



Speech by

## DON LIVINGSTONE

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

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Hansard 19 February 2002

### DR HILDA DES ARTS

**Mr LIVINGSTONE** (Ipswich West—ALP) (7.17 p.m.): On Sunday, 17 February 2002, the Ipswich community lost one of its most loved and respected senior citizens who was truly Ipswich's greatest ever ambassador. After coping with physical difficulties for some years, Dr Hilda des Arts finally lost her ongoing battle with ill health at the age of 86. It was my privilege to be able to call her my friend, and her loss will be deeply felt by the many organisations to which Hilda devoted all her time and energy and by the Ipswich community as a whole.

In her own true spirit, I feel this is a time to reflect on the many positive aspects of her life and to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that she made to the people of Ipswich. Hilda came to Australia in 1977 at the age of 62. The following year she joined Lifeline and devoted the next 12 years of her life as a trainer, counsellor and director of that organisation. Her last two years there were spent as a corporate trainer with AUSTRAIN, where she conducted workshops in conflict resolution, coping with change, management skills and strategic planning. At an age when most people tend to slow down, Hilda's boundless energy saw her take a leading role in countless community organisations—far too many to comment on in three minutes this evening.

Hilda's colourful life has not been without its tragedies. The loss of her daughter to cancer prompted her to create Ipswich Hospice Care, a service that would provide palliative care in the home to ease the last days of people suffering from a terminal illness. Ipswich Hospice started out as an unfunded volunteer service and it subsequently sought and was granted ongoing funding from the area health authority. Following the success of this venture, Ipswich Hospice Care then undertook the establishment of a community hospice centre, which commenced in 1994 and met an integral need within the community to accept and acknowledge the many physical and spiritual aspects of dying and the long-term effects of such events on family and friends.

Hilda received many achievement awards, including Ipswich Citizen of the Year in 1984, Queensland Premier's Award in 1995, Rotary Paul Harris Fellowship in 1996, Australian Senior of the Year in 1997, Olympic Torch Bearer, Ipswich in 2000 and Silver Medallion International Year of the Volunteer in 2001. Hilda has also been nominated for the Order of Australia. It is significant that all of these awards were achieved in the last 18 years of her life, supporting her unfailing belief that age is just a state of mind and, as long as the mind is agile and alert, the rest of the body will just have to try to keep up. This is exactly how Hilda lived her life, right up until the last.

I was able to speak with Hilda for a little time recently. Despite her failing physical condition, her wish was that she would have enough time to finish off a couple of projects dear to her heart, and to attend a national conference in Western Australia where she had been invited as the keynote speaker. She looked forward to this event as being the highlight of her life. Unfortunately, time ran out and she was unable to complete this final goal. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

It was my privilege to be able to go into bat for Hilda on many occasions. She never hesitated to express her gratitude at every opportunity for whatever help or assistance she was given, always with a beaming smile, a sparkling wit and a friendly word for everyone. I take this opportunity to honour the life and the dedication of this courageous lady, to present her many achievements to members for their commendation, to offer my condolences to her family and friends and the people of Ipswich, and to mourn the loss of a wonderful friend who was truly Ipswich's greatest ever ambassador.