

PALLIATIVE CARE

Statement by Member for Southern River

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [12.55 pm]: During National Palliative Care Week from 25 to 31 May, I had the pleasure of attending the very informative breakfast organised by Palliative Care WA. In the 1980s, I served as a spiritual counsellor to people who were under the care of the then fledgling Dandenong Palliative Care Service. Thanks to the excellent pain control that was available almost 30 years ago, each of the people with whom I sat as life ebbed away died peacefully in their own home. Indeed, quality palliative care destroys the arguments put forward by the advocates of euthanasia. Palliative care is about meeting the unique needs of dying patients, having their comfort maximised and their dignity preserved, and allowing them to see out their days in the familiar environment of their own home or in a special hospice facility. I am pleased that the WA Parliamentary Friends of Palliative Care group was formed earlier this year, and has cross-party support. In January, the executive board of the World Health Assembly called on member states to ensure adequate access and funding for palliative care services. I am pleased that our recent state budget increased its annual funding by \$5 million to \$32 million for palliative care. Palliative care in-home services in this state are primarily provided by Silver Chain and funded by the state and federal governments. Although Australia is one of the world leaders in palliative care services, Palliative Care Australia says that the palliative care needs of between 50 and 70 per cent of those who could benefit from access to these services still go unmet. With the ageing of the population, the call on palliative care services will increase, especially from people suffering from various degenerative diseases. Let us honour those who provide palliative care services to our community!