




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (8.35 pm): October each year is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. With the permission of my sister-in-law I would like to share her story that she and her friend Sherri wrote. Bec has been diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer, or stage 4 cancer. Her cancer broke away from the original tumour in her breast and spread to other parts of her body. There is currently no curative treatment for this breast cancer. Many people with metastatic breast cancer live well for several years, but they do require ongoing treatment.

As part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month one day, 13 October, is designated as Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day. This one day of the year presents an opportunity to increase awareness and visibility for everyone who is fighting very hard every day against time. They are desperately waiting for advances in treatment that can improve their life expectancy before they decline too far and before it is too late.

Bec lives on the Sunshine Coast but she has told me she has met a significant number of women, many at the Bloomhill Cancer Centre, who, like Bec, share the real and very raw reality of what a day of awareness represents for them. Many of these women have young children. Bec has a husband and two beautiful children, aged 12 and 14. She knows the adolescent years are tough on most families, let alone those families trying to cope with the stress of having a mum with incurable cancer. As she says, 'It is hard to keep things normal.'

People with metastatic breast cancer are not covered by the NDIS, yet the disease requires ongoing and close, persistent attention to 'stay in the game'. Medicare covers little of the ongoing medical expenses. Private health insurance has its benefits in terms of accessing preferred health practitioners, but it, too, covers very little financially. The numerous medical appointments and the physical impact of treatment affect the ability to work both during and after treatments. It is hard to stay afloat financially. At best, nest eggs dwindle. At worst, debt increases.

For people with metastatic breast cancer, 13 October is a day of hope—hope for more treatment pathways to prolong their lives, hope for ongoing mental health support to help people and their loved ones cope, hope for a stronger palliative care system that can holistically support families like Bec's through the pain and trauma of cancer and loss, hope for recognition and support for the ongoing cost burden and, ultimately, hope for a new scientific breakthrough that can provide a cure.

Bec is currently part of a clinical trial at the Sunshine Coast University Private Hospital. She is doing what she can to fight this insidious disease.