



Speech by

**DESLEY BOYLE**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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Hansard 14 October 2003

**MRS M. MEOLI**

**Ms BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (10.53 p.m.): I was sad to attend the celebration of the life of Mary Meoli at St Theresa's Catholic Church, Edmonton, on 2 October. Mary Meoli, 78 years of age, passed away on 29 September 2003. Mary Meoli was one of the great ladies of Cairns. Her beginnings, however, were modest. Born Mary Nucifora on 14 May 1925, she was the daughter of Italian migrants who struggled to make a living growing sugar cane. Her childhood was poor and difficult. Mary attended and was bullied at various schools. At home alongside her mother she strove to please her father and meet the high standards set. Throughout this she maintained her sweet and generous nature.

At the end of her school years, Mary went to work on the family farm. She learnt to drive the tractor and took on a man's work while her mother handled whatever she could of the more menial tasks. Mary met and married a handsome young lawyer named Elvio Meoli on 2 December 1944. Thus began a love affair that lasted more than 50 years. Through good times and bad, Mary Meoli was active in the Cairns business and social community. From sugar cane farming, Mary and Elvio moved on to travel agencies and currency exchange. Mary and Elvio had two cherished daughters, Camie and Gelma.

Mary found time to involve herself with the children's schools, with Rotary and with the Cairns Business Women's Club, of which she was patron. She was a devout Catholic and an energetic supporter of church events. Mary supported her husband in his role as Italian Vice-Consul. She became widely known as a marvellous hostess. Mary herself became the Vice-Consul in 1987 and continued on until 1995. Mary Meoli played a significant part in the history of Cairns. She will be remembered and recorded for her grace and graciousness and her dignity and generosity as Italian Vice-Consul, as a businesswoman, also active in church and community affairs. However, Mary will be remembered proudly and lovingly by her family—her daughters Camie and Gelma, her son-in-law, Brian, her eight grandchildren and her three great-grandchildren. Mary Meoli's contribution not only to the Italian community but to all aspects of Cairns society has been vast. May she now rest in peace.