



Speech by

JEFF SEENEY

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Hon. C. A. Wharton

Mr SEENEY (Callide—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (9.50 a.m.): I rise to say a few words of condolence on the passing of Claude Wharton, the former member for Burnett. The area based on Gayndah that Claude Wharton represented as the member for Burnett is now incorporated within the electorate of Callide. I certainly knew Claude Wharton well by reputation as a stalwart of the Bjelke-Petersen government and as a successful and effective Minister for Works and Minister for Housing. However, in the time that I have represented the Callide electorate he has lived in Gayndah and I have also come to know him well on a personal level as a constituent.

When I was first elected to parliament I was very pleased to have the opportunity to talk to Claude on a regular basis when I visited Gayndah about the role of a local member and share some of his recollections of his days representing that part of the Burnett region. What was particularly striking to me was the fact that as a very highly respected former member of parliament he was often referred to by many local people as an example of what they expected from their local member. I very quickly realised that Claude Wharton, as the member for Burnett, had set a standard of representation and performance that was still the expectation of the people of the region even though he retired in 1986, some 10 years before I was elected.

Whilst he was undoubtedly a very successful minister in a number of portfolios, the local people who gathered in Gayndah in January to pay their respects at his funeral spoke most about his commitment as a grassroots politician. There were many anecdotes that illustrated just how approachable and courteous he was in his role and how thorough was his response to every issue once it had been recorded in the famous notebook he always carried wherever he went in which he recorded constituent inquiries. The respect that he earned as a member of this parliament was only magnified by his return to live in Gayndah on his retirement and his continued efforts in the local community, notably in the Rotary Club, the Masonic Lodge and the Anglican Church. He was forever proud of the Gayndah district, which he had helped to build from nothing. He was one of a generation who are now mostly gone but who will forever be part of our folklore. He started with nothing, selected a block of land on Barambah Creek and carved a future for his family out of what was then the isolated wilderness of a new settlement.

Claude Wharton will be remembered by all who knew him as a man of great capacity, compassion and commonsense. He will be long remembered in the Burnett region for his achievements as a farmer and grazier and in industry and as a community leader. Most of all, he will be remembered as a member of this Queensland parliament who set a standard that we who follow him will always try to emulate.