



## **JUVENILE DIABETES, CANCER & MENTAL HEALTH Members' Statements 31 October 2006**

**Ms GRIERSON** (Newcastle) (4.10 pm)—I draw the House's attention to some of the great work being done by people in my electorate of Newcastle to increase awareness and raise funds for research into some of our most pressing medical problems: juvenile diabetes, cancer and mental health.

A delegation of children with juvenile diabetes is travelling to Parliament House tomorrow to raise awareness about this disease. Eight-year-old Grace Gibson from my electorate will be among them. Grace is a fine ambassador for her peers and shows remarkable maturity in dealing with the everyday consequences that accompany type 1 diabetes. After meeting Grace last month, I felt privileged to cut the ribbon on the 2006 Walk to Cure Diabetes in our region at Speers Point Park on Sunday. The walk was very successful—a successful family and community event highlighting the very real needs of children like Grace and their families living with juvenile diabetes.

It was a weekend of generous activity in my region last weekend with the cancer Relay for Life also taking place at Glendale. The first relay lap was led by cancer survivors in their honour. It is a very emotional walk. Many of us simply cannot imagine the extreme physical and emotional strain of cancer diagnosis, treatment and survival, but we can all empathise with this struggle and offer our support. Victoria Phillis and Kerry McGuire, both cancer survivors and work colleagues of mine, were part of the lap of honour. They exemplify individual courage matched with a commitment to use their experience to benefit others. In fact, Victoria personally raised over \$2½ thousand for cancer research last week—a wonderful effort!

The Newcastle Relay for Life committee deserves great praise. Consisting of 12 volunteers, the committee has turned the Newcastle Relay for Life into the fastest-growing relay in New South Wales, growing 300 per cent in financial terms and 90 per cent in participation. This growth reflects the great work the committee has done, under the outstanding leadership of Barbara Witcher, in promoting an event that raises funds for research, disseminates the Cancer Council's messages and brings together survivors, would-be-survivors, carers and supporters in an amazing spirit of hope. Barb is a great colleague as well.

Sadly, Hunter residents are more likely to die of cancer than those in any other part of New South Wales. But, while Novocastrians are playing their part, there is one simple action the Howard government could take to greatly improve the prospects of cancer survival in our region—to extend Medicare rebates to patients accessing the PET

scanner at the Mater hospital. It is a shame that the government still has not acted on this, choosing instead to spend the public's money in other ways such as on advertising.

I also note an outstanding youth mental health conference that was held in Newcastle in October. The Mind Works Conference brought together students, teachers, families and carers from all around the region to increase awareness of mental health issues among adolescents and have young people take some ownership of local mental health issues. I congratulate the Sunflower Centre Hunter and the Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales for organising this important event. I look forward to receiving the outcomes and recommendations produced by the young people involved.