




Speech By
Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Eating Disorders

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (3.34 pm): Many people will remember the story of Bronte Cullis, which was featured by Ray Martin on *A Current Affair* on a couple of occasions in the mid-1990s. Bronte was born in 1979. As a teenager, she was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa. Bronte's mother, Jan, famously said, 'Bronte didn't have anorexia—the whole family had anorexia', which was a reference to the effect of Bronte's illness on all those around her and the toll it took on the family in particular. Bronte's father had to give up work to care for her. Knowing that Bronte would die without treatment, Bronte's parents mortgaged their home, sold what they could and sent her to an unconventional eating disorder clinic in Canada. Although she has ongoing problems, Bronte is now married and expecting her first child.

Last week in my electorate, we had a *deja vu* moment with the same issue being highlighted by another young lady named Bronte. Last week members may have heard from the media that a young lady from Burleigh Heads was reported missing from her residential address. At the outset it was very distressing to hear about the situation that occurred on Wednesday last week and it was even more upsetting to hear the circumstances in further detail. Last weekend while I was at one of my many mobile offices throughout the Burleigh electorate, I ran into the father of that young lady. He detailed to me the heartache and trauma that an eating-disorder has had on his family, with the result that the situation I referred to unfolded.

An eating disorder is characterised by obsessive thoughts about food and body weight. It includes people who limit the amount of food they eat, those who eat lots of food in a very short period of time and then purge or those who overeat often. Eating disorders are estimated to affect approximately nine per cent of the population and unspecified eating disorders may account for up to five per cent of the population. Up to 20 per cent of females may have an undiagnosed eating disorder. Many people may be surprised to know that one in 10 people diagnosed with an eating disorder are male.

It was heartbreaking to hear the story of how, for the past nine years, that disease has plagued the life of that father's daughter. At his request, I bring his story to the attention of the House to raise awareness of the issue. The family was greatly appreciative of the work of the Palm Beach Police Station officers who helped them in their time of need. They wished me to express their gratitude. I made a commitment to the family to raise awareness of the issue of eating disorders and their effects. I will be raising the issue with the minister.