



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day

SPEECH

Monday, 22 February 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 22 February 2010 Page 33 Questioner Speaker Sidebottom, Sid, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (7.26 pm)—Thank you to Joanna for presenting this motion to the House, and in particular to Nicole and Richard—thank you for being here and thank you for doing what you are doing. This is personally difficult for me as well, but I suppose I want to demonstrate the importance of what you are doing, because there are so many people that have been affected by pregnancy loss, stillbirths and child death soon after birth. Some of the facts that have been presented by Nicole and Richard—you mentioned that men feel it deeply as well—are that in the developed world one in three pregnancies ends in loss, one in four women have lost a baby, one in 2,000 babies die not long after birth, one in every 48 babies is stillborn and 500,000 miscarriages take place every year. One in three women in Australia in their thirties who have given birth have also had a miscarriage. So it is something that a lot of people experience. In many cases they remain silent about it, but it is very useful for people to be able to share their experiences with each other and to know that you are not alone in your grief, and that it continues for much longer than you think.

On 4 February 1984, my wife, Bronwyn, and I lost our son Christopher, who was born premature. There was no support at all. When Bronwyn was brought in in early labour, there was no attempt to fly her to Hobart for intensive care. There was no humidicrib; it was removed. We were basically told little. Christopher was born. We spent time with Christopher. He was alive and we held him. In our ignorance, we did not know what was happening. We were told little. Christopher was taken away and we never heard what happened, how he died. Unfortunately, Christopher had an IUD lodged in him as an embryo. We were not advised that that could have been removed earlier. But anyway he was born with that. We were told he was infected. He looked beautiful, irrespective of me, and he died soon after, about an hour after. I remember it being about 2.30 in the morning; as I was leaving, in grief, they ran after me in the corridor and asked me to sign a death certificate.

The next day I came to see Bron. They had taken her out of the maternity area and had her in the general ward. She did not understand what had happened. We left together. There was no counselling or referral to anyone. We buried Christopher alone. We were told we could not have children again. Gracefully and mercifully, we were told that Bron could go on an IVF program. When she did finally front up for it they said, ‘We cannot help you because you’re pregnant.’ This was in 1986, so we lived with this from 1984 to 1986. Our son Julian was born on 26 June 1986. He looked just like Christopher, so I know what Christopher would have looked like as he grew up. Our other beautiful son William was born on 6 May 1988.

I will support this motion any way I can. We had no support. Others will have support and do now, which is terrific. Thank you for the terrific job you are doing and thank you for helping me remember.