



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Lung Cancer Awareness Month**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 2 December 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** King, Catherine, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
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**Ms KING** (Ballarat) (11:21): I would like to thank the shadow parliamentary secretary for health for introducing this important motion and for her work not just on Lung Cancer Awareness Month but also in the area of lung health generally. As noted, lung cancer claims the lives of more Australians than any other cancer. In 2010 lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer death for men and women. Some 18 per cent of all cancer deaths in 2010 were due to lung cancer. We know that lung cancer claims the lives of more Australians than any other cancer, with only 14 out of 100 Australians surviving five years beyond their initial diagnosis.

According to the Lung Foundation Australia, more than 9,100 Australians are diagnosed with lung cancer each year. In 2007 there were 7,626 deaths caused by lung cancer. If you are male, the risk of been diagnosed with lung cancer in Australia is higher. 2009 saw 10,200 newly diagnosed cases of both small-cell and non-small cell lung cancers in Australia. They are fairly confronting statistics and it is certainly why Lung Cancer Awareness Month is a month of promotion about the importance of lung health and lung care. We know that cancer is still placing an intolerable burden on our community. We have all been touched by this disease somehow. We have a family member, a friend or someone in our own lives who has been burdened with cancer. But I believe that, if governments at all levels work together, we can improve the survival rate of Australians diagnosed with lung cancer.

Early detection absolutely is the key and I am extremely proud of the work that the previous government did in this area in encouraging early detection and ensuring access to high-quality health care treatment and support. We worked tirelessly to ensure access to early detection, treatment and quality care. In the budget, the Labor government announced some \$5.9 million of funding to continue to improve outcomes for people with lung cancer, with Cancer Australia working to deliver best practice cancer care, research and national reporting of lung cancer data. The investment was part of the world-leading cancer care package and the new investment was on top of some \$3.5 billion that went into combating cancer since 2007, including \$1.5 billion in new cancer medicines. In 2009 alone we announced \$6.8 million to improve lung cancer care through identifying research in clinical priorities, providing more consistent data and targeting health professionals to deliver best practice, and we made headway in talking about lung cancer suffering in Torres Strait Islanders and Indigenous Australians.

As we know, tobacco smoking is one of the biggest factors in lung cancer. It is a testament to the previous government that we took on the tobacco industry to reduce the promotion of harmful smoking, removing the last form of advertising for smoking. I want to pay tribute to the previous Minister for Health and Ageing and Attorney-General, Nicola Roxon, as well as previous health minister Tanya Plibersek for their work in this area of tackling smoking, particularly their efforts in plain packaging reform. It was a tough fight but one that was well worth having and one on which I would be exceptionally disappointed to see any backward steps taken.

Through education and investment in critical medical research we can ensure that lung health is a priority across Australia. We remain committed to improving the cancer services provided across Australia. Lung Cancer Awareness Month is a month of promotion and awareness raising and one in which we should redouble our efforts in looking at significant ways to prevent and reduce the rate of lung cancer in Australia. Lung cancer does, of course, have many causes, but tobacco smoking is certainly the largest cause. I know many people struggle. We heard from the member for Herbert on his own personal journey and struggle with smoking, and I want to commend him. I have a pretty strong policy in my office of nagging every single one of my staff who do smoke. As an ex-smoker from a very long time ago now, I feel it is important that not only do I nag them but also they are provided with supportive opportunities to quit and that it is an environment in which we do not see smoking as something that is common within the workplace. I have so far been successful in managing to get four of my staff to take that very difficult challenge of giving up smoking. I acknowledge that it is an incredibly difficult addiction to break; but, when you see young children develop lung cancer and the survival rates are so small, it is incredibly important that during lung awareness week we talk about the opportunities and support for people, whether it be through the Quit Foundation or MBS items on the PBS, to quit smoking so that we improve lung health and the survival rates of people with lung cancer in this country. *(Time expired)*