




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

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ADJOURNMENT

National Palliative Care Week

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (7.00 pm): Today I join with the Speaker to mention that it is National Palliative Care Week. Running from 23 to 29 May, this week is Palliative Care Queensland's showcase of the positive impacts that excellent palliative care has on vulnerable Queenslanders across the state. The theme of the week is 'Palliative care: It's more than you think'. Going beyond the treatment of physical pain, it identifies and treats symptoms that may be physical, emotional, spiritual or social.

This week we honour all of those doctors, nurses and allied health workers who are working to ease the suffering of seriously ill fellow Queenslanders. The not-for-profit churches and other religious groups also play a substantial role. Can I commend the Uniting Church and Catholic Health Australia, among others, for the health care they provide to the elderly and sick. For example, Catholic Health Australia provides one in five hospital and aged care beds. Then there are paediatric palliative care services like those provided by the wonderful Hummingbird House.

The provision of excellent care is critical to people having confidence in the system to look after them near the end. I have seen firsthand the difference that timely and high-quality palliative care can make to ease suffering. It is, however, inexcusable when the sick suffer from a lack of such care. Sadly, for over three decades Labor state governments in Queensland have not kept pace with the palliative care needs of the terminally ill. This week PCQ and the AMAQ said that Queensland government funding of palliative care falls well short of what is needed to deliver adequate care. PCQ said that access is 'very much a lottery' and many providers are being forced to close. Those living outside South-East Queensland often have to do without palliative care at all. Karuna Hospice Services say their in-home palliative care service always has a waiting list.

Palliative Care Queensland says that \$121 million more per annum is needed. The government says they are investing \$171 million more into palliative care, but that is over six years so only \$28.5 million more per annum, or \$5.70 per Queenslanders per day, is invested—way below the \$121 million required. Secondly, some funds in that new figure may be diverted to other purposes. In the answer to my question on notice 1143 the health minister stated, 'This funding will support a new statewide palliative care and end-of-life care strategy.' The minister should fess up. How much might be siphoned off from the palliative care budget to pay for the government's other end-of-life strategies?

I call on the government to follow the New South Wales LNP government with a large additional investment in palliative care and do it now, in National Palliative Care Week, or at the very least in the June budget, to demonstrate that they really do care about the terminally ill.