




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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ADJOURNMENT

Going for Gold in September for Childhood Cancer

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (1.18 am): Going for Gold in September is an initiative which raises awareness for childhood cancer and is now in its third year, thanks to the courage and determination of a young Ayr lady, Miss Keely Johnson. In 2013 then premier Campbell Newman was touched by a letter he received from Keely and her friend Declan Hegarty, both sufferers of childhood cancers. Sadly, Declan passed away, but the lighting of Queensland's Parliament House and the Kurilpa Bridge for the month of September is a fitting tribute to Declan and continues today thanks to Keely, who is on a mission to turn gold as many monuments and buildings as possible and also to raise funds and cancer awareness. The fountain in Ayr is flowing gold and numerous businesses have agreed to spread Keely's message. Keely came into my Burdekin electorate office wanting to know if I could turn the Burdekin Bridge, also known as the 'Silver Link', gold in September. I approached TMR and, whilst it was unable to grant this request due to safety reasons, it was happy to make a contribution by promoting Going Gold in September for childhood cancer on the variable message sign installed at the bridge approaches.

Keely was diagnosed with a brain tumour at 13. After two brain surgeries, she was later diagnosed with central nervous system Langerhans cell histiocytosis, a rare blood cancer. Despite her own battles and spending the majority of the past four years in Brisbane receiving treatment, Keely has found time to raise a staggering \$500,000, which is a remarkable achievement and indicative of the passion and commitment of this young lady to make a difference. In April this year, she founded the Golden Octopus Foundation, which supports families of oncology patients and raises money for cancer research organisations. There are eight groups of childhood cancer and this is where the 'octopus' name came from: eight legs or arms embracing the eight representative groups. Currently in Australia we lose three children a week to a childhood cancer.

Keely has not only a heart of gold but also a golden voice, recording a song about cancer titled *Turn This To Gold* with her country music idol Lee Kernaghan, who is the Golden Octopus Foundation's ambassador. A main objective of the foundation is to improve facilities such as telehealth services and provide childhood cancer nurses to all regional areas to hopefully one day allow families to stay in their home towns instead of relocating to major centres where they often feel isolated and face added pressure on family finances and the health system. Named a 'Child of Courage' finalist in the Pride of Australia awards, Keely is a glowing gold ambassador with that true Aussie fighting spirit.