



Speech By
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Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2016

ADJOURNMENT

Rotary International, Polio

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (9.07 pm): Tonight I rise in the chamber to pay tribute and recognise the hard work and dedication of Rotary International in working towards a polio-free world. As many colleagues here in the chamber would be aware, poliomyelitis is a crippling disease that threatened Australians with epidemics from the 1930s through to the 1950s. It is estimated that during those epidemics up to 40,000 people were affected. The epidemics claimed many lives and left many more severely crippled. Thankfully, in the early 1950s Dr Jonas Salk developed the world's first polio vaccine, which came into use in 1955. It was soon followed by the oral polio vaccine in 1961, which was developed by the brilliant Albert Sabin.

As access to the vaccines grew, the number of those contracting polio rapidly began to decline in the developed world. I remember in the early 1970s when just one new case of polio in Australia would make the evening news. However, sadly, in less fortunate countries that was not the case. In 1988 alone, globally 1,000 new polio cases were reported each and every day, with around 125 countries still infected by the disease.

In that same year, the global polio eradication initiative began, with Rotary International as one of its most significant advocates. Their unwavering commitment to seeing this disease no longer be a threat has resulted in more than 2.5 billion children being immunised across more than 200 countries, supported by more than 20 million volunteers. Mercifully, the spread of polio has been well and truly stalled: by 2014, just 359 cases were reported in only three countries; by mid-October 2015, just 51 cases were reported worldwide.

The success of this program would not be possible without dedicated vaccination teams visiting each and every house in infected countries to vaccinate children under five years of age. As a proud service club member myself, I am proud to see the efforts of this great organisation in tackling polio. The hard work and unwavering dedication to truly see polio become a disease only read about in the history books and not seen in today's hospitals is something to be applauded.

The incredible efforts of Rotarians from all walks of life and countries around the globe is indeed heartwarming. This program was not the work of just one club, one state or one country. It was the culmination of hundreds and thousands of Rotarians and their respective clubs from across the world taking up the same collective challenge. It shows that dedication and team work can result in historical outcomes.

It is hoped by UNICEF that this year we will see the end of polio for good. Should this happen, it would become the second human disease to be completely eliminated after smallpox was eradicated in 1977. What a great day for humanity that surely would be.