



Speech by  
**Curtis Pitt**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

Hansard Wednesday, 18 August 2010

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## **CARDIAC CHALLENGE**

**Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.21 pm): In 2007 cardiovascular disease was the primary cause of death for over 46,000 Australians, representing one-third of all deaths that year. Despite major gains over the last 40 years, there is still a 50 per cent chance of a person dying with their first heart attack. Cardiovascular disease continues to have a major effect on the health of Australians.

For the last three weeks local patients have been able to have their heart procedures at the Cairns Base Hospital thanks to a \$4.18 million investment by the Bligh government in the new cardiac catheter laboratory. Around 80 per cent of all local angioplasty patients will now be able to undergo their procedure close to home, without the need to travel to Townsville or Brisbane. However, it is not possible for the government to fund every piece of equipment. This is where organisations like the Far North Queensland Hospital Foundation are so valuable.

The foundation is a not-for-profit charity that works tirelessly on behalf of our community to assist the activities and services of the Cairns Base Hospital and the Cairns and Hinterland Health Service District. The Yellow Pages Cardiac Challenge is the foundation's largest fundraising event—a three-day, 335-kilometre cycling event from Cairns to Cooktown. Since it began in 2007, the ride has raised more than \$400,000 to assist with the purchase of state-of-the-art equipment and provide support services for the patients and staff. The foundation is hoping to raise in excess of \$250,000 from this year's Cardiac Challenge to fund more cardiac equipment at the Cairns Base Hospital. Coordinator Glenys Duncombe is to be congratulated on her ongoing efforts.

In previous years I have led the Cardiac Challenge as it left from Cazalys, Mulgrave Road, only to farewell the riders at Smithfield. But for 2010 I have taken up the challenge to ride the whole distance and have convinced my friend and colleague the member for Barron River, Steve Wettenhall, to join me. 'Pittenhall Pedalling Pollies', as our team is known, has been gearing up for the event, taking any spare opportunity to get in a training ride. I must thank my wife, Kerry, for agreeing to come along as our support team.

Last year the ride attracted more than 175 riders. Registration for the 2010 ride has exceeded expectations, with 264 people registered. This is well above the 225 rider target. With this number of riders now in training on our region's roads, I ask that motorists take extra care. Last month the founder of the Cardiac Challenge, Peter McNally, was knocked from his bike. Peter had open heart surgery in 2003 and wanted to give back to the community. This bike ride is his way of helping others who also have heart problems. Peter's accident is a reminder that all cyclists are vulnerable on the road, regardless of their experience.

Raising money for our Cairns Base Hospital Cardiac Unit is a great cause. To date, more than \$132,000 has been raised and with 37 days, seven hours and 10 minutes to go until the start of the ride I hope people will take the time to get behind the ride before it kicks off on 25 September. Fundraising from this bike ride will help us improve the odds for heart patients in the Far North.