



Speech by

**Mark McArdle**

**MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA**

Hansard Thursday, 22 February 2007

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## **DEPRESSION; BREAST CANCER, COMMENTS BY DEPUTY PREMIER**

**Mr McARDLE** (Caloundra—Lib) (6.19 pm): On Wednesday of this week, Dr Gregory Levenston and Jeff Kennett addressed the National Press Club on the topic of 'Men's health—no more secrets'. Dr Levenston is a Deputy Grand Master of the Freemasons in Australia while Jeff Kennett is chairman of beyondblue. The Freemasons have been running a men's health campaign across Australia over the past couple of years with two being held in Caloundra in 2006, which I was honoured to open.

Jeff Kennett has been very successful in raising the awareness of depression, depressive illness and mental health. Jeff Kennett spoke at length about health and staying healthy. He stated—

If you stay excited, if you stay connected, if you stay relevant, it is the greatest act of preventing illness you can possibly imagine.

Both organisations have made a commitment to continue the battle to bring depression and all issues associated with that illness to public attention and to sweep away the secrecy and stigma associated with it. Increasingly, more and more sufferers are speaking up and it is good to see the issue being tackled openly and honestly.

I contrast that approach with what we saw in this House this morning. In a shameful exhibition, the Deputy Premier used breast cancer as a political tool. I did not believe that the government could sink any lower. The Deputy Premier managed to do exactly that in trying to extract political mileage out of an illness that affects many thousands of women across this country. In 2001, 11,000 women were diagnosed with breast cancer. In 2003, over 2,000 Queensland women were diagnosed with breast cancer. Also, in 2003 alone, 465 Queensland women died from this disease. Breast cancer is the most common cause of cancer related death among Australian women.

It is against these shocking statistics and the incredible pain and agony that women and their families must go through that the Deputy Premier stood up and used this illness as a political tool. In an article in *QWeekend* on 5 October 2005, Lisa Backhouse states—

For weeks you wake up in the morning and the first thing you think is 'Oh my God, I've got cancer'. There's that disbelief that goes along with it. And the fear that is so real, you can almost taste it. It stays with you.

In the same article, Nadia Farha describes chemotherapy as—

'Hellish. I lost my hair. I had to have a blood transfusion every month because my blood cell counts would drop. I had to give myself an injection in my stomach every day to try to keep up the white cell count. I was in hospital with infection three times.

There is not one member of this House whose heart does not go out to these women and all other breast cancer sufferers as well as to those men who suffer from prostate cancer. I add that there is not one member in this House who does not feel for every single person who is diagnosed with cancer of whatever type. But this House cannot condone the attempt by the Deputy Premier to score cheap political points in regard to such a sensitive and personal issue as breast cancer.

Time expired.