



Speech by  
**Mr DENVER  
BEANLAND**

**MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY**

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Hansard 26 October 1999

**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Death of Sir Charles Wanstall**

**Mr BEANLAND** (Indooroopilly—LP) (10.02 a.m.): I rise in this condolence debate to add my words. Sir Charles Wanstall was known to me for more than 20 years as a former member for Toowong—a seat which I held prior to its abolition through electoral distribution. He was a person with a common touch, affable and genial, as has already been indicated. He was a Queenslanders through and through, and I think in this day and age that is something which I know he was very proud of.

Sir Charles had that quiet, intelligent determination. He made contributions to the community selflessly and willingly. His friendship and loyalty to people around him was unshakeable. As has been mentioned, he came from a very humble background. In 1938 he married Olwyn John to whom he remained married until her death some 15 months ago. Their marriage was a long, successful union and they had one daughter, Jonnie.

When war broke out Sir Charles endeavoured to enlist in the AIF but was not accepted for service. However, he closed his private practice and chose to become a legal officer with the Commonwealth Crown Solicitor, concerned then with national security legislation. There is little question that from that moment his interest in politics grew because it was during that time that he realised the implications of decisions by the then Labor Government to hand significant powers to the Federal Government.

In 1943 Sir Charles joined the newly formed Queensland People's Party—the Toowong branch. He ran for and won the seat of Toowong in the 1944 State election and remained a member until 1950. In fact, it is interesting to note that also elected to this State House for the Queensland People's Party at that particular election in 1944 included members such as Mr T. A. Hiley, later Sir Thomas Hiley; the then Major K. G. Morris, later a senator for Queensland; and Mr Bruce Pie, the member for Windsor. So Sir Charles came into this House at a time when new members were elected and there was an upsurge of the newly formed Queensland People's Party making its presence felt.

In 1950 after leaving this place and having made the decision that he wanted to continue in law rather than have a life in Parliament, he then ran for and became president of the Queensland division of the Liberal Party of Australia. In his maiden speech, Sir Charles demonstrated his passion for State rights. Even on paper that speech is confident and insightful. It is obvious that Sir Charles had natural gifts for parliamentary debate and that those gifts carried over into the law. A parliamentary colleague, Sir Thomas Hiley, said of Sir Charles' speech on petrol rationing in 1949—

"So powerful was his speech, so crushing its effect, that other opposition speakers tore up their notes. None chose to desecrate what was accepted by all as a classic example of parliamentary debate. I may hear some to equal, I shall never hear any to excel that superb performance."

During that time Sir Charles was considered to be one of the most approachable and affable members of the Queensland People's Party, of the newly created Liberal Party and of this House. He encouraged young people to enter politics.

In 1974 Sir Charles received a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for distinguished service as a judge of the Queensland Supreme Court—a court he served on for 24 years but for two weeks. That is quite a lengthy service by anyone's judgment. In his retirement speech, Sir Charles said he always strove to have a happy and harmonious bench as he felt it was better to have "a real court and a real bench" rather than "a number of individual judges". He said that no bench which is torn by internal strife can function as a bench should. Sir Charles was highly regarded as a chief justice. His judgments bore the classic marks of true craftsmanship and, in fact, it is fair to say were referred to—even by members of the House of Lords.

It is true to say that it was not in Sir Charles' nature to reach the quick and ready conclusion. Rather, he pursued truth and justice carefully and concisely and his judgments were not delivered unless polished to perfection. One of my colleagues has already mentioned Mr Justice Chesterman who, at his swearing in as a judge of the Supreme Court in 1998, attributed his own career to Sir Charles' mentoring of him during a time when the profession was strongly influenced by family connections. Sir Charles made a point of taking as his associates law students who had no dynastic professional support.

He was certainly a multifaceted man and someone who gave a great deal to the community. He served that community over a long period not only as State member from 1944 to 1950 but in various other roles. For example, he was very much involved with the activities of the Ironside State School, a place where he was president of the P & C association from 1956 to 1967, even though his daughter left that school in 1963. He was the person who led the call for the building of the school swimming pool. He was also involved in a range of other school activities. Sir Charles is now honoured at the Ironside State School for his dedication to the school and his fine example of service to the community.

As far as his service to the church is concerned—and it has already been referred to—it is worth while noting that even in the construction of the Christ Church at St Lucia, of which he played a leading role, the sandstone in the altar had to be the same as that used at the University of Queensland: the church had to fit in with the community. He was very particular in that regard to ensure that when jobs were being done they were being done properly and in appropriate fashion. He served a range of community organisations throughout his wonderful life.

He was capable and practical with his hands, too. He even went so far as to take a great interest in architecture and buildings. He was even responsible for building a couple of additions to his family home. So he was a practical man as well as one who had a great deal of insight. As I say, his wife, Olwyn, who had a great love for music, passed away some 15 months ago. She had a very significant role in singing and was a member of one of Queensland's major choirs and also the Red Cross for many decades. She passed away on 15 July last year.

It is clear that, in rising to honour Sir Charles Gray Wanstall, we are honouring a person who is a true Queenslander, someone who served at the highest levels of this State and someone who has served his community as well as this Parliament, someone who in the tradition of those before him—he was the sixth Chief Justice of this State to have been a member of this House before rising to that great honour. I join with other members of this House in passing our condolences to Sir Charles' family. He is survived by not only his daughter, Jonnie, and son-in-law Hew, and his loving grand-daughters, Bonnie and Amber, but also his brother, Allan.

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