



Speech by

GEOFF WILSON

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Hansard 16 September 1998

MR R. CASSIMATY

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (9.52 p.m.): I take the opportunity in this Adjournment debate to pay tribute to a local living treasure of the electorate of Ferry Grove. I speak of Mr Bob Cassimaty. On Sunday, 13 September, Bob Cassimaty's general store at 1310 Samford Road, Ferry Grove, closed for the last time. Many people throughout the north-western suburbs and across Brisbane will know Bob personally, or know him by his outstanding reputation. As Bob said at a small celebration function on Sunday, he is partly pleased to be retiring and partly sad as well. All Australians would agree that, at the age of 78 and a half, Bob is well and truly deserving of retirement.

On 11 May 1957, Bob Cassimaty and his wife Betty—who unfortunately passed away some time ago—opened their general store on Samford Road. After nearly 42 years of faithful and selfless service to the community, Bob has now closed his business. His health has not been the best of late and this has finally forced him to sell.

This is really the end of an era. Bob had become an institution, not only in the northern suburbs but also throughout Brisbane. There are very few Brisbanites who have not at some time passed through Ferry Grove and stopped in at Bob's shop near the BP service station and the Ferry Grove Railway Station. Local schools, clubs and charities have all benefited from his generous support over the years.

Bob's must have been one of the longest operating general stores in Brisbane. Bob was born in Australia to Greek and English immigrant parents on 8 March 1920. His parents, Anthony and Ruby Cassimaty, came to Australia from Kythera, Greece and Manchester, England respectively at the ages of 15 and 12 years. Bob and his family are an excellent example of the value and strength of our multicultural society.

Bob is an old "digger" who fought in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea during World War II, and in true fashion he has never sought recognition—nor expected it—for his war duty or the years of helping the local community. He remains an active member of the Gaythorne RSL.

Both Bob's parents have passed away. He has six children aged 30 to 48 and 14 grandchildren, with one more on the way. Bob and his father ran a lunch shop in the old T & G Arcade in the city in the post-war years called the Crystal Inn. The old cigarette rack used in that shop was still being used in Bob's general store until last Sunday. His philosophy has always been that the customer comes first and he always endeavoured to get in any items that were asked for, regardless of the fact that he made no money on the sale.

In the early days the shop was really in "the bush" and serviced all the local farmers with grain, feed, hay, horseshoes and all their shopping requirements. Bob also used to do deliveries to the whole area and credit was always available when times were tough. A couple of years ago, Lord Mayor Jim Soorley, Councillor Ann Bennison and close to 300 guests—including Michael Lavarch, former Commonwealth Attorney-General—attended the opening of the Bob Cassimaty Picnic Ground at Samford Road, Ferry Grove, named in honour of Bob for all his years' service to the community.

This is the end not only of one of the last true general stores but also of a level of old-fashioned service that the supermarkets and chain stores just do not supply. At the small celebration last Sunday, a few family and friends attended Bob's general store without warning him. It was a privilege to join with Ann Bennison and the Honourable Glen Milliner, former longstanding member for Ferry Grove, to

publicly acknowledge what a fine and exemplary Australian Bob Cassimaty is; to say thanks to Bob for being such a valued friend in the local community.

Channel 7 filmed the occasion and I hope that many more people will get to know about Bob. Channel 9 did a section on Bob for Brisbane Extra some weeks ago. Bob is a very modest and humble man and does not seek the limelight. However, this is an important moment in the history of our local community. We often give great recognition to the high-flyers, the celebrities, the stars and the bigshots in our society. We should raise up more of our local living treasures such as Bob Cassimaty and give them the same recognition and acknowledgment.

I am indebted to Bob's two sons, Michael and Tony, for much of the information that formed the basis of this speech. I am sure that all members of Parliament will join me in wishing Bob all the best and good health in his retirement.
