




Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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ADJOURNMENT

Stem Cell Donations

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (7.23 pm): Members, tomorrow on your desk will be two documents that I ask you to display in your offices to encourage people in your electorates to become stem cell donors. Every 28 minutes someone in Australia is diagnosed with blood cancer and, for many, a blood stem cell transplant from a complete stranger is their only hope.

I want to express my thanks to Mr Speaker for allowing this esteemed place to be lit in yellow, white, black and red, as these are the colours of the Simply Human organisation. Not only will Parliament House be lit tonight but also on Wednesday and Thursday this week. I am very grateful.

Simply Human are a not-for-profit organisation who have a mission to help those facing situations like cancer. They help those people who may also be away from loved ones by providing support in a number of ways. They also work to raise awareness that here in Australia we need people willing to be donors.

On 25 October last year I spoke in this chamber about bone marrow donations and being an influencer. It is my hope that I can influence every member of this House to reach out to their local communities and encourage people to register as stem cell donors.

Diversity is the key. Patients are more likely to find a match with donors of similar ethnicity. Unfortunately, those from non-European backgrounds often face challenges in finding suitable donors. Research shows that people of Indigenous or ethnic heritage are underrepresented in the Australian Bone Marrow Donor Registry. Stem cell transplants from volunteer donors are usually the last option for the medical treatment of patients with life-threatening blood cancers, bone marrow failures and severe immune disorders.

The Australian Bone Marrow Donor Registry is the primary source of voluntary stem cell donors for patients in Australia, and they have been around for over three decades helping to match donors to patients in need of their help. There is a lot of misconception around the process. However, it can be as simple as donating blood.

I want to acknowledge the founders of the Simply Human organisation, along with their colleagues, who have shown me that there is a gap that needs to be filled. They also made it clear that, when many of us hear the words 'cancer', 'leukaemia', 'bone marrow' and other medical terms, we do not really understand them.

Simply Human is about being human, acknowledging our similarities as well as our differences. Facing hardship and difficult times can bring out humanness and kindness in us all.