



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2012

FAR NORTH QUEENSLAND HOSPITAL FOUNDATION, CARDIAC CHALLENGE

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (12.38 am): In 2007 cardiovascular disease was a 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 from their first heart attack. Cardiovascular disease continues to have a major effect on the health of Australians.

I was very proud on 29 September to be one of more than 300 riders who took part in the Far North Queensland Hospital Foundation's Cardiac Challenge, which is a bike ride from Cairns to Cooktown of more than 335 kilometres. This bike ride is a logistical piece of excellence. It is organised by the marketing and promotions coordinator from the FNQ Hospital Foundation, Glenys Duncombe, who is well known in the Far North Queensland area as someone who just gets the job done. Glenys and the team are doing major works bringing on board the defence forces, the SES and local sponsors—you name it, everyone who was anyone in the region was involved. I was particularly pleased to have been able to ride basically every metre of that ride barring one section. I am still recovering from a bit of illness myself. It was a terrific thing. Pack riding is an experience and, if you have not done it before, being 30 centimetres off the wheel in front of you is a hair-raising experience.

The ride itself raised more than \$320,000 for cardiac support in the Cairns region. This is typical of the very generous nature of people in Cairns and Far North Queensland given that we have an unemployment rate of upwards of 9.7 per cent. People are doing it tough but they are still giving of their money and their hearts. This has not stopped with the cardiac challenge, though. Since that time this group has noticed an appeal put out by the *Cairns Post* about a 10-year-old boy in the community of Yarrabah.

Charles Fourmile is a young man who is suffering from adrenoleukodystrophy. ALD was the subject of the Hollywood movie *Lorenzo's Oil* in the 1990s. It is a progressive genetic disease and unfortunately in most cases it proves fatal as there is deterioration of the nervous system. Charles does not have a very good life expectancy. As his condition deteriorates, he is going to be requiring air conditioning in his home in Yarrabah. Riders from the cardiac challenge are banding together, hopefully on 18 November, to do a ride over the Yarrabah range, which is a very gruelling piece of landscape to get across. We do hope they are able to do that and raise money at the same time. I want to say thank you to Melanie Petrinec, a journalist from the *Cairns Post* who I think has taken a real interest in Charles and his family. I think the people of Yarrabah in the electorate of Mulgrave certainly appreciate it.