




Speech By
Adrian Tantari

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Record of Proceedings, 29 March 2022

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Type 1 Diabetes

 **Mr TANTARI** (Hervey Bay—ALP) (2.44 pm): I would like to bring to the attention of the House the plight of diabetics in the electorate of Hervey Bay—indeed, across Queensland and Australia—and the appalling spin of the Morrison federal government, specifically the federal health minister and his media announcement recently on diabetes that showed the federal health minister's lack of awareness of the different types of diabetes, and his total misrepresentation of the 129,000 type 1 diabetics in Australia. The federal health minister would have the public believe he is giving new essential equipment, being continuous glucose monitors, or CGMs as they are known, to this group of people who struggle every day to maintain their health and stay alive with this autoimmune disease.

Continuous glucose monitors are non-invasive and enable type 1 diabetics to monitor blood sugar levels and not guess or prick themselves incessantly. This device literally keeps them alive by bluetoothing to smartphones and/or transmitter devices. CGMs for most type 1 diabetics have been around for years. However, the federal health minister would have you believe that they are new and he is helping all type 1 diabetics across Australia. The reality is that he is not. The federal health minister is discriminating against the vast majority of type 1 diabetics because it is only people under 21—that is, 11 per cent of type 1 diabetics—and those on a Health Care Card who are eligible to have free access to CGMs and other health requirements to stay alive. The federal health minister does not mention this in any of his publications. In fact, in his annual performance statement he combines type 1 diabetes with all other forms of diabetes, and he says he is giving CGM devices to all Australians with diabetes. He is not. This is a total lack of care and understanding.

The federal government should step up tonight in its 2022-23 budget and address the needs of type 1 diabetics. CGMs and lifesaving pharmaceuticals should be free to all type 1 diabetics. There is no remission for type 1 diabetics. It is an autoimmune disease and cannot be reversed. Those who earn just \$1 over the Health Care Card threshold must self-fund all their diabetes health requirements, which is a cost of \$9,000 per year, not to mention if they require a pump, which is an outlay of \$10,000. A single person who earns \$1 over \$33,488, which is the cut-off for eligibility for a Health Care Card, must self-fund \$9,000 per year, bringing their income down to \$24,488. This is poverty to the extreme. What sort of support is this from the federal government?

I know that the federal health minister and other ministers have been inundated with emails from type 1 diabetics asking for free access to CGMs and other medical supplies. These people have received nothing back—not a single squeak—from any of them. To save money, type 1 diabetics seek alternative ways to prolong their CGM devices. This is dangerous, but, sadly, because of replacement cost, a necessity. This action can corrupt the accuracy of the data on their blood sugar levels. Forcing diabetics to do this is not good enough. Continuous glucose technology should not be a privilege for those living with type 1 diabetes in Australia. It should be the norm, as should pumps, needles and all devices that keep these people alive, and it should be free to all.

Self-funding a CGM is very expensive for most type 1 diabetics and it is just not feasible. It is not just children this condition affects. Anyone can be diagnosed at any age. Type 1 diabetes does not change as people age. A person turning 21 is no longer eligible for free access to CGMs. Their pancreas does not miraculously start working again, yet they can no longer access CGMs which they have relied on previously. They now must find \$9,000 a year at the age of 21. This is a disgrace. The management of this autoimmune disease is relentless. It is 24/7, 365 days a year of sleepless nights, monitoring of food, injecting of insulin, relentless doctors' visits, blood tests, glucose tablets and stress. The burnout is real and, by not allowing type 1 diabetics access to life-saving technology, the federal government just adds to their burden.

The NDSS has indicated that between 10 and 12 people per day are found to have type 1 diabetes autoimmune disease in Australia. This could be any one of us. This disease does not discriminate, yet this federal government does. On this federal budget day, the LNP Morrison government has an opportunity to step up and make the lives of many hundreds of thousands of type 1 diabetics a little easier. Tonight it has a chance to change their lives. We can only hope that all type 1 diabetics across the country, and in Hervey Bay, receive more from this Morrison government than its shallow hopes and prayers.