



Speech by

Dr LESLEY CLARK

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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SIR SYDNEY WILLIAMS

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (1.57 a.m.): I will leave parliament on Thursday to fly home to Cairns where, as the Premier's parliamentary secretary in far-north Queensland, I will represent him and farewell a great Australian and a favourite son of far-north Queensland who dedicated his life to his family and to his community. I have been privileged during the 22 years I have lived in Cairns to witness at first-hand some of the remarkable contributions that this man of vision has made to our community.

But Sir Sydney, who died on Sunday at age 83, began his career of service to far-north Queensland long before my arrival in Cairns. In fact, it was 1948—the year I was born—that he came back home with his new bride after the war to take up the reins of the Williams estate motor business and then later his own company, Willtrac Corporation. It was during this time that he became involved in founding Bush Pilots Airways, one of the earliest aviation companies in Australia.

For the next 50 years or so Sir Sydney was heavily involved in the fabric of life in Cairns and the far-north region, including his many board positions and directorships of government bodies such as the Cairns Port Authority, the Queensland Film Commission and the Australian Tourism Commission, and business entities such as the Reef Trust Casino, Lizard Island and Cape York Wilderness Lodge, Captain Cook Cruises, Carlton United Breweries, local radio stations, numerous local and state based community organisations such as Legacy, the Association for the Blind, the Far North Queensland Youth Assistance Fund and the World Wildlife Fund of Australia. He was also patron of many sporting groups and had an extensive involvement with various Queensland universities, art galleries and cooperative research centres for Barrier Reef research and sustainable tourism. The list goes on.

Sir Sydney was knighted in 1983, having already received an Order of the British Empire in 1977. Amongst the various awards and recognitions he received for his amazing list of accomplishments and life-long dedication to community service, in 2001 he was awarded the World Tourism Conference Award for outstanding contribution by an Australian individual.

However, his lasting memory to those of us from the far-north Queensland will undoubtedly be his founding of the Cairns Amateurs, our equivalent of the Melbourne Cup and Australia's richest regional racing event, attracting thousands of visitors and locals alike to enjoy our own annual spring carnival. It was only two years ago, at age 81, that he gave up the role of President of the Far North Queensland Amateur Turf Club after 41 years.

He is survived by wife Joyce, his four sons, 11 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. To them, I send my sincere condolences, knowing that the Cairns community has lost a great friend and a major contributor to the way of life we enjoy in far-north Queensland. He was, above all, a humble man of great personal integrity, a gentleman in every sense of the word, and we will miss him greatly.