

25 June 2008

MRS JANE MCGRATH

Consideration in Detail

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (12.16 p.m.) — On indulgence, I rise to speak on the passing of a great Australian: breast cancer awareness campaigner Jane McGrath. Jane came to Australia after meeting and marrying one of our nation's greatest cricketers—Glenn McGrath. Little did we know at that time that Glenn's fortune in finding the woman of his dreams was also the fortune of thousands of Australia women and their families who were looking for support and inspiration in their fight against breast cancer.

Jane emerged as an important role model in her own right after discovering she had breast cancer. She subsequently embarked upon a campaign of raising not only funds but also awareness of the disease. During a decade-long battle, Jane entered remission a number of times. But in 2003 she was re-diagnosed with breast cancer. She finally succumbed to a secondary brain tumour earlier this week. It is a testament to Jane's work at the foundation that she leaves a legacy of greater awareness of breast cancer and particularly the need for women of all ages to be conscious of regular self-testing. Women like Jane and the late actress Belinda Emmett helped to explode the myth that breast cancer is a disease that affects only women in middle age. These two women helped to shine a light on the fact that breast cancer does not discriminate on the basis of age, and, as a consequence, younger women afflicted with the disease have found a voice, a community of support and an inspiration that would not have otherwise existed. I think it speaks highly of Jane's strength that her activism flourished in the face of great personal challenges. Far from giving in to the weight of adversity, Jane devoted her energies to her family and her philanthropic work and it was arguably Jane's positive outlook that sustained her during her long battle.

First diagnosed with breast cancer 11 years ago at the age of 31, Jane saw the need for better support services for women undergoing treatment, particularly in the form of breast care nurses. In 2002 she formed the McGrath Foundation to fill that gap. Through her work in fundraising, the foundation has been able to support four full-time breast care nurses, each employed on three-year contracts. Breast care nurses not only offer sound advice to patients but can also provide that very important emotional support at a time when many people feel most isolated and vulnerable.

I would also like to put on the record in this place my support for the valuable work being done by the National Breast Cancer Foundation, which have been closely associated with the McGrath Foundation. Their successful Pink Ribbon campaigns in October each year have been instrumental in making breast cancer a mainstream concern for Australian women and their families—and there is good reason: breast cancer affects one in every eight women and is the leading cause of cancer related deaths among women each year. It is expected that we will see 13,000 new cases in the coming year and, tragically, almost 3,000 of those diagnosed will lose their lives. The message is clear: early detection saves lives. I would encourage all women and their partners to be aware of the signs of breast cancer and the methods of detection. A simple, regular self-test could be the difference between life and death.

I would also like to extend my sympathy to Jane's husband, Glenn, and their two children, James and

Holly. I wish them all the best in this time of great loss and suffering. It is worth noting that, even through the trials that Jane faced, Glenn's international cricket career had always been supported by her. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Jane for all of the sacrifices that she made in sharing Glenn and his talents with this nation and with the international cricketing community.

Glenn's determination on the cricket pitch was matched only by his love for Jane, and I know that the thoughts of all Australians are with him and his children at this difficult time. They can be proud, however, of Jane's legacy and of the high regard in which she was held in Australia for her tireless efforts, something officially recognised by her appointment as a member of the Order of Australia this year. Just as in life, when Jane's passion broke new ground for breast cancer awareness, so too in her passing she has inspired countless people to offer their support, with more than \$200,000 being pledged to the foundation in the two days following her death.

I know that today Jane's family and friends will be farewelling her at the Garrison Church at the Rocks, the same place at which Jane and Glenn were married nine years ago. I also acknowledge the Australian cricket team, who have paid tribute to Jane by wearing pink ribbons and using pink grips on their bats during their match against the West Indies overnight.

Jane McGrath was an outstanding Australian and a role model to thousands of women. I pay tribute to her in this place today and extend my deepest sympathy to her family. I look forward to seeing the work of the McGrath Foundation continuing well into the future and the positive legacy of Jane McGrath living on in the assistance and support given to women affected by breast cancer.