he was only 22 months old on 9 September 1995. He suffered unimaginable pain between then and when he passed away on 10 September 1998. During those three terrible and painful years, Christopher fought his disease with a courage that very few of us can imagine. The community responded, giving their support and showing their kindness to his devastated parents, Belinda and Neal.

During his short life, Christopher spent a lot of time visiting his friends on family farms and he developed a special interaction with animals. In fact, he derived so much pleasure from animals, he told his parents what a good idea it would be for kids like him, suffering from cancer, to have a special place to holiday where they could experience the joys of farm life with their parents, and ease their suffering. It was young Christopher's hope that this would become a reality. Although young Christopher lost his battle with cancer, his dream is now becoming a reality. His legacy to other young cancer sufferers will be called Hope Farm and his parents are working hard to make his dream come true. Sadly, Christopher's story is one that is being repeated across Queensland, and unless it affects us personally it is one of those issues that we tend to bypass.

Although technology is improving in the fight against this terrible disease, we still have a long way to go. We need to offer more than palliative care. We need to support the parents as well as the children to make their life easier. Christopher's parents sold their family home two years after Christopher passed away and purchased 47 acres on top of the Boobie Range on the outskirts of Kingaroy. It is a magical setting, with fabulous views. But it was not just his parents who took up the challenge to make Christopher's dream come true. The community also joined in, with donations of building materials, labour and money.

Hope Farm will have bush walking tracks, farm animals, crafts, games and activities, a swimming pool—in fact, as little or as much activity as one family member needs or is capable of. A cabin on Hope Farm is being built under the banner of the Children's Leukaemia and Cancer Society, a selfless society formed 26 years ago by a group of parents of children with cancer. Families of a child with cancer have many added pressures above normal everyday living. They have added financial burdens and emotional stress, which in many cases leads to family break-ups. It takes us beyond the loss of just a loved one. In many cases, families totally disintegrate under the pressure. When it is finished, Hope Farm will be a facility for parents to use at no charge. It is a facility that will help keep families together as a unit.

It is beyond imagination the dread and fear of young children who are torn away from close friends and family to travel to a hospital far away for painful treatment. After speaking to the Prices, I now understand the trauma associated with families being devastated by having a child with a life-threatening disease such as cancer. These parents are making the dream of their young son Christopher a reality. We need to show some compassion, as the elected representatives of our communities, for the brave parents out there in every community in Queensland facing the trauma and heartbreak that the Prices have experienced.