



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Tuesday, 23 February 2010

‘RIDE FOR ISABEL’ CYCLING EVENT

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (9.40 pm): Every year in Australia more than 58,000 couples experience reproductive loss including around 1,750 stillbirths. As members of the House are aware, a little over two years ago my wife, Kerry, and I were devastated when our daughter Isabel was stillborn at 41 weeks. Sadly, tragedies like ours affect families across Queensland each and every day. Bereaved parents often find the need to talk to someone who has had an experience similar to their own. Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Support (Queensland) is a not-for-profit organisation that offers 24-hour support services via telephone and email as well as regular support meetings.

My wife and I were very well supported during what was a traumatic time for us. We vowed to do whatever we could to increase awareness of this little understood and even less talked about issue. We wanted to give something back. On Saturday, 13 March the inaugural ‘Ride for Isabel’ cycling event will take place. The 85-kilometre bike ride between Flying Fish Point—just south of Innisfail—and Woree in the southern suburbs of Cairns is to honour the memory of our daughter and to raise funds for SANDS (Queensland). The ride also coincides with the start of Bike Week, the major celebration of cycling in Queensland.

There is already strong interest from the community in joining this ride. Far North Queensland has one of the highest rates of cycling in the nation—three times higher than that of Brisbane. In the Cairns region there are more than 2,500 cyclists connected to cycling organisations and clubs alone, not counting the many who simply ride their bike as part of a recreation program or to school. The inaugural ‘Ride for Isabel’ will see riders of varying age and experience participating. This is typical of the cyclists that we see on our roads every day. It is too easy to suggest that all cyclists are the same or ride for the same reasons.

Importantly, bike events like this go a long way to challenging people’s attitudes towards cyclists and showcase the highly organised and vibrant cycling community in our region. While I am riding next month, I will also get a firsthand look at the conditions cyclists face on our roads from one end of the electorate of Mulgrave to the other. I have already stated that the Wright’s Creek Bridge needs to be upgraded as a matter of urgency for the safety of all road users, particularly cyclists, and no doubt I will become aware of other danger spots over the course of the day.

Investing in cycling is an important investment in healthy, sustainable, livable communities, and the Principal Cycle Network Plan announced in December last year set out this vision for Far North Queensland. The Aeroglen to Cairns CBD route has already secured joint local and state funding, and I look forward to this being replicated in the fast-growing southern corridor of Cairns and out to Gordonvale. I hope people will dig deep and support the ‘Ride for Isabel’. It is a cause that is near and dear to my heart, and I cannot think of a better way to launch Bike Week in our region.