



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

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MOTIONS OF CONDOLENCE

Deaths of Mr C. R. Rappolt and Mr R. B. J. Pilbeam

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (9.52 a.m.): It is with great pleasure and a great degree of sadness that I rise to second this motion of condolence moved by the Premier. This morning I speak on behalf of all the One Nation members and staff and pay tribute to the former member for Mulgrave, Mr Charles Robert Rappolt. It was with great shock and disbelief that we learned that Charlie had succeeded in his second suicide attempt while overseas in New Zealand. I had spoken with Charles just prior to his going overseas for what he described as an extended holiday to escape the pressure still bearing down on him from his detractors in the press.

Charles Robert Rappolt was born in Cairns, north Queensland on 23 August 1939. This year would have been a milestone in Charles' life: his 60th birthday. Charlie came from a family of four—one a twin brother and two other brothers. His mother is still alive and living on the tablelands. Charlie is survived by his three children: his older son, Steven, his daughter, Leisa, and his youngest son, Calen, 10, of whom he was so proud.

Charlie was a true north Queensland boy. He was brought up in a loving Christian family home. He was educated and attended St Augustine's College in Cairns, where he attained his scholarship in 1954—as I said, a true north Queensland spirit; a man of resilience and stature in his community. He was a friend who would give you the shirt off his back if that was the way you treated him. His achievements in life are numerable and, in fact, there were too many to name them all. But here is just a short list.

As the Premier alluded, Charlie was in the armed services. He was also a theatrical agent from 1961 to 1972 and managed his twin brother, who was an artist of some renown. Amongst Charlie's memorabilia of the time that hangs proudly in his house are photographs of him and his brother with notaries such as the Gibb brothers, now known as the Bee Gees. He was an investor and share trader, and very successful indeed. He was a real estate developer from 1974 to 1978 and owned and operated R W Building Constructions in Cairns at that time. He was an environment auditor approved by the Department of Mines and Energy in both Queensland and Victoria. This was where Charlie found his passion in mining.

He loved and devoted much of his time to prospecting, and he lists as one of his most favourite occupations that of a prospector. He was a mine operator and owner and manager from 1976 to 1983. He was a registered mine manager in Queensland and Victoria and registered on the Australian Stock Exchange. Charlie was employed as a consultant for mining operations covering all aspects of mining from grassroots prospecting right through to commercial operations, including viability and environmental audits. He was employed in this capacity by major players in the mining industry in Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaya and New Zealand. Due to his warm and friendly nature, Charlie has left many friends all around the world who will—as we are—be saddened by his loss.

One other major achievement that meant so much to Charlie was his love of flying. Charlie was a commercial instrument rated pilot both in aeroplanes and helicopters in Australia and the United States of America. Charlie, as a mine manager and operator, also operated an air charter company from 1981 to 1995, and he flew in, around and through some of the most inhospitable country known

to man. Charlie also loved to boast about some of the weather that he used to fly in, especially in some of the South East Asian countries. He loved to talk about his experiences in his aircraft.

We only have to look at this list of achievements to see what this man was. He was a man of mettle, a man with business acumen; tough when he needed to be, and a true friend and a port in any storm. Through all of this, Charlie still found time for his children and his community, devoting much of his time to his son Calen and his love for soccer. Charlie was not just a dad on the sideline; he could not help but get involved. He was an accredited coach and a registered referee with Queensland Soccer. He promoted junior sport in Cairns. As a businessman, he put his money where his heart was and assisted the Edge Hill United Soccer Club, where he was also a past treasurer. He worked on the executive of that club and assisted junior sport. His concern for his immediate community went even deeper. He was national and local media spokesperson for residents affected by the hillslopes developments in Cairns. He was instrumental in affecting the collection of a major petition and was president of the Save Our Slopes Committee.

It was his true love of his community and, indeed, his love of Australia and his belief that the country was going in the wrong direction that caused Charlie to stand up for Pauline Hanson's One Nation. It was his love for his children that caused him to question the political direction of this country. He wanted a job for his children, he wanted security for his children, and he wanted a better business environment for his beloved mining industry. A man who some would regard as a workaholic, Charlie thrived on work and pressure.

