



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Matter of Public Importance

3 May 2017

CROHN'S DISEASE AND ULCERATIVE COLITIS

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (18:24): Over the next five years it is expected that more than 100,000 Australians will be diagnosed with Crohn's disease or colitis—a set of illnesses collectively referred to as inflammatory bowel disease or IBD. The prevalence of IBD in Australia is amongst the highest in the world. I am fortunate to have the Hunter Medical Research Institute in my electorate and perhaps it would be appropriate for the institute to research this topic as I have not heard about any specific research recently on the disease. I would certainly support such research because it is through research that we get the required outcomes. IBD and Crohn's are gastrointestinal disorders that affect sufferers for life. According to Crohn's and Colitis Australia:

The conditions are largely unpredictable with significant variation in the degree and pattern of symptoms affecting each patient.

And I am sure every surgeon and gastroenterologist would agree with that statement.

The relapsing and chronic nature of the disorder has broader impacts on a person's emotional, physical and social wellbeing.

I am sure members would understand the debilitating nature of the disease and indeed many probably suffer some of the symptoms considering the stressful nature of our job and that we work seven days a week. It is a silent, invisible disease that is becoming more common and more complex, and unfortunately is appearing more and more in children. Sufferers can often feel isolated or embarrassed, although people should not feel embarrassed. The aim of Crohn's and Colitis

Awareness Month is to encourage greater understanding of Crohn's disease and colitis while encouraging Australians diagnosed with these diseases to live fearlessly without letting the disease get in the way of their dreams. It may be time for those who feel unwell but have not been diagnosed to go to the doctor and be referred for appropriate testing because if left undiagnosed the disease will make people very sick and will shorten their life expectancy.

Members would be aware of people who were very unwell and who have died at quite a young age from this disease. I encourage sufferers or those who are unwell to seek support and be open to their doctor about their condition because they have heard the stories before and would not be embarrassed. I cannot think of a worthier goal, particularly this month. Also, those who do not suffer from IBD must meet these efforts with a commitment of our own; we must be a little more understanding of our colleagues who might be unwell. In researching Crohn's disease for this speech I learnt that United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower was a sufferer. Eisenhower was the Supreme Commander of Allied forces in Europe before going on to serve two terms as president from 1953 to 1961. If anything should underline the truth of the stated aim of Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month it is that Eisenhower won the Second World War and was the leader of the free world for eight years despite suffering from the disease; I honestly do not know how he did it with all the stress he must have endured.

As my colleague said, Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month is highlighted by the colour purple. I acknowledge Newcastle City Council because the wonderful Newcastle City Hall will also be in purple. I commend the member for Tamworth for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. It may be embarrassing for people to talk about, but it is an important matter to talk about.