



Speech by

**Hon. J. FOURAS**

**MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE**

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Hansard 18 June 2002

**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE—DEATH OF MR C. J. BENNETT, MP**

**Hon. J. FOURAS** (Ashgrove—ALP) (9.54 a.m.): As a former member for South Brisbane I, too, would like to join in this condolence motion on the death of Col Bennett. Other members have spoken of his war service, his professionalism as a barrister, his 12 years service as a city councillor and, of course, his 12 years service as the member for South Brisbane.

There is no doubt that Col Bennett was always colourful, he was often provocative, and he was a great debater. One of the interesting aspects of his life in this chamber was that quite regularly he was sent to the sin-bin. There was a story doing the rounds that he would come in here—having to appear in a court case in the afternoon—and provoke Mr Speaker to make a certain decision. Nevertheless, he was a man who would not take a backwards step.

In his maiden speech, which I read just before coming into this chamber, he went to great pains to show how disadvantaged the city council was at that time under a Liberal administration. He was particularly concerned that the Brisbane City Council's electricity department was going to be transferred to the state, because at that time it was making a profit of 500,000 pounds a year. Other people have spoken about that in the past.

I would like to speak now about Col Bennett the local member for South Brisbane. When I was doorknocking in 1976 to convince the locals of that electorate that I should be the next Labor member for the area—the seat had been lost by the Labor Party in the great swing in 1974 when we became a cricket team—I was told by everybody that I had some very big shoes to fill. Col Bennett was a real character, and he was known to be a fighter for his constituency. As Matt Foley just said, people would go to Col's legal office to see him about parliamentary business because in those days, prior to 1974, there were no electorate offices and no electorate secretaries. Col Bennett was well known in his electorate for setting up an office every Saturday morning, particularly in front of the Melbourne Hotel. He would be there at the office from 10 o'clock to 1 o'clock; people would go by, and somebody would buy him the odd beer.

The other thing I should mention is Col's passion for Souths Rugby League Club—a passion we both shared. I was actually on the committee of Souths and Col was a patron for many years. I join with other members here today in praising the achievements of Col Bennett. He was truly a great Queenslander and a great parliamentarian, and we are all sadder for his passing.