

MEALS ON WHEELS

Ms FOX (Bright) (15:25): I wish to speak today on a matter that I am equally passionate about.

An honourable member interjecting:

Ms FOX: It is, but my passion is not quite as florid as perhaps the member for Hammond's might be in this instance. I do admire passion; I think it is a good thing. I wish to place on record my admiration and celebration of my local branches of Meals on Wheels.

An honourable member interjecting:

Ms FOX: Indeed. I am sure we all do. I am prompted to do so by my recent attendance at the Brighton branch AGM where I was with my good friend, Andrew Southcott, also a supporter of Meals on Wheels, but apparently not actually a member of the Canberra Friends of Meals on Wheels—something I am sure he will be rectifying very soon. The parliamentary Friends of Meals on Wheels was established by the member for Hindmarsh, Steve Georganas, and it is doing great work in Canberra at the moment.

It is always an enjoyable affair at the Brighton Meals on Wheels Annual General Meeting; always a good scone at the end. Some 19 per cent of the residents of Brighton are aged over 65, so I have the privilege of representing many older Australians in my electorate, and I know very well how important Meals on Wheels is in my immediate community, but it is not just Brighton, it is not just Hallett Cove; Meals on Wheels assists more than 5,000 South Australians who are elderly, housebound or have a disability.

The first Meals on Wheels kitchen was launched in Port Adelaide in 1954 with 11 volunteers who delivered meals to eight people. Of course, this excellent organisation has now gone nationwide. It should be noted that the first president of Meals on Wheels was the late Don Dunstan, a former premier of this great state, who served as president from 1954 to 1956.

Ms Ciccarello interjecting:

Ms FOX: Of course, the member for Norwood leaps in and precedes me: I was, in fact, just about to mention that Meals on Wheels was the vision of the late Doris Taylor MBE, born in Norwood in 1901. She was injured as a young person and was permanently disabled when she was 16. She became aware of the very serious problems faced by those who are physically disadvantaged and cannot cook for themselves. It was in 1953 that she managed to make it incorporated.

South Australia has more volunteers than any other state, and their hard work is evident within Meals on Wheels. Meals on Wheels in South Australia has 10,000 volunteers through 100 branches across the state. As I said before, I was honoured to attend the recent Brighton Meals on Wheels annual general meeting and I met many people who dedicate their time and hard work to ensuring that people in our community are eating correctly and have regular contact with others.

One lady at that meeting had been volunteering for Meals on Wheels for 45 years, which is absolutely astonishing. In this day and age, when most people cannot watch television and stay on one program for longer than three minutes, being a volunteer for 45 years with one organisation is truly commendable.

I have seen at first-hand the amazing work that the Brighton branch of Meals on Wheels has done for my community, and I am comforted in the knowledge that people all over Adelaide are receiving this service. It is one of the many ways that we can ensure the safety and happiness of elderly or disabled members of our community.

The cost of meals is very affordable, and that is something important to talk about because, as climate change hits, as the price of food goes up, and as drought affects our friends in the country, we know that keeping the price of meals to a reasonable cost is very difficult. Meals on Wheels struggles to do that but it does so, and it does so because of the high volume of dedicated volunteers. It truly is a community based organisation operating for the benefit of others, and it can always do with more volunteers.

It does not require a huge commitment. If you have the ability or the time it is certainly something to think about in the future. Different branches have different needs, so volunteers are guaranteed a varied role which is extremely rewarding.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend Meals on Wheels across South Australia and encourage you all to promote the local branches in your electorates. I think you will all agree that it is a service that the elderly and the disabled in South Australia cannot do without.