



Speech by

Hon. J. FOURAS

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

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DEATH OF GEORGE PIPPOS

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (11.37 p.m.): I rise to speak about the life of my friend George Pippas. George touched the lives of so many people. This was starkly evident from the massive crowd that attended his funeral yesterday. George was a lover of life and a lover of people—often blunt, at times abrasive, but never dull. George always exhibited a can-do approach. He always acted with the utmost integrity and was always loyal to friends and family. He was a great citizen and a great Queenslander.

When I look at the life of George Pippas I can see a number of passions with which he was caught up. He loved the racing game. He was proudly multicultural and he was proud of his Greekness. He was involved in the community. He was passionate about Rugby Union. He was a successful businessman.

I think we all know of his ownership of the 'Goondiwindi Grey', Gunsynd, and his recent appointment to the racing board—a job which he performed with a lot of gusto and with great passion.

With regard to the Greek community, George was president and secretary and he was involved in instigating such things as the Panyiri, a nursing home and a child care centre. More than that, he took over the presidency when the Greek Club was very much in debt and was in danger of going down. He saved the club for the Greek people and also for the Brisbane community. He was chair of the Migrant Resource Centre management committee. He was proud of the multicultural aspects of this country. He was also proud of his Greekness.

With regard to Rugby Union, George was a player in his younger days with Wests Rugby Union Club. He served for many years as president, as well as being president of the Queensland Rugby Union and a board member of the Australian Rugby Union. Just a week or so ago he rang me wanting me to organise a meeting for him with the Minister for Sport in Greece. He had a passion for introducing Rugby Union to Greece.

He was a successful businessman—a successful hotelier. He had a great talent for picking capable staff and, more importantly, he had the capacity to treat them as members of his immediate family. Once you had George's trust, you had it for life and he treated you like a member of his family.

Ultimately, I would say this: George was one of a kind. He was a man who exhibited so much exuberance and passion and such a blunt approach. He was a person who believed he could make a difference and had the power to change things. George loved challenges. Even when he went on holidays he liked to go on a trek up mountain sides or to areas of towns and cities that we knew nothing about.

I believe we all feel sadness at him being taken away from us prematurely. I want to finish by saying, 'George, mate, we are all the worse for your having left us.'