FAIRHOLME DISABILITY SUPPORT GROUP

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan — Minister for Planning) [9.48 pm]: Tonight I will speak about the Fairholme Disability Support Group, but before I do, I recognise the speech of the member who has just spoken about infant loss, and I absolutely endorse his comments 100 per cent. I am very proud that a couple of years ago this Parliament agreed to recognise Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day. I was very proud to be part of that work when I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. I also agree it is an incredibly difficult issue that is often not talked about. Sometimes people find it difficult to know what to say or do, so I think it is important to recognise that people are hurting. Whether parents lose a baby in the very early weeks of pregnancy or right up until nine months’ pregnancy, the pain and anguish does not change. The more we talk about it, though, the better off our society will be. It makes it just that little bit easier for those families who are going through that pain to know that people are thinking of them and trying to help. I would absolutely endorse the comments that have just been made.

Members would know that I have talked about Fairholme Disability Support Group Inc in this place for a number of years. I have been a proud patron of Fairholme Disability Support Group for over 10 years. It is with some sadness that I rise tonight to indicate that after 35 years the group has decided to voluntarily wind up. Established in 1981, Fairholme Disability Support Group was first known as the Parents and Friends of Fairholme Association Inc. For those members who do not know where Fairholme is, it is about a five-minute walk from my electorate office in Guildford. It is a stately old home that had been a private residence, but in the early 1950s became a home for residents with physical and intellectual disabilities. The Parents and Friends of Fairholme was established in 1981 to provide support first and foremost to the residents—generally they were family members—to fundraise for the centre and to be advocates more generally for people with disability.

I came to know Fairholme Disability Support Group late one night at the end of being adopted through the politician adoption scheme. A fabulous person by the name of Bevan Dellar came up and chatted to me. He asked whether I knew anything about Fairholme. When I said that I did not, he said, “I think we should tell you a little bit about Fairholme.” He, of course, was the chairman of the group. I had a few meetings with him and from that I think he did a few checks on me and thought that I might be an okay person to take over as one of the patrons of Fairholme. There have been a few patrons since 1981 including the late Hon Fred McKenzie, a member of this place; Hon Derrick Tomlinson, who was the member that I replaced; Hon Eric Ripper; and, more recently, Tony Buti. I also want to particularly recognise Hon Simon O’Brien who has been a member of the group for a number of years. Over the time I have been patron of Fairholme Disability Support Group, I have been very proud to participate in a number of initiatives the group has undertaken. They include the Great Bike Hike, which was a major initiative in 2012 to ride from Perth to Broome. It was a major Count Me In initiative to raise awareness with respect to people with disability in metropolitan, regional and remote areas. I recognise former minister Hon Helen Morton for her support through the Disability Services Commission for the work the group sought to achieve through the Great Bike Hike. It was an incredible success. The Artists by the River exhibition was also held for a number of years. That fantastic program involved the Melville Community Arts Association through various art mediums, giving people with disability an opportunity to express themselves in various forms. Again, it was absolutely fantastic. The best thing always was to go to the opening to see them all receiving their certificate for completing the course. There have been countless other initiatives, whether it be various Count Me In initiatives, involvement with the Swan Districts Football Club, strong advocacy including representation about guardianship, annual fetes, Christmas celebrations, provision of equipment for residents, and various other fundraising activities that were undertaken.

There is no doubt that over 35 years, many families and individuals have played a key role in Fairholme. It is always problematic to raise names because there is always the chance of missing someone. I particularly want to acknowledge Bevan Dellar. During my time as patron, he has certainly been the driving force at Fairholme. I thank Bevan and his wife Dianne, Les and Meryon Goode, Anne and Brian Iliiffe, Jan and Ken Ricks, Rachel Ivic and the many, many other members and supporters the group has had over 35 years. I simply want to say thank you for what you have done for people with disability.

I have absolutely been a very proud patron of Fairholme. Although it is with some sadness that I recognise that it has decided to voluntarily wind up, I know that many from the group will continue to work and support people with disability across our state. I perhaps might end with some comments that were put together by Bevan about the group’s achievements as part of the winding-up. Bevan said —

We are now witnessing a change of a well run race and the above is an indicative list of achievements. This was brought about by timeless efforts with the efficiency and strength of the Group depending on a combination of internal and external influences, working together—rolling up one’s sleeves to make a difference. The amazing successes of the Group we believe were due to ordinary people achieving...
extraordinary things—forming links—working together, planning; organising and participating. As a result of the Group’s role, amongst other things, was advocating and being a conduit to help facilitate the wonderful outcomes that were achieved for all, along the way of this epic journey.

He goes on to say —

… throughout the Group’s journey, all who set out to make a difference achieved their goal, making the Group’s creation a resounding success and a difference was made. All can be justly proud.

With that, I again recognise Fairholme Disability Support Group for its amazing work and contribution to people with disability for over 35 years.