

Senator KNOWLES (Western Australia) (9.59 a.m.)—This cancer inquiry has been particularly significant for all affected by cancer, both today and tomorrow. I congratulate Senator Cook on taking the initiative to initiate this inquiry. It was a very significant inquiry and it was, in many cases, a very alarming inquiry. The things that have been revealed to this inquiry are certainly food for thought for governments all around Australia and also for medical practitioners. It is very disturbing to see that there is so little communication between various levels of the medical profession where they could aid cancer patients right from the moment of diagnosis all the way through their journey.

Senator Cook well and truly needs to be congratulated for, as Senator Lees said, taking on an inquiry with quite an arduous hearing schedule when clearly it would have been very easy for him to sit at home with his slippers on—so congratulations, Senator Cook. I also will take this opportunity, Senator Cook, to wish you well in your future journey and also for your retirement. I do not want to use much time; in fact, I would like to allocate what time I have left over, when I have concluded my comments, to my colleague Senator Humphries. As everyone knows, Senator Humphries is the future; I am about to be the past. So I think it is important that Senator Humphries has considerably more time.

I would like to make special mention of Senator Marshall's chairmanship of this inquiry. I think his chairmanship has been absolutely superb. There were a lot of people who were very emotional and very affected by the evidence that they were giving. Thank you, Senator Marshall, for your care, patience and tolerance and the compassion that you showed in your chairmanship. I also, again, would like to thank our wonderful secretariat for the work they have done on this. But I would also like to have the indulgence for a moment of the Senate because I did forget to thank two very significant groups of people in my valedictory speech. One is Hansard: bless your souls, you have managed to get down all the words over 21 years and make sense of them at times. I would also like to thank the library. Both have been wonderful resources over the time. But, as I said, I wish to leave my extra time to Senator Humphries. Congratulations again to Senator Cook and the committee on an excellent report that I hope will see great benefits extended to those who are diagnosed today and deal with it tomorrow.