



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

Hansard Tuesday, 19 May 2009

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### **MOTION OF CONDOLENCE: CONNOLLY, HON. PD, QC**

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.37 am): It is my pleasure to rise to speak in support of the condolence motion moved by the honourable the Premier for Peter David Connolly, the Liberal member for Kurilpa from 1957 to 1960. Peter David Connolly was an outstanding Queensland who dedicated his life to service. A soldier, a politician and a judge, Peter Connolly was one of the respected few who have served in each of the estates of government. Born in Sydney in 1920 the son of Roy Connolly and Eileen Searle, Peter Connolly grew up in Brisbane, attending St Joseph's College at Gregory Terrace. He continued his education at the University of Queensland, where he excelled in law.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1940, Peter Connolly put his studies on hold to join Australia's military effort. He served in the 2nd AIF with the 12th Infantry Battalion between 1940 and 1946, rising to the rank of lieutenant. At the end of the war, Peter Connolly returned to Queensland to finish his law degree. He had a brilliant legal mind, demonstrated by his receipt of the University Medal.

During his early working life Peter Connolly was aide-de-camp to the Governor-General. It was an office he would later come to defend as a monarchist at the 1999 referendum. After lecturing in constitutional law at the University of Queensland, Peter Connolly was admitted as a barrister in 1949. During his time at the bar he gained a reputation as one of the greatest lawyers of his generation. His towering intellect, as Chief Justice de Jersey puts it, and diligence were both revered and feared by his colleagues. Her Honour Justice Kiefel of the High Court can attest to this. One of Her Honour's earliest briefs was to Mr Peter Connolly QC, who had been known to throw out briefs if they were not done to a very high standard. The brief survived and Her Honour went on to appear as Connolly's junior counsel.

Peter Connolly's eminent legal career was interrupted when he was elected as the member for Kurilpa in 1957. He sat in this House for only three years but in that time he made a valuable contribution to parliamentary debate. Last night I noted from reading his maiden speech that he spoke for 55 minutes and took numerous interjections. We now have time limits. He spoke for 55 minutes, which was quite comprehensive.

He approached his parliamentary duties with passion and enthusiasm. He believed in academic and judicial freedom. He stood for faithful obedience to the constitution and to the people of Queensland. In spite of his position he didn't care too much for petty politics. During his maiden speech he launched an attack on a Labor member who had previously said, 'We do not need arguments, we have the numbers.' He saw this as an affront to parliamentary process and Westminster tradition.

Peter Connolly took his parliamentary duties very seriously. He was highly critical of the draftsmanship of Queensland statutes, particularly those that deferred powers to the executive government to make regulations. The people vested power in parliament to make laws, not public servants. His attitude remains a good lesson in accountability.

Peter Connolly's commitment to the integrity of the legal system made him an exceptional legislator. He was a black-letter lawyer who believed in fairness and justice. It was these qualities that also made him an exceptional judge following his appointment as Justice of the Supreme Court in 1977. During this time,

as the Premier has mentioned, he also served as Justice of Appeal to the Solomon Islands and Kiribati. He was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire for his services to the legal profession. After his retirement Justice Connolly was commissioned to conduct a judicial inquiry into the Criminal Justice Commission, but was stood down from the investigation before it was completed.

Justice Connolly was a keen supporter of the arts. I note that he was a director of the Queensland Opera Company and the president of the Musica Viva Society. In his spare time he dedicated more than two decades to overseeing the administration of the Queensland Art Gallery as a trustee. I refer to Senator George Brandis's contribution to the obituary in the *Courier-Mail* where he relates a story that I have heard before about Justice Connolly—

He would sometimes indulge his waspish sense of humour on the bench: on one fabled occasion while presiding in chambers, he noted that the solicitor appearing before him on a routine application was from the Gold Coast. 'Oh well, we won't be needing these, then, will we?' he chortled, as he tossed his copy of the Supreme Court Rules theatrically over his shoulder.

Sadly, Justice Connolly passed away peacefully on 2 May. He is survived by his children, two sons and two daughters, who today can be proud of their father's significant contribution to our great state.