



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Tuesday, 15 September 2009

PROSTATE CANCER

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (12.15 pm): Imagine if every month a bus carrying 47 Queensland men ran off the road at high speed killing everyone on board. According to the latest statistics, that is exactly how many Queensland men die each year from prostate cancer. Sadly, 572 men died in Queensland in 2004, and the 2008 numbers are similar. These men have families, friends and loved ones who continue to grieve their passing. September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. It is a month when as a government and as a community we consider ways in which we can help reduce the dreadful impact of this terrible disease. Unfortunately, around 3,000 Queensland men are expected to be diagnosed with prostate cancer in the coming year.

It is clear that men who feel supported, connected and informed are going to handle the health and emotional challenges much better than those who are isolated, uncertain and afraid. That is why I am pleased to commend the work of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, which helps to coordinate over 80 support groups across Australia—around 22 of which, at last count, are in Queensland. These groups provide support and advocacy to men and their families affected by prostate cancer. They meet regularly and provide a very important supportive forum for the exchange of experiences, ideas and the latest research.

I am very pleased to announce that tonight at the Beenleigh RSL a new support group for men and their families living in Logan and the northern Gold Coast will meet for the first time. The new Beenleigh Prostate Cancer Support Group has been established through the leadership of local volunteer convenor Peter Keech together with Graeme Higgs, the Queensland State Manager of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia. With the support of tonight's guest speakers, Dr Roger Hinsch and Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia ambassador Mr Rob Stirling, I am confident the new Beenleigh support group will grow in the tradition of other support groups around Australia in providing crucial regular networking opportunities to men, their wives and partners and their families.

The role played by research in trying to find answers and solutions for dealing with prostate cancer in Australia is absolutely crucial. Queensland is fortunate to have many highly talented researchers who are searching for the factors that initiate prostate cancer. Some are identifying new approaches to treating it, while other researchers are trying to discover or develop new tests or biomarkers that predict the future course of the cancer.

The Rudd government announced in January of this year a new \$7.5 million Prostate Cancer Research Centre at Brisbane's Princess Alexandra Hospital. The new centre is one of two dedicated Prostate Cancer Research Centres created as part of the federal government's \$249 million national cancer plan. The new PA centre is hosted by the Queensland University of Technology and conducts research that will play a vital role in improving cancer research and care in Queensland and across the country.

In implementing the Q2 policy, the Bligh government contributes significant funding to the Queensland Institute for Medical Research. I am advised that some of the current research of the institute

is related to early detection of prostate cancer. In addition, Queensland Health has contributed state funding and is also working with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing to train urologists.

The Rudd and Bligh governments' focus on research is most important, but governments can only do so much. I commend the work of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia and its recently launched national community service campaign. The campaign reminds people that, when it comes to prostate cancer, 'the difference is you'. It is clear that, if we choose to just sit back and let the problem get worse, that bus full of Queensland men that goes plunging over the cliff every month will just get bigger and bigger. In Prostate Cancer Awareness Month I take this opportunity to congratulate all of Queensland's Prostate Cancer Foundation support groups for the very important work they are doing and wish our new group at Beenleigh well in getting the message out that, at the end of the day, the difference is you.