



Speech by

**Mr D. BRISKEY**

**MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND**

---

Hansard 2 April 2003

**MRS J. LOCH**

**Mr BRISKEY** (Cleveland—ALP) (10.40 p.m.): Recently I joined the Greek Consul, Alex Freeleagus, the honourable member for Hinchinbrook, Marc Rowell, and Ingham Shire Mayor, Keith Phillips, to pay tribute to a truly remarkable Queenslander, the late Joice Nankivell Loch. A journalist, author and aid worker—the life and significant humanitarian achievements of Joice Nankivell Loch are an inspiration to all Queenslanders and indeed all Australians. Decorated by the governments of Poland, Greece, Serbia, Romania and Great Britain, Mrs Loch was awarded more medals than any other Australian woman—two more than war heroine Nancy Wake.

Joice Loch was born on 24 January 1887 at Farnham Plantation near Ingham. She was an accomplished journalist and writer who devoted most of her life to helping refugees and the poor. In 1922 she and her husband, Sydney, volunteered to perform relief work in Poland with the Quakers. While there they wrote articles to highlight the plight of the Polish refugees in an attempt to raise funds for them.

In May 1923 they moved to Thessalonica in Greece to help the thousands of Greek refugees escaping from persecution in Turkey. Joice helped in medical relief work, established a malaria eradication program and set up classes in survival skills for orphan girls. In 1926 the Lochs moved to the refugee village of Ouranoupolis, south-east of Thessalonica, and in return for their help were invited to make the medieval Tower of Prosforion their home.

When World War II broke out in 1939 the Lochs went to Romania to help refugees fleeing Poland. There they went on to lead about 2,000 displaced Polish and Jewish adults and children to safety from Romania to Palestine. Towards the end of the war the Lochs cared for thousands of Polish orphans. Joice Loch's commitment to refugees was nothing short of remarkable. Indeed, many refugees around the world owe their lives to this truly amazing Queenslander. On returning to Ouranoupolis, Joice and Sydney continued to live in the tower and she continued to raise communal funds through journalism and to guide many community projects. Sydney died in 1955.

After Joice's death in 1982 at the age of 95, a Greek Orthodox bishop described her as one of the most significant women of the 20th century. In her lifetime Joice was the recipient of 11 medals for outstanding humanitarian achievements. It is important to mention that, even though Joice lived most of her life in Greece, she never lost her Australian identity. She retained her Australian accent and kept an Australian flag on her desk. I would like to think that the laying of the commemorative plaque at Ingham was a small step toward the deserved recognition of this remarkable Queenslander.