



Speech by

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### MENTAL HEALTH WEEK; DISCOVERY, SUNSHINE COAST

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.20 p.m.): This week is Mental Health Week. There are many positive things to talk about—some of the wonderful things people are doing in our communities to try to promote good mental health and to support those who have been through some tough times with mental health issues. We know that at least one in five, and some statistics say one in four, people will suffer some form of mental illness during their lives. Most will come back to a position of health and wellbeing. Others may live with some degree of mental illness. However, with the right support strategies, they are able to live a very full and meaningful life.

I want to acknowledge the work of Discovery, a wonderful group in my electorate providing support to people who self-identify as suffering from a mental health illness. Their focus is very much upon mental health rather than illness. I have to say that I am extremely impressed with what I have seen. They run with a skeleton staff of only a couple of workers, yet they literally have scores and scores of participants—they do not call them clients. After people have been involved as participants in the organisation for some time they really do blossom. They are volunteering in those roles and helping each other in a very practical way. But it is funny in the respect that when people come to the organisation and ask who is in charge, often they find a lot of people say they are in charge. People may have difficulty in actually identifying who the paid workers are. But it is a positive and one that I would like to see replicated elsewhere. I would like to see this type of organisation expanded on the Sunshine Coast. I commend its work. It is doing a truly superb job and really deserves to receive ongoing support, in a financial sense from government but as a community as we understand people.

There are always other issues to do with levels of services available to people. Preventive services and supportive services in the community are very important. I also know, though, that there are issues to do with acute services. Tragically, often people's pathway into mental health services is when they hit an acute phase. If there is a criticism of the way we deliver mental health services it is about the need to be able to provide people with pathways into mental health support services before they hit an acute phase.

Tragically, still those pathways through even acute services mean that suicidal people find they have to contend with emergency departments and access block within mental health wards and may not receive the level of monitoring that they require before they are in a position to be able to work through those issues. A critical issue is where people are let go from acute facilities and other mental health facilities before they have been able to work through sometimes quite serious issues with life-threatening potential. I believe we need to provide more focus on providing adequate access to good acute services.