



Speech by

Hon. Pat Purcell

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Hansard Friday, 21 April 2006

DEATH OF MR RB WAIWIRI

Hon. PD PURCELL (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Emergency Services) (8.32 pm): One of the pleasures of being a local member is that you have the privilege of meeting and hearing the stories of the characters and great people who make up this state and the electorate of Bulimba. I would like to tell the House about such a person—Raymond Barry Waiwiri. I would like to celebrate and commemorate his life. I am sad to say that Ray passed away on 2 March leaving behind a loving family and many friends. Ray was one of the nicest blokes a person could ever wish to meet. He was a big man with a big heart.

Ray was born in New Zealand to Tom and Maude Waiwiri and was one of 15 children. He is survived by seven sisters and two brothers. He had a wonderful upbringing with his family, chopping wood, picking pine cones, milking cows and trout fishing. He used to reminisce about those marvellous times he had when he was young with his family.

After finishing school he worked in a cheese factory before moving to Wellington. A few years later he moved to Australia and went fruit picking in Young, New South Wales, where my grandfather and grandmother first went to when they came out from Ireland. For a couple of years he moved between Australia and New Zealand before settling in Australia and marrying Yvonne. Unfortunately the marriage did not last but to Ray's joy his first son, Craig, was born.

Ray later married Gail and his second son, Trent, and his only daughter, Latoya, were born. Latoya is very much like Ray. Ray had a lovely voice and loved to sing. For the next 20 years Ray worked in many jobs around the country. He was a volunteer at the Commonwealth Games and a volunteer driver at the World Masters Games. He was also a member of the State Emergency Service in which he was among thousands of Australians who dedicated their time to helping others in their time of need.

In 1986 Ray became an Australian citizen. It is my pleasure to say that lawn bowls was Ray's chosen sport. He was a member of the Cannon Hill Bowls Club for 25 years where he won many championships. I am proud to say that I am the patron of that bowls club and that Ray was a very good friend of mine. There was nothing more memorable than when Ray teamed up with his daughter, Latoya, to win the mixed pairs in the year 2000. Ray was a board member of the club from 1998 to 2003 and served several terms as president. With his love of music, from Elvis to Christmas carols, the big man with the big smile lit up the room every time he entered.

To Helen, Ray's bride of only a couple of months, and Ray's children, Craig, Trent and Latoya, I say thank you for sharing him with us. The Queensland community has been the richer for his life.