



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Thursday, 20 August 2009

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (4.38 pm): In rising to speak to the address-in-reply, it is important to remember what is at the heart of our lives—those things which are truly important. It is always people. Life is precious and no individual is without value. In this parliament we do not always agree about which philosophy or program best serves our state, but I do believe that the majority of members come into this place with the aim of public service in their hearts. We should never let the busyness of life and competing ideas and views overshadow our common humanity and pursuit of service to others.

When people ask me what I enjoy about my role as an MP, I always reply that it is the grassroots politics of connecting and helping people. It may sound corny, but I still passionately believe that you do not deserve to serve at a higher level unless you are willing to serve a local constituency in this front-line advocacy role. These issues will not necessarily be found on the front page of newspapers or make the top 10 hot political topics, but they are the issues that matter to people.

I have been truly privileged to serve in this role for the seat of Maroochydore and in my shadow ministry roles across Queensland, but my encouragement and continued inspiration comes from the lives of others who demonstrate what servant leadership is really about. I want to talk about two such people. On Tuesday this week when I spoke about the road toll and the fact that on average more than one person a day is dying on Queensland roads, I had no idea that 24 hours later two dear friends would fall victim to this toll. However, in paying tribute to them today, I know that they will never be just a statistic as their extraordinary lives will have impact well past their brief time on earth.

Today, hearts on the Sunshine Coast are torn by the tragic loss of Kari and Allan Taylor when they died yesterday in a roadside accident on the Sunshine Motorway. I want to acknowledge and thank education minister Geoff Wilson for his tribute this morning in his ministerial statement and for his words of comfort, along with those of other members of this House.

Some people live long and do not achieve half as much as what this wonderful couple did. Kari and Allan Taylor were the best example I know of servant leadership. They loved God and they loved people, and they were just a lot of fun to be around. Allan could have been a stand-up comedian. But behind that jovial, fun-loving exterior was a gifted communicator—someone with an incredible insight into how to connect with children. As the Sunshine Coast's first primary school chaplain, he has touched hundreds of young lives. A qualified teacher, he was also a former principal at Suncoast Christian College in its infancy. He was well known throughout the coast but at Woombye and Palmwoods primary schools, where he was their 'chappy', he was belovedly called 'Mr T' and had a special place in their hearts. He also undertook RE in other schools. Children would line up to talk with him as he always had a great way of letting them know just how special they were—their individual worth and beauty.

His beautiful wife, Kari, was no less a powerhouse of passion and purpose. Together they were just extraordinary. A gifted dancer and conservatorium trained singer, Kari's talents shone brightly. However, like Allan, she poured her life into others—training young people, helping them reach their best. As a founder of Machaneh Dance School, she not only helped young dancers develop their dancing skills but she lived life with them, imparting so much more than just the skills of how to be a better dancer.

Machaneh also took young people overseas including to Third World countries, showcasing the skills of these young dancers and helping them connect with other people.

Together Allan and Kari Taylor were truly one of the most extraordinary couples that you would meet. It has been said that the truly significant things to invest our lives in are those that last beyond a generation. This is a couple who truly invested their lives into those of others and their impact will go well beyond a generation.

The pain we feel is not for Allan and Kari, who are in a better place with a God they served and served so faithfully. Our pain is for those who are left behind and the hole in the lives of others. We feel for Ashleah and Kallan, their children, and the greater family—for Bob and Fran and all Kari's siblings.

There is a powerful legacy as well as a beacon to what is important in the lives of Allan and Kari Taylor. They embodied faith, hope and love but they knew that the greatest of these is love. We will greatly miss them but we will never forget them. To the school communities and the thousands who knew them, we speak words of comfort but we also speak the words of hope that they would have spoken in circumstances such as this. Vale Kari and Allan Taylor.