



Speech by

CATE MOLLOY

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard 26 November 2002

MR R. MARX; MR L. TOWSK

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (11.51 p.m.): Earlier this year I had the honour of opening an art exhibition of the work of Ray Marx at Cafe Paradiso in Noosa Junction. Ray and Robyn Marx are both hardworking, active community members on the Sunshine Coast. Ray's art is simply beautiful. Its colour, shape and sheer sensitivity are a credit to Ray's ability to communicate what words cannot express. The venue, Cafe Paradiso, is one of our area's much-loved icons, providing quality service, heaps of community support and a great place to go.

At the art exhibition I was invited to visit at Leon Towsk's 100th birthday by his daughter and son-in-law. The invitation arrived and I was delighted to accept. Leon Towsk is one of my constituents who now lives at Laguna Retirement Village in Noosaville. Leon's life story symbolises the sacrifices and achievements of many Australians of his generation who chose to make Australia their home.

Leon was born in Prague on 22 August 1902. Two years later the family moved to Vienna, where he lived until 1938. He graduated in electrical and mechanical engineering from Vienna's technical university. On graduating in 1925 Leon was employed with a company that was supporting the Austrian railways and he was involved in the design of innovative machinery. Leon travelled all over Europe with his work. In 1938, shortly after the Nazi Anschluss, with the help of an Austrian friend in Melbourne he and his wife were able to immigrate to Australia. He worked solely on creating and patenting knitting machines that were a great success. Myer stores were among his customers.

During World War II Leon designed instruments for the RAAF, machine tools for the Army and precision instruments for the RAN. He received recognition from the commander of the RAN for his part in the development of a supersensitive device that picked up signals from the cables laid across Sydney Harbour. This work helped to detect the midget submarine attack of 31 May 1941.

After the war Leon had a number of jobs, and in 1952 he joined the government aircraft factory in Port Melbourne and was involved in ground-breaking work in his field. When he retired in 1963 he was senior engineer in charge of research and development. After retirement he returned to work as a consultant with Victorian Gas and Fuel Corp. There he was associated with the creation and operation of a testing facility to ensure the safety of appliances using natural gas.

During my conversation with Leon I found that he had been a neighbour of mine in the Melbourne suburb of Balwyn. Leon actually knew my cousins—Sandra, Gerard and Helenmary Gilhooly—and my uncle and aunty, Vera and Dick Gilhooly. It was a pleasure to spend some time reminiscing about the beautiful old times of Balwyn, to share a bit of his past and to know that people such as Leon have been able to immigrate to Australia and help build this nation into what it is today—a beautiful and safe place for all of us. I salute Leon Towsk.