



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Cunningham Electorate: Health**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 19 March 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Tuesday, 19 March 2013  
**Page** 2683  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Bird, Sharon, MP

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

**Ms BIRD** (Cunningham—Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills) (16:10): I want to report to the House on two important community health initiatives that occurred in my electorate in recent weeks. First of all, on Thursday, 7 March, I was very pleased to join with 17 other Illawarra political leaders at an event organised by Wollongong's Young Citizen of the Year, Jessica Sparks, who has an organisation called Sparking Life. Jess created Sparking Life, which is dedicated to increasing organ and tissue donation in Australia. She was the recipient of a double-lung transplant over three years ago, and I have known Jess for those intervening years. She is a great advocate for the importance of organ donation.

The event was a culmination of DonateLife Week, which happens around the nation. Seventeen of us came together from all political parties. There were me and the member for Throsby, Stephen Jones; state members Ryan Park, Noreen Hay, Anna Watson and Gareth Ward; Wollongong Lord Mayor, Gordon Bradbery; and Shellharbour Mayor, Marianne Saliba—just to give a taste of the coverage that was at that event. We all came together to hold up signs of commitment, a pledge, to talk to our families about the importance of organ donation so that, in those tragic circumstances where decisions have to be made, the conversations have already been had.

It is particularly important to recognise that at any one time there are about 1,600 people on a transplant waiting list and that just one decision to donate can save up to 10 lives. So it is a very important issue to raise. I am very pleased that I had my Medicare donor card, and I would encourage anyone who thinks that they are covered by some sort of driver's licence scheme or whatever not to muck around and to go to the Medicare site and sign up and have that conversation with your family. I am sure that all of us in this chamber heartily endorse that focus.

The second event was on 9 March—a couple of days later—where I was able to join the Illawarra Rotary Clubs for their launch of this year's Bowelscan campaign, a tremendous initiative that they have been running for 14 years. I want to particularly pay tribute to Alf Harley, who is the local coordinator of the program—and it has of course spread nationwide. We know that, sadly, too many people die unnecessarily of bowel cancer. It is one of those diseases where, if it is detected early, the prognosis is so much better. The Bowelscan program has been running through Rotary since about 1982. In the 2012-13 federal budget, the government extended its own National Bowel Cancer Screening Program to Australians turning 60 and announced a program of increasing checks in the years ahead. I commend that program to all as well.