



Speech by

**Paul Hoolihan**

**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

Hansard Tuesday, 14 February 2006

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## **BREAST CANCER AND PROSTATE CANCER**

**Mr HOOLIHAN** (Keppel—ALP) (12.10 pm): I wish to speak about something that I believe may dispel some of the doom and gloom that we have heard since 11.30 am. One of the issues that we all support in our communities is detecting and fighting various forms of cancer. Today, I want to speak particularly about breast cancer and prostate cancer.

In this House there are members who have suffered from various forms of cancer and who continue to fight this insidious disease. The Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, the Hon. Warren Pitt, is hopefully winning his fight and the member for Aspley, Bonny Barry, is continuing her own fight against breast cancer. By any measure, BreastScreen Queensland, which is administered by Queensland Health—and I will deal with that matter later—has been very successful in detecting breast cancer in women who have regular mammograms. I have every reason to thank the wonderful people who work in that area. I believe their work is the real reason for the successful campaign to reduce the incidence in women of death from cancer. A statistic that is of concern is that one in 11 women will be diagnosed with some form of breast cancer during their lifetimes.

BreastScreen Queensland is administered and staffed by Queensland Health and receives Commonwealth funding. In November the Rockhampton unit was responsible for the diagnosis that my wife, Elizabeth, was suffering from breast cancer. The amount of assistance and support that is given by BreastScreen—remember, administered by Queensland Health—and the Queensland Cancer Fund to the many women who have suffered from this disease is amazing.

An even greater concern is that more men will die from prostate cancer than women will die from breast cancer. When I speak to my many male acquaintances, they tell me that they have a real fear of contracting prostate cancer, but that they have a greater fear of the method of detection. I understand that a funding proposal for a prostate cancer screening program is being considered by the federal government. I call on all men throughout Queensland and the rest of Australia who fall into the age group that is of concern to support and take part in any program. It may save their lives.

On her first visit to BreastScreen, Elizabeth was provided with information and support by the medical staff. As I was in this House at the time, a very supportive woman from Yeppoon, who had been through the mill, offered to accompany Elizabeth. From then on, Elizabeth has had almost continuous support both from BreastScreen and the doctors who operate in that area of Rockhampton. A surgeon was present at the time of Elizabeth's diagnosis. By the way, he was a visiting surgeon. We have had his continuing support and guidance and the full range of Elizabeth's supporters have contributed to her almost complete recovery.

I have always been supportive of people who suffer the anguish and worry of this disease but, believe me, when it touches your life, you fully understand that anguish and worry and appreciate the many groups that are there to assist. I think it was ironic that during 2005 I was asked to be a model for a Queensland Cancer Fund calendar for 2006. I never dreamed that I would need the assistance of the fund so soon. I congratulate the owners of one of those calendars as their support has been needed. It may even have some historical significance one day.

Elizabeth would have received the same excellent treatment by the same surgeon at the Rockhampton Base Hospital that she received at the Mater Hospital, but that would have taken a place that was needed by another person. Because we have the capacity to pay for private health insurance, we have tried not to become an additional patient for Queensland Health when there are many people who have a greater need. From the time of Elizabeth's operation it has been the little things that have mattered—continuing support from BreastScreen, community health, the Queensland Cancer Fund, other women who have suffered the disease and even the Zonta Club, which provides a comfort cushion to all women who have had a mastectomy. That support has made Elizabeth's recovery so much easier. I call on all members—indeed, all Queenslanders—to continue their support for these great and necessary services.

From here on my aim is to promote support for the Queensland Cancer Fund and to endeavour to raise prostate cancer awareness so that men receive the same level of diagnosis and treatment that women receive for breast cancer. I say to all the men in this House—and to all the men in Queensland—to get off their backsides and do something about it, because a DRE may save their lives.