



Speech by


## Steve Wettenhall

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Hansard Wednesday, 25 May 2011

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### WORLD MS DAY

 **Mr WETTENHALL** (Barron River—ALP) (6.58 pm): Today is World MS Day, the aim of which is to raise awareness about multiple sclerosis—a chronic disabling neurological disease suffered by some 20,000 Australians. MS is the most common chronic condition affecting young adult Australians and it affects seven times more women than men in Queensland. I know what people with MS have to endure only too well, as my mother, now in her 88th year, has lived with MS since her diagnosis when she was 32. Although now frail, she has combined regular physical exercise with a very strong will and a positive attitude to keep the disease at bay for so long. This is an attitude and approach to life that I admire and that I have observed in many other people I have met with MS.

World MS Day this year focuses on employment issues for people with chronic disease such as MS. Raising awareness of MS with employers, reducing workplace discrimination, providing flexible workplace arrangements and promoting government services available to employers are all positive steps that can be taken to keep people in employment. The Bligh government is committed to helping people with MS. More than \$5 million in recurrent funding is provided to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Queensland to deliver a range of support services, and of course in last year's budget we introduced the medical heating and cooling rebate which is of particular support for people with MS.

Community fundraising also provides vital funds for research and support services. One such event is the annual 24-hour Megaswim. This year, led by the Trinity Beach Lions Club, the event was held for the first time in the Far North and has so far raised over \$21,000, well on its way to the target of \$30,000. Exercises like swimming are especially important for people with MS. The Trinity Beach Lions Club and the multiple sclerosis gym group are proof that good exercise works wonders and has positive benefits for participants with MS.

I want to acknowledge Mr Alan Docherty and all the local Lions who helped organise the event and Dan Sweetman and Amy Rymer from the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Queensland. I also want to thank the Trinity Anglican School for making its excellent pool available for the event and its director of swimming, Mr Bill Evans, for his support. Most of all though, I want to thank the 152 swimmers who took part and their support teams. They ranged in age from eight to 80. The octogenarian, Thelma Bryan, swam 80 laps of the 50-metre pool and raised well over \$2,000—a remarkable and inspirational achievement by any measure. We all look forward to the day when a cure will be found for this mysterious disease.