



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Palliative Care**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 2 June 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Andrews, Karen, MP

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

**Mrs ANDREWS** (McPherson) (12:13): I am pleased to support this motion by the member for Kingston. Palliative care is the area of health care that is possibly the least discussed and least recognised and yet the one that has the most impact on families at a very stressful and emotional time. National Palliative Care Week, which finished on Saturday, was an opportunity to talk about the role of palliative care and the incredible job that those who work in palliative care do. The theme of this week was: let's work together. It is great that we can come together in this place from across the political spectrum to agree on the need for more public awareness of palliative care.

We have had a lot of debate and discussion recently about the need to address the challenges that come with an ageing population. The fact is that between 2010 and 2050 the number of people aged 65 to 84 will more than double, and the number of those aged 85 will more than quadruple. It stands to reason that the need for palliative care services will also increase in the coming decades.

I particularly want to recognise, as part (3)(b) of this motion does, those dedicated healthcare workers and volunteers who choose to work in palliative care. Just about every other aspect of health care is aimed at recovery and helping an individual to get well. An intrinsic satisfaction of the job must be seeing and assisting in that recovery process. Palliative care workers do not have the satisfaction of that recovery process, but they do have a vitally important job in relieving suffering, in helping individuals and their families to deal with their circumstances and start the journey through grief, and in ensuring that their patients leave this world in as peaceful and as dignified a manner as possible.

I was very pleased to note that last Thursday the Assistant Minister for Health announced that the federal government will provide \$52 million over three years to improve palliative care services and training. This funding is in addition to the support the Australian government provides to states and territories to operate palliative care services, the subsidies for palliative care medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and palliative care consultations under the Medical Benefits Scheme. While the state and territory governments are responsible for the delivery of palliative care services, the funding we have announced will continue to support education and training opportunities in palliative care for health professionals and to promote the importance of advance care planning.

I want to take some time in this debate to discuss advance care planning, which is mentioned in part (4)(a) of this motion. It is important that we discuss the value of planning when it comes to making our wishes and intentions clear. Less than one per cent of Australians over 70 have an advance care directive in place. An advance care directive lets your loved ones, your doctor and other health professionals know about the level of care and the quality of life you would like to have if you are no longer able to make those decisions on your own. It is also very difficult and at times heart-wrenching for our loved ones to have the responsibility of making decisions on our behalf if we have not let them know how we feel and what we would want. The Palliative Care Australia website, [www.palliativecare.org.au](http://www.palliativecare.org.au), has a section on advance care planning, including a number of resources and links to help people consider their options.

Finally, I want to take a moment to recognise the charity Queensland Kids, which I understand is very close to its aim of establishing a children's hospice and respite care centre in Brisbane, to be called Hummingbird House. Hummingbird House will operate as an eight-bed, 24/7 medical facility including physician and nursing support, pain and symptom management, both scheduled and emergency respite care and end-of-life care. The government has made a commitment of \$5.5 million to help fund the facility, and the state government is also providing funding, but it is largely through the efforts of the dedicated founders of Queensland Kids, Paul and Gabrielle Quilliam, that this project will become a reality.

It is incredible that there are only two children's respite care and hospice facilities in Australia, located in Sydney and Melbourne. There are 3,700 Queensland families with children who have a life-limiting condition. As a

parent, I cannot imagine a more difficult, stressful or emotional situation to have to deal with. A dedicated facility is desperately needed and will provide a vital service to these families. Fundraising for Hummingbird House is in full swing, and I wish Queensland Kids every success and encourage anyone listening to this debate to donate to this worthy cause.

I am pleased to be part of a government that recognises the importance of palliative care and is taking steps to ensure that spending on vital health services is sustainable in the future.