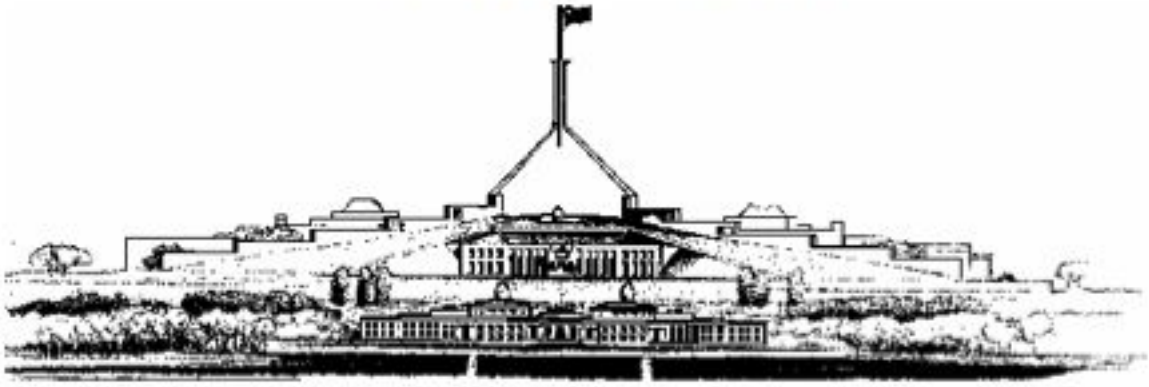
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Health: National Palliative Care Week

SPEECH

Monday, 25 May 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date	Monday, 25 May 2015	**Source**	House
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Questioner		**Responder**	
Speaker	Neumann, Shayne, MP	**Question No.**	

Mr NEUMANN (Blair) (11:52): I thank the member for Wakefield and shadow parliamentary secretary for putting forward this motion on National Palliative Care Week. I am pleased to speak in support of it. National Palliative Care Week is an opportunity for all of us to begin those necessary and sometimes difficult conversations with those whom we love about death, about life and about end-of-life decisions.

Some of the most difficult conversations I had when I was practising for more than 20 years as a lawyer were not in family law cases and not with criminal law charges against clients but in fact concerned wills and estates. It was very difficult to have those conversations with people, so I commend the member for Wakefield for raising this issue. This week provides an opportunity to celebrate life while accepting, recognising and planning for the inevitable.

In Shakespeare, Queen Gertrude attempts to comfort her grieving son, Hamlet, telling him:

Thou know'st 'tis common. All that lives must die,

Passing through nature to eternity.

All of know people who have died. All of us have grieved. We fail to discuss the type and extent of medical assistance we wish to receive. We fail to discuss where we wish to pass away. We often fail to do a will, fail to do a power of attorney, fail to formalise our wishes on advanced health directives.

I commend the Grattan Institute for its 2014 *Dying well* report on palliative care. It particularly caught my attention. It stated:

Most people prefer to die comfortably at home or in a home-like environment with minimal pain and suffering. They hope to be surrounded by friends and family and the care services they need. A good death meets the individual physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of the dying person …

But often the obstacle in front of many people is the conversation they need to have. The hospital is a pressure cooker of an environment, but that is the place where most Australians seem to end up dying. The failure to properly plan for death means many of us die in hospitals or, indeed, in residential aged-care facilities. Fifty-four per cent of deaths of those over 65 years of age occur in a hospital and 32 per cent in a residential aged-care facility. The Grattan Institute reports in *Dying well* that only about 14 per cent of Australians who would prefer it actually die in their homes. It is about half the rate of comparable OECD countries including the United States, New Zealand, Ireland and France.

When Labor was in government we recognised that Australians needed to take better control of this decision making, so we funded, as the member for Wakefield said, a $54.95 million trial, 'Better Access to Palliative Care', which included $38 million to the hospital service in Hobart. The trial will help us determine what we do in relation to this area.

I want to also mention the Ipswich hospice in my electorate—a not-for-profit community owned organisation operating a palliative care facility in Ipswich, in the heart of town. For over 20 years, it has been providing exceptional palliative care and comfort to those terminally ill and their families in Ipswich and the West Moreton region. In 2013-14, there were 2,009 bed days, 86 admissions and 77 deaths at the seven-bed facility. Many hundreds of people were supported through their grief with the wonderful work done through Hilda's House, its neighbouring community centre. The hospice provides bereavement support as well as education to the community and medical professionals on palliative care, death and grieving.

Over 20 years, the hospice has been supported by a wonderful team of wonderful volunteers—183 as of last year—guided by a dedicated management committee. It has blossomed under the leadership of talented and

committed directors. Jan Wilton, a talented and caring registered nurse with whom I had the privilege of serving on the local Health Community Council, served as the director of the hospice for many years. Jan was ably followed by Ros Holloway, a capable and caring person with whom I have enjoyed a friendship as we both attend the same church in Ipswich. In 2014, Ros passed the baton to Sandra Larkin, who will no doubt continue to grow and strengthen the hospice, which is supported by the business community and the meat workers union through regular payroll deductions directly to the hospice. I commend the union for their wonderful work and the hospice for the work they do.

I am very pleased to have been a longstanding supporter of the Ipswich hospice. I was bitterly disappointed, I must say, when the new government, through MYEFO, cut the $100,000 to the hospice that I had secured through the Liveable Communities program to enhance community care services—one of the first acts of the Abbott government. I commend the new member for Ipswich for securing $3.1 million in Queensland government funding for the hospice for the next three years and look forward to working with the hospice in Ipswich for many years to come. *(Time expired)*