



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Thursday, 18 June 2009

BRISCHKE, MR T

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.30 pm): Members of the Australian Workers Union were shocked and deeply saddened by the sudden passing of recently retired far northern district secretary, Ted Brischke. Ted and his wife, Cecilee, were involved in a car accident and tragically killed as they travelled to a birthday party for their granddaughters on Sunday, 7 June 2009.

Ted was the face of the Australian Workers Union in Cairns. He spent more than 40 years as a member of the AWU, fighting for members as a delegate, organiser and district secretary. As Ted himself once said, 'It is hard to remember unionism not being a part of my working life.'

Ted first joined the AWU when working as a bridge carpenter at the Cairns Port Authority. A short time later he was elected as the AWU representative and Ted expanded his involvement in the union as he was interested in how delegates could enforce the entitlements previously won by members. Ted became an AWU organiser in 1975, a position he did not accept right away but decided to have a go at after discussions with his family. After 10 years as an organiser he was appointed far northern district secretary in 1985, where he worked until his retirement at the end of last year.

During his service as an official, Ted represented members in many disputes and campaigns, including the World Heritage campaign, the South Johnstone sugar mill lockout in 1998 and, most recently, the Your Rights at Work campaign fighting the Howard government's draconian workplace relations system.

Ted loved the work of a union official and the contact with members, and the members could not have asked for a more loyal, dedicated and hardworking official to represent them in their fight to get what they were entitled to. In all of his endeavours Ted was characterised by his doggedness in protecting and improving the conditions of workers. He was determined to leave no stone unturned in ensuring that AWU members received the representation that they deserved, as many of his former officials and staff will attest to. Tough in negotiations and at work, but generous and courteous once the job was done, Ted has contributed greatly to the rich history of the AWU. He was rightly proud to be among the list of the longest serving AWU employees and the longest serving far northern district secretary.

My sister Dionne Berry worked as an organiser under Ted in Cairns and, like everyone else at the AWU, was rightly proud to have worked alongside him. It is with regret that I am not able to attend the service for Ted and Cecilee to be held tomorrow. On behalf of the Pitt family, the member for Cairns, Desley Boyle, and my other parliamentary colleagues, our thoughts and best wishes are with Wayne, Allan and Shannon and their families at this time. Ted and Cecilee Brischke will be greatly missed by all who had the good fortune to know them.