

27 November 2008

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Lindsay Electorate: Samuel Morris Foundation

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (10.22 a.m.) — I rise to acknowledge the important work being undertaken by the Samuel Morris Foundation, which was established in March 2007 to provide assistance to families of children suffering from severe disabilities following near-drowning accidents. The foundation was set up by Michael and Jo-Ann Morris of Cranebrook in my electorate, after their then two-year-old son, Samuel, suffered a near-drowning incident in the family's backyard pool. Water safety issues have been highlighted this week with the backyard swimming pool tragedy involving 21-month old twins, Ethan and Matthew Hill, of St Huberts Island. Ethan died and Matthew is fighting for his life. We extend our sympathies and best wishes to all those affected by this tragedy.

In Samuel's case, he had been playing in the backyard with his older sister when he managed to shake free a 1½-metre section of the pool fence. He made his way into the pool, and by the time his sister had raised the alarm Samuel had already stopped breathing. With the help of his mother, some quick-thinking neighbours and emergency services personnel, Samuel was revived.

Samuel—now five years old—has been left with severe hypoxic brain injuries, meaning he can no longer walk or talk and requires constant care and specialist treatment and equipment. Samuel is a fighter and a source of inspiration. His injuries are severe, but I have seen firsthand his will and determination. Samuel is currently in Westmead Hospital preparing for surgery next week and I wish him and his family all the best.

I recently accompanied Michael, Jo-Ann and Samuel to the launch of the 2008 National drowning report by the Minister for Sport and Youth in Parliament House. The report sets out some tragic statistics. In the last year there were 27 drowning deaths in the under-4 age group, with backyard swimming pools, followed by lakes and dams, as the most common locations for these drowning deaths. But even these statistics do not reveal the less-reported near-drowning accidents, which are much greater in number than drowning deaths. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's research has found that the great majority of near-drowning incidents are experienced by children younger than 15, and many of these are under four.

It is these families that the Samuel Morris Foundation works to support. The foundation fundraises extensively to help families of children suffering from hypoxic brain injuries resulting from near-drowning accidents with the heavy financial burden of the specialist equipment and therapies that these injuries require. The foundation works closely with Royal Life Saving and won this year's Patron's Award for the most significant contribution to water safety with a focus on an under-represented group at the New South Wales Water Safety Awards.

Samuel's story is one the Morris family has been working hard to ensure is not repeated. As parents, we all need to heed the message of water safety and be vigilant when our children are near water. I congratulate the Samuel Morris Foundation, and in particular Michael and Jo-Ann Morris for their



outstanding contribution, and I look forward to continuing to work with them to promote the message of water safety.