

ADJOURNMENT

Cancer

Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (7.43 p.m.)—I rise today to speak about the vital work that cancer support groups and organisations carry out in our community for cancer sufferers and their families. I want to pay tribute particularly to a new network that has been formed in my electorate, the Fleurieu Cancer Network. This network brings together many social support groups within my electorate so that they can work together to inform and provide cancer sufferers and their families with the best possible support. I would like to congratulate the many volunteers within the Fleurieu Cancer Network who sacrificed their time to make sure that cancer support groups and services are available in Kingston.

Cancer is a word we all fear, but unfortunately it is a reality for so many. About one in three South Australians experience cancer during their lifetime. The impact of cancer extends well beyond the person directly affected by it. I am sure all members of the House have had their lives touched by cancer, whether suffered by a friend, a family member or indeed themselves. The various forms of cancer are the single leading cause of death in Australia. It is a disease that affects many, no matter what their age, in our society. The ABS calculates that years of potential life lost through deaths caused by cancer make up close to 30 per cent of years of potential life lost for men and almost 45 per cent for women. This is a higher percentage of years of potential life lost than those lost to heart disease, accidents or self-harm.

We all know of the advances that have been made in recent years in cancer treatment and indeed it is pleasing to see that deaths from cancer have plateaued in some areas. Despite the progress made in prevention and treatment over the recent decades, cancer continues to affect many thousands of Australians every year. The vital care provided by support networks is essential in assisting cancer sufferers and those who love and care for them the most.

As outlined in the *Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Psychosocial Care of Adults with Cancer*, there is significant benefit to be gained from support services for an individual, especially in the adjustment to the disease and treatment. Talking with other cancer sufferers who are in the same position as oneself—knowing that you are not alone—can have a powerful effect on one's level of optimism and can improve one's mental state. Sharing information with peers is also a key to ensuring that those with cancer feel empowered and have choices in how they might fight the disease. Support services and groups have a role in providing psycho-educational programs, helping to decrease anxiety and depression. Cancer support groups play an important role for families, enabling family members to meet others in similar situations. Often it is the family members who have to be strong for their loved ones and do not take care of their own stress. Support groups play a vital role in helping them to do this.

Cancer support groups do tremendous work in providing information, education, emotional support and physical assistance, and I cannot applaud their dedication and services enough. Supporting people through difficult times is what makes our communities. As the different support groups work together and coordinate their activities they will be able to provide harmonious services to people around the country. Congratulations once again to the Fleurieu Cancer Network and to the local cancer support groups that make up the network. Ultimately, their help aids in easing the burden that falls to families and loved

ones when cancer strikes. Interventions that provide support for partners of patients are effective in reducing distress in both patients and partners.