

AUSTRALIAN MULTIPLE BIRTH ASSOCIATION

Statement

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [6.25 pm]: “Having multiples brings unimaginable joy but also unavoidable and unique challenges.” Those are not my words but the words of the Australian Multiple Birth Association, but I fully concur. I will speak very briefly about multiple births. I want to acknowledge my self-interest first. My eldest daughter, Jessica, with Lucy, had my beautiful first grandchild, Sophie, five years ago.

She is the love of my life. I thought she was going to be the only grandchild I was going to get, given that they were leaving it fairly late, so I made some silly commitments about paying for her education. My youngest had Juniper about 18 months ago. I did not suspect that she wanted to have children but I then had two. Four months ago, Lucy and Jessica had another addition to the family—twins Ella and Darcy. I do not know where that leaves my commitment to education. I think my wife and I are probably going to be in the pauper’s house for a while.

I want to talk about multiple births because it made me think a little bit about the challenges of multiple births. I think any parent knows having any child is difficult. It adds stress to the household and immeasurable joy. I do not think there is anything more worthwhile than having children but when you have two children, the stress and financial stress multiplies more than twice. There are no real economies of scale when it comes to sleepless nights and such. The Australian Multiple Birth Association is lobbying for some changes and some recognition. I know it is a federal issue but I thought it would be worthwhile to start the debate at a state level. We all have the opportunity to speak to our federal counterparts. The Australian Multiple Birth Association is looking at whether there should be some sort of initial grant, given the additional expense. I have to confess that I have a very close-knit family and we help each other all the time but lots of couples out there do not have that support. An additional grant would ease the extra costs for those families. The other thing is whether there could be extra support within the household, which might be worthwhile to be able to provide. Given that it has been said it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a society to raise two children or more. Another one I think is quite relevant is the progress that has been made with parental leave and paid parental leave. I wonder whether it might be worthwhile considering both partners being able to have paid parental leave given the pressures of multiple births and, as I said, coping with two children in the middle of the night and such.

These are just some thoughts about what the Australian Multiple Birth Association is lobbying for. It is worthwhile having the conversation. I want to finish by saying that having one grandchild is fantastic, having two is equally fantastic and having more has been a blessing to my life. I love them dearly, but it may be worth thinking about how we help those families, particularly those who may not be as close as we are and do not help each other in the same way.