



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Bradfield Electorate: Palliative Care**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 15 June 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 15 June 2015  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Fletcher, Paul, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr FLETCHER** (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (10:32): Palliative care and dying at home are issues that can be confronting to talk about, but with our ageing population and more people living longer with cancer and other terminal diseases, these are issues that we, as a community, need to discuss. All too often there is an urge to provide even more medical interventions when a patient is dying, when it can be more important to give the patient the safest and most peaceful and comfortable path in their last days. In my electorate of Bradfield, we are lucky to have several services available to help people who wish to receive palliative care at home. As the *North Shore Times* has state:

... more than three-quarters of people referred to a community palliative care service in northern Sydney have fulfilled their wish and died at home.

HammondCare, based in my electorate, runs a home support program with the Northern Sydney Local Health District which has been accessed by 150 people since late 2013, with 77 per cent dying at home. This is in contrast to figures from Palliative Care Australia showing that while 70 per cent of Australians would prefer to die at home, only 16 per cent do so.

Palliative care campaigner and resident of Bradfield, Dr Yvonne McMaster, is a tireless advocate for end-of-life care and adds her voice to all those who call for greater community engagement on the issue. In a fairly recent Sydney Morning Herald article, Dr McMaster said that the demand for palliative care services is growing and she encouraged government to look at funding programs that are working so they can be expanded.

I recently met a constituent, Mrs Sarah Bloom. Mrs Bloom wanted to see me to discuss her wish to die at home and her belief that more needs to be done to facilitate the wishes of palliative patients. Sadly, I was advised just a few days ago that Mrs Bloom recently lost her battle with lung cancer but she died knowing that she had shone a light on matters relating to palliative care for me.

There is a huge call on palliative care services, with more and more people wanting to die at home. It is perhaps human nature that we find this a difficult topic to engage with, and we can be tempted to bury our heads in the sand, but it is thanks to the tireless campaigning work of people like Dr Yvonne McMaster, who is a specialist in this area, as well as Mrs Sarah Bloom, who was herself suffering from a terminal disease, that awareness of these issues is going to be raised. I want to acknowledge the important work of Dr McMaster, and the courage of Mrs Bloom in raising this issue with me in her last weeks. I want to also acknowledge the very important work done in the electorate of Bradfield and elsewhere within the Northern Sydney Local Health District by HammondCare. I want to add my voice to those who say that we need to engage more seriously with palliative care so that those in their last days can have the safest, most peaceful and comfortable path.