




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Meningococcal B; Fidler, Ms B

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (2.54 pm): In November last year the Fidler family were dealt the most cruel blow imaginable, enduring every parent's worst nightmare. Their beautiful girl Bella tragically passed away at the age of 23 years old after contracting meningococcal B. Bella was a happy and healthy young woman with a huge life of promise ahead of her. Having recently completed her degrees in law and government and international relations, Bella went on a girl's trip to Bali to celebrate. A week after returning to Australia, she noticed something was not quite right. She thought she might have had COVID. She arrived at John Flynn hospital in the early hours of the morning and soon became critically ill. In the space of 24 hours, beautiful Bella had gone from feeling a bit unwell to tragically losing her life.

Meningococcal B is a life-threatening bacterial infection. While the state government school vaccination program immunises against meningococcal, meningococcal B is not included in the immunisation program. Some 4½ years ago the South Australian government acted to protect its young people by including meningococcal B in its vaccination program and today we are calling on the Queensland government to do the same. Karen from Meningococcal Australia and Bella's family are here today in the gallery and they are here to bring Bella's story to parliament to encourage the state government to ensure that meningococcal B is added to the school vaccination program. We know that we can vaccinate against it. If Bella was vaccinated against it, we would be in a different situation right now.

Meningococcal B is the most prevalent strain. It accounts for 65 per cent of all meningococcal cases and the mortality rate is shocking. One in 10 people die from it. If you are lucky enough not to die, one in four are permanently disabled. It is a preventable disease, but to privately pay for the vaccine can cost upwards of \$400. In a cost-of-living crisis, parents cannot afford it and they simply should not have to. The state government has known about this. In 2020 Deb Frecklington when leader of the LNP committed to including meningococcal B as part of the vaccination program, and yet here we are today after another young life has been tragically lost to this preventable disease. This place must draw on the courage of the Fidlers. We cannot let their courage go to waste. We have to make sure we act. This state government needs to make sure that it listens to Bella's story and that it includes meningococcal B in the school vaccination program. We cannot wait for the federal government. We must have action now. No more young lives can be lost.