



Speech by

Mr TIM MULHERIN

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard 4 August 1998

MR E. R. RAMSAMY

Mr MULHERIN (Mackay—ALP) (7.04 p.m.): I rise in the House tonight to speak about a man who gave much of his life for the benefit of others. I am referring to Ram Chandra, the Taipan Man. Sadly and very unexpectedly, Mr Edward Royce Ramsamy passed away last Friday, 31 July. Ram was born in Grafton, New South Wales. He was a former showman and made his living by handling snakes. Although his snake handling show was classed as entertainment, Ram looked on it more as a way he could educate people about the dangers of snakes, how to react when confronted by a snake, how to identify types of snakes and what to do if bitten. Ram travelled up and down the east coast displaying his snakes and, while in Mackay at the Mackay Show, met his wife to be, Noleah, who came from Boigu Island in the Torres Strait. Ram and Noleah then settled in Mackay and raised a family of 11 children.

Ram is most famous, of course, for his research about the deadly taipan, including his pioneering work in developing an antivenene for taipan bites in 1955. It is estimated that the antivenene has since saved more than 90 lives—not least of all his own back in 1956 when he was bitten by a taipan. Over the years, Ram lectured hundreds of people in the medical profession and countless children and adults who visited his displays at schools and in shopping complexes. Throughout his life Ram continued to strive to educate people about snakes.

In recent years, Ram mostly displayed his snakes in shopping complexes throughout the State and donated any funds raised to cancer research. In my time as chairman of the Mackay branch of the Queensland Cancer Fund, I had a lot of association with Ram. After he would return from one of his trips, he would come along with the proceeds and make a donation to the Cancer Fund. His regular donations were always greatly appreciated and gratefully accepted. I am sure that the feeling of gratitude for the significant contributions that Ram has made for the betterment of all Australians would be endorsed by all members of this House.

As well as being recognised and admired by the Mackay community, Ram's lifesaving work has also been officially recognised. He received a British Empire Medal and a Queen's Birthday honour, won Mackay's first Senior Citizens Award in 1981, is listed in the Australian Hall of Fame as one of Queensland's unsung heroes, received the Burke Shire Council's Order of the Outback with only four other Australians, received the Paul Harris International Rotary Award in 1992 and was bestowed with an Order of Australia in 1995.

What really mattered to Ram, though, was that his work in developing the taipan antivenene saved many lives that would otherwise have been lost. It was the people who mattered most to Ram. In an interview earlier this year Ram said—

"That means as much to me as any award. When you face the people who've been saved—mothers who have brought children to me who have been saved by taipan antivenene—in their faces is thanks for everything, for all the risks I've taken."

Two books have been written about Ram and his work: *Search for the Taipan* and *Traveller Brown*. In Mackay a street, Ram Chandra Place, was named in his honour in 1991.

Ram was semi-crippled by the effects of numerous snakebites throughout his life and, even though this slowed him down, it never stopped him educating and advising people about snakes. Until

his death Ram still received calls from people about snakes and he would always give verbal help but obviously, due to changes in our laws, he was limited in what he could do. He was also very involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community affairs in the Mackay area and was always willing to contribute his time and effort.

Ram is survived by his wife, Noleah, 10 of his 11 children, 36 grandchildren and 64 great and great-great grandchildren. Our thoughts and prayers go to Noleah and each and every one of the family. Although they must be feeling great sadness at this time, they must also be very proud of the life of Edward Royce Ramsamy.

Words can never express the deep regard people in the Mackay community have for Ram Chandra, but the Mackay Daily Mercury in its editorial went some way toward expressing how we feel by saying—

"Ram's selflessness and kindness to his fellow human beings endeared him to all. His knowledge of a feared and intriguing reptile was boundless. There is only one thing left to say. Thank you."

I am sure that I speak for all members of this Parliament when I say that he will be sadly missed.
