



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 25 February 2003

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Death of Hon. C. A. Wharton

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (9.57 a.m.): I have no doubt that my life is much richer for having known Claude Wharton. I really mean that. That is not just something I am saying because the poor fellow has passed on. He was one of the greatest people I have ever met. He had a capacity no matter where he was, whether it was at a show, at the local hotel or down in the street, to start talking to people and gather people around him. I believe I learnt a lot from that. One of the reasons he was good with people was that he was interested in them. In addition, he had a pretty good apprenticeship through having started off with absolutely nothing but, at the same time, having done many jobs similar to labouring jobs in his early days. He really had an apprenticeship in dealing with people, which was rewarded at a later time through the public sending him to represent them in a higher place.

Claude played a huge role in 1974 in helping me to win the then seat of Belyando. He continued to come out to the electorate. He would give the schools little things including, as Terry Mackenroth said, holidays here and there. I think every school got a holiday before the election. That was helpful in those days, but it would not be very helpful today. After I won, he felt very proud; he seemed to feel it was his job to try to get this young baker from Clermont into parliament. He was successful in doing that and I think he saw that as a major achievement. He was very helpful to me as I was learning the ropes.

When I was a minister Claude was Leader of the House. That was a bit of a different story, because he was a pretty officious Leader of the House and God help anybody who wanted to change the program or bring on an extra speaker or anything. He set that House up and that was the way it ran and nobody could change him. That was interesting, as most ministers felt at the time. He also demonstrated how fair dinkum he was, because often I would go to his electorate after he had retired and he would always boast that, at whatever function I was addressing, he was first to put his name down and come along. I felt pretty happy about that as well because I was not too sure who wanted to come and hear me, but Claude always did. It was just wonderful. He was one of the greatest people I have known, one of the nicest people to ever pass through this parliament and one of the most fair dinkum Australians that I have ever met.