



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Bundaberg Arthritis Support Group; Arthritis Queensland**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (3.42 pm): I rise to share with the House the work of my local Bundaberg Arthritis Support Group and Arthritis Queensland. Arthritis may be mild, moderate or severe and overall it is the major cause of disability and chronic pain in Australia, costing the community many billions of dollars. Arthritis is non-selective of age and may affect children, teenagers, young adults, middle aged and elderly alike. Arthritis usually causes pain and stiffness in and around one or more joints and can interfere with basic daily activities such as walking. The symptoms can develop gradually or suddenly and some conditions also involve the immune system and various internal organs of the body.

I was privileged to attend the 25-year birthday celebration of our local support group last weekend and quickly learned of the commitment to management of the affliction by laughter and friendship. The use of Tai Chi was demonstrated as a significant contributor to the wellbeing of arthritis sufferers. I spoke at length with Helene from Arthritis Queensland about supporting the community groups and the other important work they do. We spoke about strategic goals to diversify their services and formats through which their services are provided. Arthritis is often a serious and complex autoimmune condition which people need to self-manage between trips to their medical practitioners. Arthritis Queensland also advocates for people with arthritis. In the past 18 months they have completed the 2013 Action Plan for Queensland Children with Juvenile Arthritis which was informed by state-wide questionnaires and stakeholder workshops. There are four people doing this work and we should be very proud of the work they do and its important challenges. The service is almost all donor funded with two per cent of the funding from the department of health. We would like to see the continuation of funding beyond the end of this year. It is a tiny amount of funding but every bit helps people with arthritis and osteoporosis.

Queensland Health also generously provides office space on Lutwyche Road at Windsor. However, the last contract was for just two years and the lease expires in September 2014. The short lease and the time to expiry are further challenges to the longevity and financial viability of Arthritis Queensland. There are more than a million Queenslanders with arthritis and osteoporosis. Arthritis Victoria has just released a document titled 'A problem worth solving' informed by Access Economics which states that the national cost of these diseases in 2012 was \$55 billion. Arthritis Queensland has finalised its Action Plan for Queensland Children with Juvenile Arthritis. The plan is a proactive way to improve the lives of children with juvenile arthritis. It takes a detailed and multidisciplinary approach, including health care, education and transition into adult life.

The Action Plan for Queensland Children with Juvenile Arthritis was made possible as a result of survey and workshop feedback from parents, children and young adults, healthcare professionals, educators and social workers. I believe we need to thank everyone involved. Because of this work

they have been able to create a document with the ability to change young lives. I have witnessed the support groups in my electorate and have been impressed with Arthritis Queensland. I congratulate them. We need plans so that we can all support Queenslanders with arthritis and osteoporosis.