



Speech by

Darryl Briskey

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Tuesday, 7 June 2005

FREELEAGUS, MR A

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (11.45 am): Last Friday I received a call from a friend within Brisbane's Greek community who informed me of the death of a good friend, Alex Freeleagus. Alexander Christy Freeleagus AO, CBE, AM was born on 28 December 1928 in Brisbane, the son of Christy Freeleagus and Ariadne Coroneos. Alex was educated at the Church of England Grammar School in Brisbane and then went to the University of Queensland, where he studied law.

Alex's father, Christy, had held the position of Queensland's first Honorary Consul-General for Greece since 1919. Alex was appointed Vice-Consul in 1951 and upon his father's death became Honorary Consul-General in 1957. He joked that he had no choice as his father had told him that he was the Vice-Consul whether he wanted the position or not, but I know that he was proud and happy to serve the Greek community in the position that his father had held before him.

Alex was a solicitor, director and then senior partner at Henderson and Lahey Solicitors, now Clayton Utz, from 1973 to 1993. He was also a director of Oil Search Australia Ltd, a subsidiary of Origin Energy Ltd. Alex will be best remembered for his service to the community. He was a member of the Queensland Council of the Australian Bicentenary Authority from 1986 to 1988, founding chairman of the Brisbane Biennial Festival in 1991, convener of the visit to Brisbane of the Ancient Macedonia Exhibition in 1989, Dean of the Consular Corps from 1977 to 1978 and again from 1989 to 1990, Greece's Commissioner-General for Expo 88, Chief Attache for the Commonwealth Games in 1982, Liveryman of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators, founding chairman and after that national vice-president of the Queensland British Order of Australia Association from 1975 to 1985, national vice-president of the Order of Australia Association from 1986 to 1987 and a valued adviser to successive state and federal governments on immigration and citizenship matters.

Alex's military service saw him retiring as Wing Commander, Specialist Legal Consultant, after 40 years of Army and Air Force reserve service. He received a number of honours for his service to the Greek community and the ex-service community. He was awarded an Order of the British Empire—Commander (Civil) in 1976. He became a Member of the Order of Australia in 1977 and an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1995. In 2001 he received a Centenary Medal. Alex was also awarded the Silver Cross of the Royal Order of St George 1 and the Gold Cross Patriarchate of Constantinople. As honourable members would realise, Alex Freeleagus lived a remarkably full life of achievement and service to the community.

As I said at the outset, Alex was a friend. Our friendship grew out of my association with Brisbane's Greek community. Alex knew that I turned 21 in Greece and that I have a great love and respect for the Greek community and their many achievements in Queensland and Australia.

Alex loved Queensland and his Greek heritage. Like many of my Greek-Australian friends, he had family links to the beautiful island of Kythera. On many occasions he spoke to me about the many Queenslanders with Greek heritage who have made Queensland what it is today. He also spoke to me at length about Australia's architectural heritage, which owes so much to Greek builders and architects. He was proud of the hugely successful Athens Olympic Games and talked of nothing else for months prior to the games.

I will always remember our trip to Townsville, where we met the local representatives of the Greek community, who were so generous with their friendship and hospitality, and then our drive to Ingham, where we unveiled a plaque in memory of Joice Nankivell Loch. It was Joice Loch's life story in the book, *Blue Ribbons Bitter Bread* that captured Alex's imagination. He spoke to me at length about Joice's life, the fact that she was Australia's most decorated woman and that for the last 50 years of her amazing life she lived in the tower of Prosforian in Ouranoupolis. I know that Alex wanted me to visit Ouranoupolis and see the ancient Byzantine tower of Prosforian that was Joice Loch's home. I will keep my promise and some day make that trip—maybe on the way back from Kythera.

Alex was without doubt a great Queenslander who left his mark in so many ways. He was also extremely proud of his Greek heritage and worked tirelessly for most of his life for the Greek community in his role as Honorary Consul-General for Greece. Alex was a good friend, a champion of the Greek community and a caring and loving family man. Alex touched the lives of thousands of Queenslanders who will remember him. He was a great Queenslander. Alex Freeleagus had the respect of his peers and the love of his family and friends. No-one can want for more. I will miss you, mate. On behalf of my wife, Cathy, and our family I convey our condolences to Alex's sisters, Rene and Evie, and their families.