

MENOPAUSE AND CANCER

Statement

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [6.45 pm]: I was not going to give a member's statement, but I was encouraged to do so by the contribution by Hon Lorna Harper. Most people who know me know that I wear my heart on my sleeve, so I wanted to agree with the honourable member and say that menopause does need to be normalised. Without Gina's permission, I might just tell our story through menopause. Gina, my wife of 42 years, went through menopause in her early 50s. It was a very tough time for her and, indeed, the family, because I think she had all the symptoms. I think it went for four years, but we finally got through that. About six months ago, my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was high risk, so she would get a mammogram every six months. Because of that, she caught it early; it was a very small lump. We went to see a very good surgeon, Dr Richard Martin, and he set out a plan for us. She had a short course of radiotherapy. We are very grateful that she did not have to go through chemotherapy, because chemotherapy is very difficult. I have seen people go through it. After a short course of radiotherapy, she then had surgery to remove the lump. The lump was then sent away for examination. They usually prefer to find a perimeter without any abnormal cells, but, unfortunately, the perimeter of what they had taken out had some abnormal cells, so she went back in for another surgery. After that, the surgeon was quite comfortable that he had removed all the cancer.

There are a number of ways that the risk of cancer recurring can be reduced. The honourable member mentioned one, and that is to reduce oestrogen. That is one way to reduce the risk of cancer recurring. My wife is on tablets to diminish all the oestrogen in her body. Lucky for us and for her—tongue in cheek—she has had to go through menopause again, but I am very pleased to say that this time she has not had as many symptoms. That is a blessing for me, but certainly for her as well. I am very pleased to say that she had a follow-up mammogram two weeks ago and the cancer was found to be completely gone, so I am very pleased.

Members: Hear, hear!