



Speech by

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Hansard 25 February 2003

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Hon. C. A. Wharton

Hon. T. M. MACKENROTH (Chatsworth—ALP) (Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for Sport) (9.53 a.m.): I join in this condolence motion to the late Claude Wharton and, in doing so, I pass on my condolences to his wife, Pearl, and also to his children. I knew Claude Wharton reasonably well as a member of this parliament. Upon reflection, I think there are probably four members still here who actually served with Claude during his time in this House. I remember that one of my first speeches was as a person with a passion for housing. Claude was the shadow minister for housing. I hopped up in the parliament and I thought I gave it to him pretty well. At least I thought I did. It was in this chamber so it would have been in 1978. When I walked out the back into the lobby Claude came over and congratulated me on my speech. He said, 'That was a good speech, son. Come and I'll buy you a beer.' I have to tell members that he deflated me. We had many debates in the parliament, but they were always in the parliament and were left here and outside I was fairly good friends with Claude.

His daughter, Sheryl, contacted my office at the end of last year to arrange congratulatory letters for Claude and his wife, Pearl, on the occasion of their 60th wedding anniversary. They were able to celebrate that before his passing. As the Premier mentioned, I attended Claude's funeral in my capacity as a friend of Claude and also representing the government. One of the things that was mentioned—and while sitting there I actually reflected on this—was that Claude was the person who, as the Minister for Works, was responsible for seeing the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, the Parliamentary Annexe and a number of other new buildings—about nine in all—built in George Street. I thought, 'Here is a man from the country who obviously had the vision to see that we needed these sorts of facilities in our capital city.' That is something all members of parliament should reflect on and think about. We needed those facilities. Although he looked after his electorate, he also ensured that as Minister for Works capital works were constructed throughout the state.

Robert Schwarten reminded me that Claude Wharton used to be known as 'Holiday' Claude, because as Minister for Works he visited many schools and, in those days, if a minister went to a school, even for the opening of a lavatory door, all the kids at the school got a holiday. I remember that when I first got elected to parliament we could not get a minister to come to opposition members' electorates and the teachers would be angry at us because we could not get them a holiday.

Ms Bligh: They still ask for them, though.

Mr MACKENROTH: They still ask for them. Today, imagine if I as minister went into a school and said, 'You can have a holiday.' Can members imagine the reaction of the parents? They would lynch me. I guess those were different times. Claude was a great Queenslander, a person who loved being a member of parliament, and I think served the parliament very well and will be sadly missed.