



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Meals on Wheels**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 23 November 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Thistlethwaite, Matt, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
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**Mr THISTLETHWAITE** (Kingsford Smith) (11:32): I am very pleased to support this motion moved by the member for Ryan and pay tribute to the Meals on Wheels establishment and the wonderful work that it has done in Australia since 1952. In particular, I would like to thank, congratulate and pay tribute to the wonderful volunteers of Meals on Wheels across Australia who, every day, ensure that the elderly, people with disabilities and those who are lonely are provided with support and, importantly, a nutritious meal to ensure that their health and wellbeing is being catered for.

I wish, in particular, to pay tribute to those that work in our community in the electorate of Kingsford Smith in the Randwick and Botany Meals on Wheels organisations. For well over 50 years they have been supporting vulnerable people within our community and delivering those meals on a daily basis. At the moment, in both Randwick and Botany combined, Meals on Wheels delivers close to 2,000 meals a week to people within our community. They are not just meals; they are healthy, fresh, nutritious meals that can easily be heated up and delivered to people who are living in difficult circumstances and who may be frail, elderly, disabled and in need of care and attention to ensure that they can live fulfilling lives.

As other speakers have pointed out in this debate, the great value of Meals on Wheels is not simply in the food that is delivered. Meals on Wheels is much more than simply delivering a meal to a person on a daily or weekly basis. The wonderful volunteers of Meals on Wheels spend time with those whom they visit. They spend time chatting with them, they help them out around the home and, importantly, they sit with them and have a cup of tea or a chat and talk about their life and talk about what is happening in their life at that point in time. Particularly for elderly people or those who may be lonely and do not live with anyone, that is vitally important to a person's mental health and wellbeing. In the lead up to Christmas, when traditionally Australians spend a lot of time with family, I think we also need to remember those in our communities who live alone. Over the Christmas period Meals on Wheels provides a wonderful service connecting with and supporting those who may be lonely and live on their in our community.

Last week I conducted some volunteer awards in Kingsford Smith where we awarded community service certificates to those who volunteer in our community. For the last two years that I have done these awards, Meals on Wheels volunteers have been well represented and are well respected and loved within our community. It is a great pleasure to be able award a certificate of community service to someone from Meals on Wheels. Many of those volunteers that have worked in our community for Meals on Wheels in Randwick and Botany have been long-term volunteers, with over decades of support for this wonderful organisation. Many of them report to me that it is not simply about volunteering and providing support to those living vulnerable lives in our communities. Volunteering is also good fun, and that is something that I am acutely aware of. I came to politics through my work in community organisations. I was involved in Surf Life Saving from the age of 13. Most of my social network and friends that I have developed over those many years have come through being involved in volunteering. So volunteering is not simply about the social benefit; it is also about feeling part of a community, feeling connected to the community, and developing great friendships and love for the community and for people within that community over many years. Meals on Wheels and their volunteers provide that opportunity to many in our community.

Today I once again congratulate and thank and pay tribute to those volunteers, who, week in, week out, over many decades, have supported the vulnerable, the lonely, the disabled and the elderly in our community. You provide a wonderful service, and your contribution deserves credit and accolades from this parliament.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER ( Mr Vasta ): The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.