I look around, and members are asking, "What happened?" I hear the whispers around the room. What caused a man of iron to collapse as he did? What was the final straw that finally told on such a good hearted and strong man?

Members of this House will recall his premature resignation from the Queensland Parliament in November last year, when he decided that the stresses and pressures involved in being a public figure were not worth the destruction that they were causing to his family life. He was a man with great respect and integrity, and his loyalty to his family took precedence over his passion to make a difference in politics, in particular his desire to bring the mining industry back to the prosperity that it formerly enjoyed.

When I look at how Charlie chose to take his life, I cannot help but wonder what he must have been feeling to think that death was better than the alternative of life. The Murdoch press achieved what 45 years of hard work could not do to Charlie—pushed him not just to the edge but over it. It is here that we should note the ethics of journalism, not just to pursue a man but to pursue him to death. There is blood on the hands of some journalists in the Murdoch press today, and that stain will not be erased. Little did Paul Whittaker care when he accepted stolen documents from a former disgruntled One Nation media adviser, Debbie Beaven, concerning Charlie's domestic situation. Little did Chris Mitchell, the editor in chief of the Courier-Mail, care when he disregarded not just a Supreme Court injunction but flew in the face of the domestic violence legislation itself that prohibited publication and printing of details of that document. The care factor of the "Murderoch" press is zero.

Let us see how they report this speech—if in fact they have the integrity to do so. This is the same dingo pack that is signatory to a court action concerning the improper publication of a Labor member's name on an Internet site. It seems that politics in the Murdoch press dictates the manner in which a politician is treated. I wonder how their selective conscience will be affected on hearing this little gem. I can even hear a "Hear, hear" from Charlie about that.

About a week after Charlie's death, I was reading the Courier-Mail and came across a couple of articles about suicide, stress and depression. The more I read, the more I realised the impact that mental health disorders are currently having on members of our community. I wondered if the publication of these articles was designed to lighten their consciences just a little.

Firstly, let me briefly inform honourable members about mental health disorders. Mental health relates to emotions, thoughts, and behaviours. Those with good mental health generally are able to handle day-to-day events and obstacles, work towards important goals and function effectively in society. However, even minor mental health problems may affect everyday activities to the extent that individuals cannot function as they would wish, or are expected to, within their family and community. This can impact on the way they feel about themselves and often results in a downward spiralling into depression.

A report by the Centre of Independent Studies titled "Indicators of a Changing Australia" highlighted some alarming statistics. For example, in 1997 the number of male suicides was 24 per 100,000—the highest recorded for this century. The report found that chronic unemployment, particularly among the young and in rural and remote areas, was contributing to the high rate of suicide.

Depression—a medical condition resulting from an imbalance in the chemical functioning of the brain—is also on the increase, with the number of antidepressant drugs prescribed in 1997 being two and a half times greater than in 1990. Usually, deep emotional losses, profound trauma, difficult

relationships, financial problems or any unwelcome change in life patterns can trigger a depressive episode. Depression can also affect people for no apparent reason. The imbalanced brain function can cause a previously healthy and happy person to feel that life is no longer worth living.

Whilst perusing information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, I discovered that the number of suicides in Australia in 1996 was greater than the number of motor vehicle accident deaths. Considering that untreated depression is the number one cause of suicide, the relation between the two is clearly evident.

With these figures in mind, I turn to the Minister for Health and ask: what is being done about educating the public about depression and the impact it can have on oneself? Although research has been conducted concerning this issue, there is no point in doing research and not passing on the information to the general public. Our community needs to be educated about issues that are affecting them and I believe it is about time that this Government started putting the people first. It would have been remiss of me not to mention these facts as I spoke about Charles.

Mr Premier, before I close I will pass on to you exactly how grateful Charlie was with the empathy that you displayed to him during your visit to him at the Cairns Base Hospital Psychiatric Unit. I believe that you understood Charlie's situation and you showed him the compassion that he needed at that time.

In closing, Charlie, I will say this: I did not know you long, but you have left an indelible impression on me and upon all your fellow members of this House. No matter what the circumstances, Charlie, I know that your pain has ceased. We love you, mate. Goodbye.
