



Speech by

STEVEN RODGERS

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Hansard 17 October 2001

MR C. STEFANOS

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (11.09 p.m.): I draw the attention of the House to a highly respected member of my electorate, Christos Stefanos. Christos celebrated his 100th birthday on 18 September and is proof that life is pretty good in the north. Christos was born in Cyprus, one of a family of 10. When he was 15 years old he left his home to work in a food store in Cairo, always with dreams of travelling to Australia. After saving enough money, he departed his country of origin on a coal-driven ship bound for Down Under. He arrived in Sydney in 1922 and worked his way up the Queensland coast to Cairns before settling in Home Hill in 1925 to work as a canecutter. It was in this quiet country town that he met and married the love of his life, Eleni, a refugee whose family fled the Balkans War. Unfortunately, the couple were never able to have children and, sadly, Eleni passed away four years ago.

However, Christos has dozens of godchildren due to his association with St Stephen's Greek Orthodox Church and community hall, which he helped build and run, thus leaving his permanent mark on the town. Residents of Home Hill and other areas of the Burdekin actually consider it lucky to have Christos christen their children. And it seems that Christos will be able to christen their children for many more years. Just recently his doctor told him that he was fighting fit and to come back in two years. That is not bad for someone who is 100 years old.

I was honoured to have Christos come into my office earlier this year because he wanted to personally invite me to his 100th birthday, an invitation I happily accepted. Family members and friends travelled from all over to join with hundreds of members of the Burdekin community in celebrating his 100th birthday on Saturday, 16 September with a big party at the local Greek community hall in Home Hill. As part of the celebrations, I was honoured to be able to present Christos with letters of congratulations from the Queen, the Governor-General of Australia, Queensland's Governor-General, Premier Peter Beattie and other state and federal politicians.

Because Christos has put so much time and effort into Home Hill's Greek community as a source of information and help to Greek people when they first moved to Home Hill in the early days and for being an integral part of St Stephen's Greek Orthodox Church and community hall, I also presented Christos with the state government's first 2001 International Year of the Volunteer medallion for the Burdekin electorate. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of my speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Christos appreciated this very much and in return presented me with a beautiful wooden vase, which he crafted with his own hands using his impressive woodturning skills. He is still turning items on his lathe.

I applaud the State Government for their creation and support of the 2001 International Year of Volunteers with certificates, badges and medallions as they provide the perfect way to thank hard-working and respected volunteer members of our electorates such as Christos Stefanos.
