




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 21 April 2016

ADJOURNMENT

Heart of Australia

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (2.50 am): I rise to speak about the lifesaving work being undertaken by Heart of Australia and founder Dr Rolf Gomes, whose vision and drive is delivering front-line health services to rural and regional communities in south-west and western Queensland. I want to thank Dr Gomes for his dedication in providing this healthcare model that works for the residents and saves lives in my electorate and others. The self-sufficient truck and trailer houses two custom designed private clinics, a testing room and a reception area. It is wheelchair accessible and fully air-conditioned.

The Heart of Australia visits fortnightly the communities of St George, Charleville and Roma in my electorate of Warrego and the other communities of Emerald, Barcaldine, Hughenden, Charters Towers, Longreach, Dalby, Goondiwindi and Moranbah. The services delivered include specialist medical investigation and treatment clinics, and there are tangible benefits. There is a boost to front-line services that previously did not exist and a reduction in the financial burden on taxpayers. There is a reduction in waiting lists in towns that have poor access to specialists, a closing of the gap in preventative health services to Indigenous communities and enhanced liveability of rural towns and communities through improved health services. The service is also delivering regular medical education in the form of a structured lecture series to local health practitioners and employing local staff where possible.

I am greatly heartened by the way the residents of my electorate have embraced the Heart of Australia's services. It is a particularly important service for the elderly and disabled, who have the most difficulty travelling long distances. People like Denis Cook of the Murweh Shire Council are strong supporters of the service as is Donna Stewart, the former mayor of the Balonne Shire Council, who said that the Heart of Australia is providing the opportunity for patients who could not travel to the city to see a cardiologist. There is something else very interesting about this service, and that is the savings to the taxpayer from this model of care and early detection.

It is estimated that government savings over a 12-month period are: avoidable hospital admissions, \$2.5 million; economic burden of heart attack, \$4 million; and Queensland Health travel accommodation subsidies, \$1 million. This equates to an estimated total savings to the state government of approximately \$7.5 million per annum. This is not an insignificant saving compared with the total requested input of funding from state and federal governments of \$2 million—\$1 million from each level of government. It is particularly disappointing that this state government has declined to extend the initial start-up support which was given to the Heart of Australia. The state government suggested that the program seek individual contracts from the hospital and health services. This response contrasts with that of the federal government, which responded to the proposal for continued funding for the Heart of Australia—

(Time expired)