



Speech By  
**James Martin**


**MEMBER FOR STRETTON**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Polio

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (7.22 pm): I rise to recognise Rotarians in my electorate and around the world who have donated their time and money to a very worthy cause—the eradication of polio. Polio is a paralysing and potentially fatal disease that still threatens children in some parts of the world. Polio can be prevented by vaccines but is not curable. However, unlike COVID-19 and many other diseases, polio can be eradicated.

Last Friday I joined with members of local Rotary clubs, including the Sunnybank Hills Rotary Satellite Club Chinese from District 9620, for their End Polio Bridge Walk, marching proudly in their red 'End Polio' shirts behind a traditional Indian marching band, gathering just outside this House at Speaker's Corner. I recognise District Governor Wendy Protheroe and former District Governor Jitendra Prasad for organising this celebration and all the Rotarians who attended, recognising the amazing combined efforts by governments, NGOs, philanthropists, scientists, researchers and, of course, Rotary through their Polio Plus program.

Today this combined effort has reduced polio by 99.9 per cent worldwide and they predict total eradication within three years. The program started 30 years ago and was the first initiative to tackle global polio eradication by vaccinating children on a massive scale. Every year hundreds of Rotarians work with health workers to prepare and distribute information for people in areas that are isolated by conflict, geography and poverty and mobilise local volunteers to assist in transporting the vaccine. They have also won the support of major philanthropists like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which matches their \$50 million commitment per year two to one.

Overall the program has raised over \$2.1 billion and contributed countless volunteer hours to protect more than 2.5 billion children in 122 countries from this devastating disease. It is amazing to think that because of these efforts 19 million people who would otherwise have been paralysed are walking and more than 1.5 million people are alive who would otherwise have died. This is the power of vaccines, of modern medicine and scientific research.

The creation of the polio vaccine in the late 1950s was hailed as a scientific miracle. Likewise, the rapid development of a safe and effective COVID vaccine is something to be praised—a result of decades of experience and research showing that vaccines are safe and effective. With this in mind it has been disappointing to see anti-vaxxers and science deniers stirring up fear in our community. Like the members of Rotary helping the rollout of polio vaccine internationally, it is on all of us in this place to support the rollout of the COVID vaccine locally, encouraging people to get their double dose so we can protect our loved ones and unite families interstate and overseas. The Premier, Deputy Premier, ministers and members on this side are doing their bit, but unfortunately the same cannot be said for those opposite.