



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Lung Health Awareness Month

SPEECH

Monday, 1 December 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Champion, Nick, MP

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Mr CHAMPION (Wakefield) (12:44): I have to thank the member for Shortland for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I echo the words of previous speakers in congratulating her on this effort.

Some of my earliest memories as a child are of not being able to breathe—of having asthma and being taken down to the women's and children's hospital in the middle of the night by my mum. It is a particularly terrifying thing if you happen to experience it, particularly if you are young. But it is also pretty terrifying for those around you. I think my mother still has a fair bit of distress about those memories. I think she found it very worrying—having to make those emergency visits to the hospital with a sick child in the middle of the night. My grandmother had emphysema at the same time, so she and I shared a common bond, but my mother, who could breathe but had to take care of us both, really felt it. I think we need to be mindful of that impact on families when we discuss lung disease.

On Friday I was at the Asbestos Victims Association Memorial Day in Pitman Park in Salisbury. The City of Salisbury has a memorial to honour those who have suffered from and lost their lives to asbestosis, to mesothelioma or to lung cancer. It allows the families of those victims to honour them and to acknowledge their passing. This would not have happened but for the efforts and the energy of Terry Miller OAM, who has long been passionate—one of the most passionate people I have ever met—not just about honouring families and making sure that the victims, and the families of those victims, of asbestosis are looked after but also about prevention and making sure that others do not suffer from that terrible but entirely preventable disease.

At that event we heard from a lady named Tracey. She gave a stirring, heartfelt address to those present about the death of her husband, Rob Dietrich. It was one of those passionate addresses that did not leave many dry eyes among those present at that event. Even the MC had tears in her eyes. I had tears in my eyes. Nearly every politician there was affected by Tracey's very passionate address about what had been a very terrible death and the impact on her children, Andrew and Maddison, of the loss of their father—and the impact on her of the loss of her husband. As I said before, it did not leave a dry eye at the event. It made us all too aware of the importance not just of preventing asbestosis but of Lung Health Awareness Month and the importance of this motion coming before the House.

Lung disease affects families and it is something we need to be cognisant of when we are looking at our health budget—10 per cent of the overall health burden in Australia, 20,000 deaths, three per cent of hospitalisations and one in 10 Australians affected by lung disease. We do not have to go too far in this debate to hear from people who have suffered from asthma or who have family members who have had to care for those with lung diseases, so we know that this is an important motion. It deserves the efforts and energies of all of us in the House. I congratulate the member for Shortland for bringing this motion forward and all the other speakers in the debate. It is important that these motions are bipartisan, that we show our care and concern for those who are suffering—particularly for the families of those who are suffering from these very distressing diseases and events. My concern and my thoughts are with all of them.