



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Tuesday, 3 June 2008

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### MOTION OF CONDOLENCE: MR B E BISHOP

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (9.41 am): Bruce Bishop died on 20 May 2008 aged 82. He was born on 25 August 1925 in Maffra, Victoria. His first foray on the Gold Coast was in 1959 when he arrived in Surfers Paradise to work with Father Shannon, who people have told me had a memorable temper, from St Vincent's Church in Surfers Paradise, and this was much to the chagrin of Bruce Bishop's father, who was a staunch Presbyterian minister. After he finished with the church, Bruce opened menswear stores in Surfers Paradise, Broadbeach and Southport. Over the years he became renowned for his unique fashion style and has been attributed as the author of the Gold Coast casual boardroom style. His entrepreneurial spirit also led him into the video rental business as well as having interests in camera shops and furniture hire companies.

**Mr Lucas:** A safari suit with short pants!

**Mr LANGBROEK:** They were memorable days. An active member of the Liberal Party, in 1969 Bruce ran as the candidate for the seat of South Coast, held by Russ Hinze, who years later would have several heated run-ins with him in the party room. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that it is a much calmer place nowadays. It was the first three-cornered contest in Queensland, and traditionally conservatives banded together to beat the Labor Party, or try to defeat the Labor Party, but in this case the Nationals forged a deal with Labor which led to his narrow defeat. It did not quell his desire to serve the people of Surfers Paradise and the Gold Coast, and he was elected President of the Surfers Paradise Chamber of Commerce in 1970.

He was instrumental in developing Surfers Paradise into a premier holiday destination, which boosted the Gold Coast economy to what it is today—Australia's sixth largest city. Bruce was wary of the coast's infamous white-shoe brigade, who marched into south-east Queensland with their 'develop at all costs' mentality. He wanted to develop the Gold Coast but he wanted to do it in a balanced and appropriate way, so in 1973 he ran for local government and won the division of Surfers Paradise. In 1977 he decided to try his hand at the state seat of Surfers Paradise, which back then was held by Sir Bruce Small. It was considered an unwinnable fight. As the former mayor of the Gold Coast, Sir Bruce Small was regarded as unbeatable. Yet, Bruce Bishop managed to secure a spectacular victory, commencing what would become a colourful parliamentary career.

In parliament, Bruce Bishop vigorously harassed the Bjelke-Petersen government. He was one of the rebel 'ginger' Liberals who rolled Sir Joh. In fact, Bruce and his Liberal colleague in the neighbouring Southport seat, Peter White, were seen as the black bishop and the white knight. I think it would be fair to say that their election and their many robust contributions to debate were not always welcomed by Sir Joh. Bruce was never afraid to speak out about what he believed in, even if it meant ruffling a few feathers.

In a tribute to Bruce, close friends and former political foes described him as the bulldog type: once he had his teeth into an issue, he rarely let go. That tenacity earned him a lot of respect from all sides of politics. Unfortunately, his parliamentary career came to an end when he lost his seat to a young Rob Borbidge in 1980. He remains as one of the most underrated and underrecognised achievers in the history

of the Gold Coast. He was one of the founding fathers of the Gold Coast, which enjoys a strong tourism economy thanks to his vision.

After stepping out of the public limelight, Bruce enjoyed a quiet retirement on Mount Tamborine with his partner, Narelle Robberson. He re-emerged briefly in 2004 during the debate over council's plan to sell off the transit centre and the adjoining Bruce Bishop Car Park, named after him for his contribution to the coast. In his old age, Bruce maintained that development should not come at the cost of sustainability. Until his dying day, Bruce wanted the Gold Coast to become a world city.

Bruce died last month after a short illness. Today our thoughts and sorrow go out to his partner, Narelle, and sons, Danny and Simon, and their families. I am honoured to pay tribute to Bruce Bishop. There have been only five members for Surfers Paradise since 1972. Bruce and I are the only two Liberals to have held Surfers Paradise. As I said in my maiden speech in 2004, I certainly hope my achievements will be looked on as favourably as Mr Bishop's. Bruce Bishop came into parliament to do a job, not to get a job. Vale, Bruce Bishop.