



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Relay for Life 2009**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 10 September 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Furner, Sen Mark

**Source** Senate  
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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Senator FURNER** (Queensland) (6.15 pm)—Tonight I rise to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the Cancer Council and to discuss my involvement as part of the Queensland Senators Team in the Cancer Council's Brisbane Relay for Life. Every year the Cancer Council puts on the Brisbane Relay for Life, one of the many held around Australia, to raise money for cancer research, provide support for those with cancer and educate the community about prevention. But the Relay for Life is not just a fundraiser for the Cancer Council. It enables people from all walks of life to come together for 18 hours for one common cause: to celebrate cancer survivors, remember loved ones who we have lost and to fight back against the disease which has affected each and every one of us in some way.

According to the Cancer Council an estimated 111,000 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in 2009; one in two men and one in three women will be diagnosed with cancer before the age of 85; cancer is a leading cause of death in Australia, with more than 42,000 expected to die from cancer in 2009; almost 12,000 more people die each year from cancer than 30 years ago; more than 60 percent of cancer patients will survive more than five years after being diagnosed; the survival rates for many common cancer have increased by more than 30 percent in the past two decades; the most common cancers in Australia, excluding non-melanoma skin cancers, are prostate, bowel, breast, melanoma and lung cancers; each year 434,000 people are treated for non-melanoma skin cancer, which is the most common but least life threatening; cancer costs \$3.8 billion in direct health system costs; and \$378 million was spent on cancer research in 2000-01, 22 per cent of all health research expenditure in Australia.

These numbers are alarming, which is why I decided to embark on this journey with the Cancer Council by participating in the Relay for Life, and have done so over several years now. I have participated in the Pine Rivers Relay for Life three times before as co-captain and in two years won the award for highest fundraiser, raising over \$30,000. I have also taken part in the Redcliffe Relay for Life and will be joining the member for Petrie, Yvette D'Ath's, Petrie Possums on 19 September, along with a team in the Pine Rivers 2009 relay on 31 October.

Participating in these events is important to me. It is not only for a good cause but a chance as a community

to provide support and aid to those who need it most. I am sure everyone has been touched by cancer in some way, whether it was your mum, your dad, your brother, your sister or even your child. Cancer does not discriminate, which is why it is important that we support events like Relay for Life to raise much-needed funds for non-government organisations like the Cancer Council to find a cure for a disease which can affect anyone at any age.

Together with fellow Queensland Senator Claire Moore, Abdul Salam Obeid, Wendy Cooke, Russell Vieritz, Christine Stubbs, David Doolan, Abdul Kadir Obeid, Stacey Furner, John Hamze, Annalese Vieritz, Carol Cooke, and John, Carol's partner, we formed the Queensland Senators Team and participate in the Brisbane Relay for Life held at Mount Gravatt showgrounds from 3.00 pm on Saturday 22 August to 9.00 am on Sunday 23 August. The idea of the event is to have at least one carrying around the team baton for the entire 18 hours. Each team member took turns with a half hour shift, and I thank those who did the graveyard shifts in the early hours of the morning. The event kicked off at 3.00 pm on the Saturday with an opening ceremony and a chance for survivors and carers, wearing sashes, to do a walk of solidarity in the fight against this disease which affects so many Australians. At 6.00 pm there was a candlelight ceremony, where every team member was given a paper bag to decorate. Some people put the names of loved ones who they had lost to cancer on them. After a moving ceremony, a candle was put inside each bag and lit and all the lights at the showground were turned off so all you could see were soft lights coming from within the bags.

The following morning was the closing ceremony, where the story of a young woman of just 22 suffering from cancer was played to the crowd. The young lady was diagnosed with bowel cancer and had undergone chemotherapy only to find that it had spread to more parts of her body. But she has not given up and remains optimistic that she will pull through this disease, which has affected her so young. It is stories like this that make you realise that no one is exempt from cancer. As well as the ceremonies, the Cancer Council provided entertainment to get the 500-plus participants going throughout the night, including two movie screenings from midnight for the kids.

This year's Relay for Life also had a different spin from previous years. Aside from raising money leading up to the event, each of the 50 or so participating teams had to organise a fundraising activity at their tent site. There were cake stalls, shoulder rubs, face painting, raffles, chance games and Smurf muffins to name just a few. Additionally, the Queensland Senators Team had a game called 'Put money where your mouth is', where participants got to throw coins through a hole cut out of the mouth of one of my corflutes. The game was a success, with many eager passers-by having a go throwing a coin at me.

The event was an overall success and I would like to thank all my fellow team members for all the hard work they put in by raising funds and helping to set up on Saturday afternoon and pack up on Sunday morning. I would also like to say a big thankyou to all our sponsors and those who made a contribution either online or by post to the Queensland Senators Team, including Colgate Palmolive; Kerry Ingredients; Campbells Cash and Carry; ITW Proline; Berri; Bidvest; Metcash—IGA Distribution; Pizza Hut, Holland Park; McDonalds, Carina Heights; Mansfield State High School; the Australian Services Union; Christine Flage; the member for Deakin, Mike Symon; Senator Farrell; Senator Sterle; Senator Bilyk; Senator Hurley; the member for Lindsay, David Bradbury; the member for Blair, Shayne Neumann; and Queensland state member for Murrumba, Dean Wells.

In total the Queensland Senators Team raised \$4,764.70 to contribute to the Brisbane Relay for Life 2009 event, which continues to climb and is now over \$92,000. I would like to give a big thankyou to those who donated to my team members. Your support is greatly appreciated.