



Speech by

Mr T. MALONE

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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MR E. R. RAMSAMY

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (7.07 p.m.): We were all very saddened at the passing of Edward Royce Ramsamy in Mackay on 31 July this year. He was most popularly known as Ram Chandra, the taipan man. The member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin, and I, representing both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in Queensland, attended when Ram was laid to rest. It was one of the largest funerals seen in Mackay in recent times. The past Federal member for Dawson, Ray Braithwaite, and the past State member for Mackay, Ed Casey—both of whom were personal friends of Ram—contributed to his eulogy. Mr Braithwaite said—

"Edward Royce Ramsamy gave so much of himself to his family and to others. In doing so he took our friendship and our deep respect for a man of humble origins who reached the pinnacle in spite of many obstacles and reverses. Perhaps he now takes our regret that we should have reciprocated that friendship and respect by personally seeking him out, in his later years, to ease his burdens."

Ram was probably most famous for his pioneer work in developing an antivenene for taipan bites in 1955. It is estimated that the antivenene saved more than 90 lives, including his own in 1956 when he was bitten while demonstrating snake handling in Mackay and was rescued from the enclosure by two heroic ambulance officers who undoubtedly saved his life on that occasion. It would be remiss at this time if I did not also touch on the close working relationship that Ram shared with ambulance centres which produced greater public awareness of snake recognition and capture and in providing an antivenene for taipans and other deadly snakes.

Ram was the man people called first when they sighted a snake. He spent much of his time hunting, capturing, identifying, handling and researching those snakes, although new legislation governing national parks and wildlife issues had curbed those activities in later years. Over the past few years, I made representations to various Ministers to allow Ram to continue his activities, but sadly I was not successful.

Ram Chandra was a former showman who made his early living handling snakes in order to educate people in an entertaining way. While he was touring his snake show along the east coast of Australia he met his wife, Noelah, at the Mackay show. He made Mackay his home and his base for researching the deadly taipan. He lectured hundreds of medical professionals and probably millions of schoolchildren about snakes and the treatment of bites. Ram travelled extensively throughout Queensland and Australia and he was as well known in an outback country town or school at the end of a long dusty road as he was at major convention centres addressing health professionals from all over the world.

His years of dedication to the cause saw him recognised in a number of ways: the British Empire Medal; the Queen's Birthday honours list; in 1981 he was Mackay's first recipient of the Senior Citizen's Award; he received the Burke Shire Council Order of the Outback—with only four other Australians; in 1992 he was a recipient of the Paul Harris International Rotary Award; in 1995 he received an Order of Australia; and in 1991 a street in Mackay was named Ram Chandra Place in his honour.

Ram Chandra dedicated his life to promoting an awareness of deadly snakes within our region and to saving lives. I am sure that he was very proud to receive many formal recognitions over the years, but I am equally sure that it was the knowledge of the many lives he saved and the personal

thanks from those people and their families that meant the most to him. We can be proud of this man who has been described as a living legend, a national treasure, and a truly great man—all phrases which are reserved for very few people in their lifetimes but which are all very fitting indeed for Ram Chandra.

At the end of his life, Ram was incapacitated by the effects of numerous snake bites over the length of his dedicated life. He had shunned personal publicity and fortune which could have been his to live the lifestyle that he chose. However, he chose a lifestyle in close proximity to his family. Ram will be sadly missed, but his legacy will live through his wife Noelah, his 10 children, 36 grandchildren, 64 great and great-great grandchildren and, most importantly, through the many lives he saved in the past and those who will be saved in the future.
