

22 February 2010

Main Committee

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (7.36PM) — I also commend the member for Gilmore for bringing this motion before the House. I am very pleased to be able to speak in support of it. Last year I watched one of my best friends carry a small white coffin in his arms. It was the funeral for his daughter who, days before, had died in utero. He was carrying her out of the church for her final farewell. There was not a dry eye to be found in the church. It was one of the saddest, one of the most moving funerals I have ever attended. She had been the subject of much anticipation, of the excitement of expectant parents and their friends and families.

In January 2009 my wife and our four children had visited our close friends whilst on holidays in Brisbane. We exchanged stories about their hopes for their child and our experiences as young parents. We inspected the nursery. There was such anticipation. But the long lifetime full of rich memories that we envisaged would be ahead of this as yet unborn child would never be realised.

The small white coffin carried in a grieving father's arms was a heart-wrenching scene. As a person brought up in the Catholic tradition, a funeral in even the most difficult circumstances is a time for celebrating the life of the deceased. But it is not until you attend the funeral of a life that has barely had time to be lived that you realise the depth of the loss that families faced with this reality confront. As my grandfather, who survived one of his own children, once confided in me, 'There is no greater loss you can feel than attending the funeral of one of your children.'

In Australia in 2007 there were 1,676 deaths of babies at some stage during pregnancy and a further 856 deaths of babies within the first 28 days of life. Each

of these deaths represents an enormous tragedy and a grief that we all wish no-one should ever experience. To lose a child, particularly a child who has died at the very beginning of his or her life, is a wound which does not heal for parents, although the hope, the prospect and perhaps even the eventuality of having other children can help parents to again look forward in their lives.

The Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day is a day that seeks to recognise the pain and the suffering of those parents who have lost a baby. In the United States of America 15 October is observed as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day. For families who have experienced the loss of a baby this day provides a chance to acknowledge the grief of millions of parents and remember and honour the babies lost. People are invited to light a candle at 7.00 pm on 15 October no matter where they are in the world and keep it burning for an hour to create a wave of light across the globe in memory of the babies lost to us.

For my good friends who lost their daughter last year, Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day has represented a way to connect with others who have experienced the same grief. My friends recently wrote to me, and I will read their words into the Hansard:

The day we found out our daughter had no heartbeat and had died in utero, a piece of ourselves also died. Our hearts broken. Our dreams shattered. Our lives changed forever. We became part of a select, far too often ignored and hidden community of bereaved parents. Each of us struggling to put our lives back together, to integrate the death of our children into something resembling a normal existence. Every phone call, every message, or simple gesture recognising our daughter as part of our new lives help us move forward in our grief. Last year, we participated in our first IPIL Day and Walk to Remember. Friends, family, and the greater community all coming together to remember and honour the far too many babies' lives lost. IPIL Day enabled us to feel the love and support of our wider community again.

Words can do so little to soothe the pain that a parent feels at the loss of a baby, but Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day provides a way to share that loss and know that others are walking down the same path. I would like to express my support for this motion and for this remembrance day. There are thousands of parents out there each year who suffer the loss of a baby, and they should know that they are not alone.