



Speech By  
**Leanne Linard**


**MEMBER FOR NUDGE**

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **Teal Ribbon Day**

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (10.34 pm): Mr Speaker, this morning you kindly drew the attention of the House to Ovarian Cancer Awareness Day. To be honest, I always have mixed emotions about wearing the teal ribbon. For me it is a reminder of a disease that was such a large part of my life and that of my family for eight years, but doing everything possible to raise awareness of the insidious nature of this disease is far too important for me not to wear a ribbon and not to withstand three minutes of some discomfort to make a very small contribution to raising awareness of Ovarian Cancer Awareness Day.

Ovarian cancer is referred to as the silent killer, so named because it can have no symptoms or non-specific symptoms such as back pain, abdominal or pelvic pain, indigestion, abdominal bloating, a sense of feeling full, and frequent or urgent urination—all of which can easily be dismissed in isolation as non-threatening. There is no screening for ovarian cancer—though many women incorrectly believe that routine pap smears will identify the disease—and there is no proven method of prevention. Because of these factors and the often poor prognosis of those diagnosed, Ovarian Cancer Awareness Day and indeed month is vital to educate and raise awareness among women in our communities. I commend Ovarian Cancer Australia and others for the work they are doing in this regard. One in 70 women develops ovarian cancer in their lifetime. Ovarian cancer often only presents when it has spread. Out of the 1,400 Australian women diagnosed every year, only 20 per cent of these women will survive for longer than five years, compared to those with breast cancer, which has an 80 per cent survival rate.

My mother was diagnosed when she was 43 years old. She had experienced abdominal bloating and other irregularities that in the busyness of life she ignored. When she did consult her GP, he similarly dismissed the fairly minor symptoms at first. Like so many mothers, even when her concern did grow she put it aside to take care of her family, us—as my father at the time himself was in the advanced stages of cancer.

When my mother—Margaret was her name—did present to her GP once more after over a year of experiencing these fairly innocuous symptoms, she was sent for a colonoscopy which identified advanced stage ovarian cancer. She underwent a lengthy surgery to remove the mass, lost part of her bowel and stomach lining and was given a low chance of surviving five years. We had eight years in the end, full of chemotherapy, the continuous roller-coaster of blood tests and CA125 counts, sickness and fatigue, but it was equally sweet, infinitely precious and we lived it to the fullest. My mother went through pain bringing me into this world; mine was in watching her leave it. I implore all women to be vigilant, to recognise the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer, to know their family history and to talk to their GPs about appropriate proactive screening and health checks.