



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Water Safety

SPEECH

Monday, 15 June 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Robert, Stuart, MP

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Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (8.22 pm)—Two young heroes in the Gold Coast from All Saints school, Lachlan Vernon, who is 12, and his sister, Josephine, who is 14, in early May heard a man scream, ‘Does anyone know CPR?’ These two young students rushed down to a pool at about 3.30 pm to find that a young boy, eight years old, had been pulled from the pool by this man, but he did not know CPR. Lachlan and Josephine commenced CPR, as they had been taught at school, and put him in the recovery position, saving this little eight-year-old boy’s life. This is the story of two Gold Coast heroes from All Saints Anglican School. It is the story of an eight-year-old little boy who will live to grow up to play sport and hopefully one day get married and have kids of his own.

There have been 424 drownings of children aged zero to five since 1997-98—that is, in the last 10 years. And that is 424 too many. Campaigns such as Laurie Lawrence’s Kids Alive program have been instrumental in reducing the number of drowning fatalities and educating children and parents on pool and water safety. Since its inception, the Kids Alive show has been seen in 545 country towns and 44 remote communities and has been watched by over 225,000 children in Australia. It is also sad to note that there are something like 6½ thousand near drownings each year.

I support any creation of a national drowning and prevention awareness and memorial day. I support anything that will bring attention to these dreadful and horrifying statistics and encourage people to familiarise themselves with prevention techniques. I have a four-year-old son and a two-year-old son and another child on the way. The horror of losing a child in a drowning would be simply unimaginable, and I support anything that will empower parents, educate them, and encourage them to know what to do should the unthinkable happen.

Assisting schools in teaching their students CPR by introducing first aid as part of a school’s curriculum is an outstanding idea and will certainly ensure that tens of thousands of young adults who would normally not know how to perform what is a simple action will be able to do it correctly. It is interesting that most adults actually believe they know how to do CPR, yet testing by industry has shown that only about 50 per cent of them, when push comes to shove, actually do. Proper education, combined with vigilance and great parenting, saves lives.

Establishing a national code for pool compliance, including the need for all pool owners to be trained and certified in CPR, also makes a great deal of sense. As Laurie Lawrence says: ‘Fence the pool; shut the gate; teach your kids to swim—it’s great; supervise—watch your mate; and learn how to resuscitate.’ It is somewhat catchy, it is five simple steps and it makes an enormous amount of sense. Likewise, a national program of water safety would certainly ensure that not only the same message was learnt by everyone but also the right message is taught.

As well intentioned and well meaning as all these actions are—and they certainly enjoy my whole-hearted support—nothing will ever replace the vigilance of parents. Nothing will replace the supervision by parents to ensure that fences are properly constructed, the gates closed and, indeed, that self-locking mechanisms close by themselves. Only on Saturday I went round and checked all the locking mechanisms on our gates around the pool to make sure that they would close automatically within a second after I walked through them. Nothing will replace supervision by parents, and nothing should. But, if appropriate and sensible measures can be put in place to assist parents and to ensure that others in the community know what to do in the time of an emergency, that certainly makes sense. Then, if the unthinkable happens, if the tragedy does occur where a child is found at the bottom of a pool, then we can be assured that young heroes like Lachlan and Josephine Vernon from All Saints Anglican School will have been trained and taught to know what to do. I certainly commend the motion to the House.