



Speech by

KERRY SHINE

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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MRS A. WOOD; RUSSELL MINERAL EQUIPMENT

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (12.26 p.m.): In the time allotted to me, I wish to speak to two matters. The first relates to my recent sad duty of representing the Premier on the occasion of the funeral service of the late Anne Wood, who died on 18 May this year at Toowoomba aged 94 years. Mrs Wood was the widow of the late Mr Les Wood, a former MLA, and mother of Peter and Bill, twins, who were both members of this House at the same time.

The death of Anne Wood recalls a turbulent and tragic time for the cause of Labor in Queensland's political history. It was when the Labor Party split and the Gair government broke into warring groups leading to the defeat of the government and the election of the Nicklin government in August 1957. At that time Les Wood was the member for Toowoomba North. He retained his seat, but the other Labor member in Toowoomba, Jack Duggan—then the leader of the ALP—lost his seat. Jack Duggan, the only cabinet minister not to align himself with Vince Gair, had been elected parliamentary leader of the ALP at the time of the split and his electoral defeat left the party leadership vacant. Les Wood was then elected leader unanimously.

Anne Wood worked with her husband supporting the cause of Labor in the 1930s. Les was absent on active service during the war. On his return, he was elected to state parliament at a by-election in 1946. However, at the subsequent general election of 1947, the conservative seat in Toowoomba was lost to the government. Les Wood was elected to the seat of Toowoomba North at the 1950 election and held it until his death in 1958. He was Labor leader and Opposition Leader from August 1957 to March 1958 when he died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 51 years.

Anne Wood was her husband's greatest supporter and advocate, toiling with enormous energy. During the election campaign following the split—a time of great drama and bitterness—she is recalled supporting her husband at a Toowoomba City Hall election meeting. The hall was crowded and Les spoke quietly and calmly, as always, to argue his case. Some in the audience were hostile and burly men near Anne sought to shout Les down. Anne Wood was what one might call pint sized, but that night she had her umbrella and she wielded it to such great effect and created such consternation that for a time it had a quietening effect.

Mrs Wood always felt that the great stresses of the Labor split contributed to Les' early death. Nevertheless, she continued to campaign for Labor, supporting her sons Peter and Bill in their election campaigns. Peter was elected to the seat of Toowoomba East in 1966 and Bill to the seat of Barron River in 1969. They both lost their seats in 1974. Peter is currently Toowoomba's Deputy Mayor.

Mrs Wood was a vigorous advocate for Labor. Had she been of a later generation, she would more likely than not have been one of the women members of the parliament today.

I conclude by quoting part of her obituary in the *Toowoomba Chronicle*, which stated—

It is often said that behind every great man there is a great woman and Anne Wood is a testimony to the truth of this statement.

She was the strength and support that enabled three men in her family to pursue and achieve success in a demanding environment, while facing her own personal challenges. More importantly perhaps, she epitomised the ideal of a dedicated, vibrant woman for whose contributions in life her family and community can be grateful.

The second matter that I raise relates to the South Queensland—Exporting to the World Award, which was won by a Toowoomba firm, Russell Mineral Equipment. The company is a fully integrated solution provider to the world's mining and mineral processing industry, where the solutions involve

mechanical, electrical and hydraulic devices. RME has designed and supplied many products for mine sites worldwide, including in North America, Argentina, Chile, Africa and the Australasian/Pacific region, including the Century Zinc project in Queensland.

RME is based in Toowoomba. It commenced operating in 1987 as a specialist mining equipment designer. It has combined the skills and ethics of high-powered mechanical engineering design consultancy with the additional step of manufacturing those designs. The company has successfully grown a strong reputation around the world as a designer of equipment that delivers effective solutions to everyday processing problems.

The Australian mining market quickly adopted the solution developed during the growth of the mining industry in the early 1990s and consumed 70 per cent of RME's production. However, since 1996, the company has effectively developed the export market to a point where almost 90 per cent of current production is heading offshore.

RME is fast becoming a significant employer in Toowoomba, particularly with respect to highly qualified engineers. The company is a generous benefactor to the Chair of Engineering in the University of Southern Queensland. It is a corporation with a heart and a sincere sense of community responsibility.

Russell Mineral Equipment of Toowoomba is a company recognised worldwide as a quality provider of mineral grinding mill relining technologies. Having won the recent South Queensland—Exporting to the World Award, it now looks forward to competing in the Australiawide award later this year.
