

2003 Private Members Statement

Subjects	Diseases: Breast Cancer
Speakers	Bartlett Mr John ; Burton Ms Cherie
Business	Private Members Statements

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- **TOMAREE BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP**

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- **Mr JOHN BARTLETT** (Port Stephens) [4.25 p.m.]: October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Today I want to talk about a wonderful volunteer group based on the Tomaree peninsula called the Tomaree Breast Cancer Support Group. I support the group's call for more volunteers to help because it is, unfortunately, getting more and more work. Statistics show that about one in 11 women in Australia will develop breast cancer at some time during their life. The Tomaree Breast Cancer Support Group has a motto: "By caring and sharing we can make a difference". The steering committee for the group, which meets once a month, comprises Nola Lawler, Annie Cowling and Anne Curtis. They undertake a range of different activities to help people suffering from breast cancer.
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- The group was formed in 2001 after a suggestion by Dr Ralph Gourlay that such a service was needed in the area. The Tomaree peninsula has a population of about 18,000 people and is about 60 to 70 kilometres from the Mater hospital in Newcastle, the major oncology hospital for the Tomaree peninsula. The Nelson Bay Bowling Club provides the space for the group's meetings and it has met regularly since April 2001. The objective of the members of the group is to support women suffering from breast cancer in the best way they can. The group formed under the umbrella of the Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation Incorporated, and was inspired by the then President, Virginia Rigby. The group adheres to the constitution of the foundation, and that ensures its accountability at all times.
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- Currently the group has 30 members and their services fall into four categories. Earlier I mentioned the distances involved in travelling to hospital for repeat visits. The first category of service is transport. A team of 13 drivers takes patients to Newcastle hospital for chemotherapy, radiotherapy and associated appointments. More drivers are needed. The second category relates to comfort cushions designed to provide arm support. These unique cushions, which are made of satin, are soft, feminine and practical. People throughout the Hunter have provided wonderful feedback about them. The group holds sewing bees in the homes of members. They make approximately 50 cushions per session and have a great deal of fun. Apparently it does not matter whether the members of the group can sew because

another task is to stuff the cushions in the proper manner to provide the correct support. At one time the group supplied 40 cushions per month to the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. The project was so well received that they now supply cushions to most of the other hospitals in the Newcastle area. I commend them for their efforts.

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- The third category is a specialised counselling service. A trained psychologist visits patients in their homes and provides the service free of charge. The fourth category involves a roster to help patients in their homes. People on the roster make casseroles and do the shopping and washing, et cetera. The group is able to fund those services through dinners, raffles and bus trips. Funding is provided for the cushions, petrol and insurance for the drivers. October is Cancer Awareness Month and the group has hosted dinner and breakfast engagements. Two years ago I attended a function that was so well supported that the bowling club was filled. I congratulate all members of the group and commend them for the wonderful job they are doing for people on the Tomaree peninsula.

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Miss CHERIE BURTON (Kogarah—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.30 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Port Stephens for highlighting the activities of this important group. Cancer is one of the biggest killers in this country; my family has been touched by it on a number of occasions. The Tomaree breast cancer support group makes a wonderful contribution to the community. Monday was Pink Ribbon Day and on Sunday I had the pleasure of participating with 300 other people in the Sussan women's fun run to raise money for breast cancer awareness. I commend the honourable member for his ongoing hard work and for his support of his local community. I wish the group all the best in helping women suffering from breast cancer.