



Speech by

CHRISTINE SMITH

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (7.09 p.m.): Tonight I wish to acknowledge some remarkable people in my electorate. This story really began early last year when I noticed a surprising number of requests for congratulatory letters for people celebrating their 60th wedding anniversaries. On reflection, the reason for this was clear. In 1942 Australia was involved in World War II and many young men were being posted overseas to New Guinea and other theatres of war. At that time many couples chose to marry early rather than wait for the end of the war and the return of their sweethearts.

I decided to acknowledge these couples by hosting a morning tea to celebrate the milestone. The party was held in November of last year, and 13 couples came along and had a marvellous time. My theory proved correct. Most of the men had served overseas during the war and there were great discussions about the various branches of the armed services and their memories of that turbulent time. I think the couples enjoyed the opportunity to meet with other couples of the same vintage and talk about their past and their present. In fact, they all got along so well that we considerably overstayed our welcome at the hotel.

Alma and Clarence were one couple who intrigued me. They were married in 1942, when Clarence was 18 and Alma just 16—and they are still talking to each other! One lovely couple, Beryl and Eric Englander, brought along photos of their wedding. Eric is now living in a nursing home but Beryl, in addition to visiting her husband each and every day, also works tirelessly for the Make-a-Wish Foundation on the Gold Coast.

It was at this morning tea that I discovered the secrets of longevity and long marriages. Firstly, almost without exception the guests turned down tea in favour of coffee and, secondly, they were undoubtedly the most charming group of people I have ever had the good fortune to encounter. So the secret is to be nice and drink coffee. I think I have the coffee part down; I will just have to work on the niceness!

Last year's gathering was such a success that next week we will do the same thing all over again. At least 25 couples have contacted my office to request 60th anniversary congratulatory letters and they, too, deserve to have this special occasion marked. Last year our couples were entertained by Gold Coast magician Arthur Coghlan, who entertained guests with jokes and tricks. Arthur and his magic show are synonymous with the Gold Coast. He was one of the earliest entertainers to make a name for himself on the coast. I am very grateful for his time and have prevailed on him to do the same again this year.

Many of the guests at last year's function brought along their letters of congratulations from both the Premier and the Queen. Organising for this year's celebration reminded me again of how proud people are of receiving these letters. Often to us it is simply part of our job, but it is worth while remembering how important it is to those who receive these letters and the pleasure and pride they bring. I congratulate those couples who have made a lifetime commitment to each other. Sixty years of marriage is truly remarkable.