



Speech by

Jack Dempsey

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

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NATIONAL STROKE AWARENESS WEEK

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (10.04 pm): It is very fitting that I make this adjournment speech about stroke tonight. Stroke is Australia's second single greatest killer and the leading cause of disability. Every year 53,000 Australians will suffer new and recurrent strokes. That is one every 10 minutes. A stroke occurs when the brain is deprived of oxygen. The signs of a stroke can be one or a combination of many factors.

The acronym FAST is an easy way to recognise these signs. F is for facial weakness, A is for arm weakness, S is for speech difficulty and, if these symptoms exist, it is T for time to act fast and call 000 immediately. Prompt action can prevent further damage and help with recovery. The risk of a stroke can be reduced by eating healthily, exercising, not smoking and maintaining a normal blood pressure level.

The Bundaberg Stroke Support Group recently increased my awareness of the difficulties of stroke victims during National Stroke Week from 17 to 23 September. This included being strapped in a wheelchair and trying to make my way through the main street of Bundaberg. The Bundaberg Stroke Support Group has approximately 30 members, all of whom are either stroke victims themselves or directly affected through a spouse, child, parent or friend. Some are or have been carers, but they are all caring people who are dedicated to supporting stroke victims, enhancing stroke awareness within the community and promoting initiatives to reduce the risk of stroke.

This dedicated and hardworking group is headed by president Debbie Keena, secretary Jocelyn Scott-Wright, treasurer Jo Dunn, assistant treasurer Pauline Langford, publicity officer Denise McGaw and Dianna Hardy. This group meets monthly, providing important fellowship with others who have had similar experiences as themselves. They have regular guest speakers at their meetings from such organisations as Home Assist and Centacare as well as motivational speeches from local psychologists. This dedicated group of caring members also make frequent hospital visits to talk to new stroke victims, providing them with friendship and support and offering help in whatever way they can.

During National Stroke Week the Bundaberg group spread the word to many people throughout the Bundaberg district. One display in the Bundaberg CBD provided a free sausage sizzle for the public as well as promoting published and verbal information about strokes and its effects. One radio interviewer received phone calls from 20 people who had suffered stroke, six of whom had also experienced a subsequent heart attack which sadly can all too often follow unless prompt and professional treatment is carried out.

I also learnt that a stroke can happen at any age. One could only be inspired by the presence of 19-year-old Ryan Rohan whose life was changed forever by a stroke last year. Ryan was also happy to attend the public displays with his mother, Debbie, relate his story and help create greater awareness of the effects of a stroke and how to best deal with its aftermath. I sincerely thank this passionate group for their

continual efforts in promoting stroke awareness. I ask all members here this evening to spread the FAST acronym message.