



## **Brain Cancer Action Week**

### **Main Committee**

**11 May 2011**

**Sharon Grierson MP**

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (09:52): As it is unlike its more colourful cousins, many Australians will not have seen the grey and white ribbon that I am wearing today, yet many people in my electorate and throughout Australia will have seen the effects of brain cancer in a friend, a family member, perhaps a work colleague.

Kaye Duffy, a constituent in my electorate and the coordinator of the Hunter Brain Tumour Support Network, has written to me on a number of occasions about the need for greater funding for brain cancer research. 'Too many people are dying too young,' she said. 'It would make your heart ache.'

This white and grey ribbon is a symbol of the Cancer Council's Brain Cancer Action Week, which is now in its second year. Running from 8 to 14 May, Brain Cancer Action Week works to highlight the need for funding for and research into the cause and treatment of brain cancer.

Although it is the leading cause of cancer death in people under the age of 40 and accounts for more than one-third of all cancer deaths in children aged under 10, it is one of the most under-funded and understudied cancers and receives too little research funding. In part this is because the speed at which brain cancer kills means that conducting clinical or biological research is very difficult.

As a result, little is known about this disease other than statistics that reveal its devastating consequences for sufferers, their friends, families, carers and health workers.

As a member of the Centre for Brain and Mental Health Research Advisory Board, based at the Calvary Mater Hospital in my electorate of Newcastle, this issue is very close to my heart. There are many people in my electorate who make a significant contribution to fighting brain cancer, but there is one who deserves special mention, Professor Chris Levi. Chris has made a significant contribution to the global research efforts around brain health and particularly to improving the prospects of people who suffer a stroke.

Brain cancer has an almost 100 per cent fatality rate, and the number of diagnoses has increased by seven per cent over the past decade. One Australian now dies from brain cancer every eight hours.

But we can make a difference. Fifteen years ago leukaemia killed 90 per cent of patients. Now leukaemia sufferers have a 90 per cent survival rate. The slogan of Brain Cancer Action Week this year is 'Ideas. Research. Hope'. The ideas are there; there can be the research.

As a parliament we do need to give sufferers and their families hope. I hope that funding take-up for brain cancer research will increase.