

15 September 2008

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

### **Prostate Cancer**

**Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (8.21 p.m.)** — I rise to note that September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, and I wish to draw to the House's attention the important work being done in the community to raise awareness of this very serious disease. As part of Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, I am supporting the blue ribbon campaign, which is helping to raise funds for prostate cancer research. I am wearing one of the blue ribbon badges to show my support this evening.

Men's health is a topic that many men studiously avoid. We are more likely to ignore symptoms of illness until it is impossible not to—but, by that time, for many men, it is unfortunately too late. Prostate cancer is one of those diseases that many men would prefer to not talk about. It involves uncomfortable testing in uncomfortable areas, but it is a killer. Prostate cancer is the second highest cause of cancer deaths among men, after skin cancer. Each year in Australia 18,700 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer and, of those, tragically, 3,000 men die. This is roughly equal to the number of women who die from breast cancer each year. One in nine Australian men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetimes. Those most at risk are men with a family history of prostate cancer. But the chance of being diagnosed with prostate cancer increases with age: it is one in 1,000 for a man aged in his 40s but as high as one in 13 for a man aged in his 80s. Research shows that early detection is the key to survival for men diagnosed with this disease, and this underlines the importance of raising awareness of prostate cancer within our community.

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, and I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Prostate Cancer Foundation, which plays a key role in campaigning for a better understanding of the disease in the broader community. The foundation helps to fund life-saving research into prostate cancer and provides scholarships for young urologists and prostate nurses to travel overseas and further develop their skills so that they can provide world-class health care to patients in Australia.

The Rudd government has also recognised that we need to do more to look after the health of men and has developed Australia's first ever men's health policy. This policy seeks to get the topic of men's health on the national agenda so that more men are talking about their health care to their healthcare providers. We have also committed \$15 million to establish dedicated prostate cancer research centres.

The message of Prostate Cancer Awareness Month is simple: if you are at risk of prostate cancer, have regular tests. I would encourage men to ask their GPs for a simple prostate specific antigen, or a PSA blood test, which can show early signs of any cancer growth. Surveys undertaken by the foundation indicate that only 10 per cent of men between the ages of 50 and 70 have regular prostate checks. This underlines the significant hurdles that need to be overcome if we are to change men's attitudes towards their own health.

Some months ago I joined my colleagues in celebrating the life's work of the late Jane McGrath, whose tireless campaigning put breast cancer front and centre of the nation's mind. The result of the successful

pink ribbon campaigns and the support of many high-profile Australians for that message is that many more women and their families are aware of the risks of breast cancer and the need to have regular examinations. Reaching out to men about their health, however, proves to be a more difficult task. Prostate Cancer Foundation surveys show that, while 78 per cent of women feel well informed about breast cancer, just over half of Australian men surveyed felt that they had enough information about prostate cancer.

In my electorate we are very fortunate to have an active group of supporting sufferers and survivors of prostate cancer. The Nepean-Blue Mountains Prostate Cancer Support Group have lent an understanding ear to many men and their families in the local area, and I would like to acknowledge the hard work of president Victor Cipants, secretary Alan Moran, vice-president David Price, assistant secretary Gabrielle Moran, treasurer Brett Sowerby and all of the members of that group.

On Friday, 5 September, we were honoured to have the Treasurer, the honourable member for Lilley, join the Nepean-Blue Mountains Prostate Cancer Support Group for an afternoon tea generously hosted by the Penrith City Council and speak about the challenges that face prostate cancer sufferers and their families. Diagnosed in 2001 with the same disease that claimed the life of his father, the Treasurer himself is a survivor of prostate cancer—a member of the secret brotherhood, as he likes to refer to it—and he attests to the benefits of early detection. It is important that we have men of the profile of the Treasurer willing to speak out, who are unafraid to have honest conversations with other men about prostate cancer. It is stories like that of the Treasurer that we can all look to for inspiration, and I would like to extend my thanks to him for his time in coming to my electorate and sharing his experiences.

I also acknowledge that Sydney broadcaster Alan Jones will return to work tomorrow after being diagnosed with prostate cancer earlier this year and I wish him all the best with his battle.