



Speech By  
**Michael Healy**


**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 September 2021

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT**

**Liz Plummer Cancer Care Centre**

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (2.03 pm): In late July I was honoured to attend the 10-year celebrations of the Liz Plummer Cancer Care Centre. The facility is located at Cairns Hospital and is operated by Icon Cancer Centre. Since the doors of that centre opened in 2011, over 13,500 Far North Queenslanders have received treatment at the facility, including my wife and one of the girls who works in the office. The Liz Plummer Cancer Care Centre holds very special and strong memories for not just me but many thousands of Far North Queenslanders.

The facility came into being due to community campaigning that led to the establishment in September 2006 of the Cairns Organisation United for Cancer Health, better known to locals as COUCH, by Charles and Pip Woodward. They were inspired by Cairns resident Liz Plummer's fight for better oncology services in the Far North. Liz was receiving treatment for cancer and she highlighted, through local media, the inadequacy of cancer facilities in Cairns. COUCH garnered strong support from private businesses, community organisations and the general public. The passion of Liz Plummer and the leadership of Charles and Pip Woodward and the rest of the COUCH committee, with support from the community, has brought the Cairns community a long way since that first meeting. They are to be applauded for the work they have done in getting the facility established.

In 2007 the Australian government committed \$8.3 million and on 1 January 2009 Premier Anna Bligh announced a radiation oncology and cancer care unit would be built at Cairns Hospital. Today that facility offers medical oncology, haematology and palliative care, alongside radiation oncology delivered in partnership with Icon Cancer Centre.

I had the privilege of knowing Liz Plummer. She truly was one of those remarkable few who viewed her diagnosis as a means to fight for other cancer victims. After being diagnosed with breast cancer in 2004, she transformed into a one-woman campaigner for other cancer patients. Liz was born in Greece in 1951 and her family migrated to Western Australia in 1955. In 2005 she was in remission but unfortunately, whilst on holidays, she learned that the cancer had returned. In 2009 Anna Bligh confirmed that her government would fund an oncology and radiation unit to be named in Liz Plummer's honour. That moment was described by Liz's husband, Max, as the proudest day in her life.

Sadly, Liz passed away on 14 July 2009, aged 58 years, two years before the centre opened. At the 10-year anniversary celebrations she was well remembered, as were each and every one of those who have contributed to make that terrible illness a little more palatable.