



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 25 February 2003

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Hon. C. A. Wharton

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.40 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late Hon. Claude Alfred Wharton, a former member of the parliament of Queensland.

That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the parliament of Queensland, for the loss they have sustained.

Mr Claude Alfred Wharton was born on 15 October 1914 in Gayndah. Mr Wharton was educated at the Ginoodon State and Junior Boys Grammar School, Maryborough. Prior to his election in 1960, Mr Wharton worked as a grocer's assistant, main roads worker, dairy, citrus and small crops farmer, grazier and breeder of stud cattle and pigs. Mr Wharton's devotion to the land was evidenced through his association with numerous organisations, including chairman of the Gayndah Cooperative Dairy Association Ltd, the Gayndah Cooperative Trading Society Ltd and Queensland Bacon Pty Ltd. He was also a director of the Queensland Cold Storage Cooperative Federation Ltd, the Cooperative Wholesale Society of Queensland Ltd and the Producers Cooperative Distributing Society Ltd and was vice-president of the Dairymen's Organisation.

Just as Mr Wharton was active in his representation of these industry groups, he made a significant contribution to the state with respect to the length of his service to his electorate as a member of parliament and to the state as a minister of the Crown and in undertaking additional responsibilities in the Legislative Assembly. Mr Wharton was elected to the seat of Burnett in the state election on 28 May 1960. During his term in parliament, Mr Wharton held the offices of Minister for Works and Housing from 1977 until his retirement in 1986, Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement and Fisheries from 1975 to 1977, and Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement in 1975. He also held the additional offices of Leader of the House, Temporary Chairman of Committees, and was a member of the Standing Orders Committee and the Parliamentary Buildings Committee. Mr Wharton was the leader of a parliamentary delegation to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa in 1984, a delegate to the General Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in London in 1973 and a member of a parliamentary delegation to New Zealand and the South Pacific in 1970.

Good representation of the people in our communities is a key role for all elected members, and Mr Wharton was a champion for primary industries and the importance of the regions. And it was no doubt clear to members at the time from Mr Wharton's maiden speech to the Legislative Assembly on 30 August 1961 that he had a personal knowledge and understanding of the issues confronting regional areas. In his maiden speech, Mr Wharton wasted no time in highlighting to the parliament important issues for the Burnett region, including the development of the local sugar industry, the advantages of irrigation and the importance of transport and power infrastructure in regional development— issues which remain significant for the regions and on which the government continues to work with communities.

In his speech, Mr Wharton also expressed his concern for the dry conditions experienced through a drought in the Burnett region. Now, some 40 years later, the region is again in drought with conditions affecting the primary producers. Like Mr Wharton then, we hope for good rainfalls to end the

drought and hardship. I am delighted to say that in recent times we have actually received some rain. I hope it continues not just through the Burnett but the whole state—the more the merrier. Mr Wharton held the seat of Burnett until his retirement at the state election in November 1986 when he settled in the Gayndah district and became heavily involved in the running of the family's stud property with his son, Gary, and continued to be involved in community affairs.

In 1960 Mr Wharton said, 'I believe that the development of the state will come by individual enterprise.' His own words seem a fitting description for the way in which he lived. The weir on the Burnett River near Gayndah is named after Mr Wharton, as is the state government building in Bundaberg which houses offices of the Department of Families, Corrective Services, the Environmental Protection Agency and Disability Services Queensland. I note that my colleague and friend, the Hon. Terry Mackenroth, the Deputy Premier, then Acting Premier, attended the funeral of Mr Wharton on 7 February on behalf of the government. I thank the Deputy Premier for so doing. I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy and that of this House to his family—to his wife, Pearl, and to his children, Max, Sheryl and Gary and their families.

No matter how long a person's life lasts, there is no doubt that a person is missed by their family. He was well respected by this parliament and I express the condolences not just of the government but also of all Queenslanders. I know that the motion will be seconded by the Leader of the Opposition.
