




Speech By
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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Mental Health

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (11.57 am): I rise to speak about the important issue of mental health. Last week was Mental Health Week. Mental Health Week gives us an important opportunity to promote awareness of mental health and wellbeing. The theme this year was ‘value mental health’. It is all about helping people to realise their own abilities to cope with the normal stresses of life and about us as a community helping to create an understanding and inclusive society.

Nearly half of our population will experience some form of mental health issue at some stage in their lives, yet it is still an issue that many people do not speak openly about. Mental Health Week provides a great chance for us to dispel some of the myths about mental illness that persist in our society. People living with mental illness will often experience stigma and discrimination from friends, family, employers and the community as a whole. We know that disadvantage and isolation due to this stigma can be more disabling than the illness itself. The stigma can stop people with mental illness seeking help and support, and it can even cause a worsening or relapse of their condition. That is why it is so important to let people know about the facts of mental illness.

As I have said, mental illness is common. Mental illness is treatable. The vast majority of people with mental illness are not generally violent. Indeed, people being treated for a mental illness are no more violent or dangerous than the general population. Most people with mental illness receive treatment in the community. Most people with mental illness recover well and are able to lead fulfilling lives in the community with the help of treatment and support.

I commend the Ipswich community for valuing mental health by getting behind last week’s Mental Health Week community events. The West Moreton Mental Health Collaborative held a number of free community events around the Ipswich region, including a morning walk, a community showcase at The Park centre for mental health and an information night, as well as a free breakfast in Queens Park. It was my great pleasure last Thursday to open an early childhood mental health forum run by Aftercare as well as the West Moreton Mental Health Collaborative’s silent art auction at the Ipswich community art gallery. The Ipswich community’s participation in these events shows that we are a community that values its mental health.

I am proud to say that the Palaszczuk government also values mental health. Our government is committed to providing the very best mental healthcare and support services in the country. Last Tuesday the health minister unveiled the Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015-17. The plan aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders by taking early action. The action plan includes a grants program administered by the Queensland Mental Health Commission which has already delivered \$1.48 million for local initiatives that promote good mental health and wellbeing. Minister Dick also announced more than \$450,000 in funding to improve mental health through greater social inclusion and community participation, particularly in regional areas.

The Palaszczuk government values the mental health of our youth and has committed \$11.8 million over four years to rebuild mental health care for young people in Queensland after the last three years of neglect. This stands in stark contrast to the LNP, whose closure of the Barrett Adolescent Centre—Queensland’s only care facility for adolescents with severe mental disorders—is the current subject of a commission of inquiry headed by the Hon. Margaret A Wilson QC. I cannot stress how important it is that we take Mental Health Week’s theme to heart and value our mental health. I recently had the opportunity to visit a youth residence at Greenslopes run by Aftercare which provides a home situation to five young people experiencing mental health issues. It is about rehabilitation and it has been running for eight months at Greenslopes. Its rehabilitation of young people is second to none and is a good example of how the Queensland government is getting people with mental health issues back into the community and contributing. Mental health is an issue that touches all of our lives at some point, either personally or through the experiences of friends and family. Most of us can manage these issues and get on with our lives, but others need help. Whether as a government, a community or individually, we must do everything we can to assist them.