



Speech by

JOHN ENGLISH

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Hansard 31 July 2001

MRS M. STATHAM

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (11.56 a.m.): I rise today to inform the House of a recent loss to the state of Queensland. On Thursday, 12 July 2001, Margaret Statham passed away. Few members of this House knew Margaret, but let me say that Queensland is worse off by her passing. Margaret was born in 1937 in England. Being raised and educated during World War II certainly presented difficulties. However, Margaret preferred to see them as challenges. Margaret moved to a residential Catholic school when she was 12 and stayed there until she was 15. Margaret left school at the age of 15 and got a job as a nanny in a children's nursery. Part of this job involved washing out terry towelling nappies by the dozen and hanging them on the clothesline to dry. They then had to be ironed with old coal-heated flat irons. There were no electric irons in those days.

This nursery was strictly administered by a short-tempered Welsh matron appropriately called the 'Welsh Dragon'. When she was upset with one of the staff, which was quite frequently, she would harangue them until she ran out of steam, after which she always stormed out the back door. Margaret decided to leave the clothesline unpropped so that the line hung a bit lower—just a girlish prank. This time after the matron's burst of temper and her normal exit through the back door, she walked straight into the clothesline, leaving part of her apparel on the line—namely, her matron's wig and cap. After this, it occurred frequently—quite by accident of course!

At the age of 17, Margaret went into nursing, starting with post-operative nursing and, after a time, geriatric nursing. At the still tender age of 20, Margaret changed her name when she entered into a job she had wanted forever since starting school—she married her husband, Barrie, on 19 October 1957. Margaret carried on with part-time nursing until she took on another job—motherhood. First there was Susan, then Barbara followed by Jane and finally little Andrew. In 1974 the Statham family migrated to Australia, living first at Windsor in Sydney. They stayed there until July 1986, at which time they had the good sense to move to Macleay Island. Upon settling on Macleay Island, they built their own home from the ground up. Barrie took on the job as groundsman at the local bowls club where, for the next three years, Margaret was not only on the committee but was one of the cooks in the club kitchen with Dawn Schneid.

In 1988 Barrie and Margaret joined the island fire fighting unit, with Barrie in charge helped by Margaret who did the office work and telephones. This was shortly followed by them joining the ambulance service where Margaret played a very active role in the local ambulance committee for seven years; that is, she was the telephone link and coordinator for the island emergency services. When the old fire station was being dismantled, islanders turned up and mucked in. Of course, Margaret was there with the inevitable sandwiches and cold drinks. The new Macleay Island emergency services building frame was erected by Q-Build. Upon completion of the building frame, a local resident, Dick Pearce, received a call from Margaret requesting help to place 'a little bit of concrete'. Seven truckloads later, Dick was still there on his knees finishing off the edges when Margaret turned up with the daily sandwiches and cold drinks. Dick Pearce started to get up when Margaret said, 'Oh, no. Not you, Dick. At least not until you have finished that last little bit.' Needless to say, her dedication to the volunteers was paramount. Her humour was always there. She was just one of the boys.

The Macleay Island combined emergency services are the envy of many rural and regional centres. The success of the Macleay Island combined emergency services is a credit to all the volunteers who have donated their time, energy, sweat and money over the years. However, a special mention must go to the three musketeers: Barrie Statham, Ron Whelan and, of course, Margaret. The

enthusiasm and openness of Barrie, Ron and Margaret created an atmosphere that attracted volunteers to the emergency services team.

As well as fulfilling the office-keeping roles of secretary and treasurer of the rural fire brigade and undertaking her local ambulance committee work, Margaret coordinated the deployment of members to major incidents and took care of logistical support for the volunteers in the field. I use the term 'logistical support', but Margaret saw it as keeping her people, her family, fed and watered. Margaret loved Macleay Island and participated in all aspects of island life. Margaret was a very compassionate person. She had a heart as big as Macleay Island.

In this International Year of the Volunteer, when all levels of government are acknowledging the contribution to our society provided by the hundreds of thousands of volunteers, I have spoken to the Minister for Emergency Services, the Honourable Mike Reynolds, regarding naming the Macleay Island combined emergency services centre the Margaret Statham Centre. The minister has indicated that he will consider this matter positively. I am sure that the thoughts of all members of this House go to Margaret's husband, Barrie. Margaret, we will miss you but we will not forget you.
