



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Thursday, 20 May 2010

DAVID, MR JD

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.59 pm): I rise in the House to speak about a very special constituent of the Greenslopes electorate, Mr John 'Daniel' David, known by the Greenslopes community as Danny David, who sadly passed away recently. Danny was a unique man who made it his life's purpose to help others, particularly those less fortunate than himself.

Throughout his life, Danny was the founding member of many community organisations in Brisbane and was heavily involved in many voluntary activities. He was a man of great foresight and was a pioneer in bringing Asia and Australia together in this state. Danny first arrived in Australia from Sri Lanka in 1956 to study social studies at the University of Queensland, supported by a grant from the Asia Foundation. He graduated in 1961 and thereafter returned to Sri Lanka, before returning to Australia in 1975 to work as a social worker.

In a radio broadcast in 1959, our state's centenary year, Danny appealed to Asian countries to send their children to Australia to undertake higher education because, as Danny saw it, every opportunity was provided for students in this country as Australia was democratic, tolerant, hospitable and realistic. In a broadcast on Radio Australia in 1960, Danny said that 'the destiny of Australia is intimately linked with that of Asian countries'.

Other highlights of Danny's activities throughout his career included launching the International House Project, as well as holding office as president of the Overseas Student Association. Danny was the president of the Brisbane Council for International Students. He also produced the first magazine for the overseas students of Queensland and was chosen as the spokesman for Ceylonese students in Australia.

Sir Raphael Cilento, President of the Australian Asian Society and former Director of United Nations Social Affairs, referred to Danny as 'an apostle of international goodwill'. Danny was also the founding member of the 139 Club, which was a centre for homeless people. He was the secretary for two years and helped in its numerous activities. When Danny worked as a social worker at the Alcohol and Drug Dependent Service, he felt the need for an accommodation quarters to be set up for people whose lives had been blighted by substance abuse, so he bought a property which could house 19 people where assistance was provided to them, and no bond required.

During his lifetime, Danny David was guest of honour at numerous functions attended by civic leaders, members of parliament, businessmen, churchmen and hundreds of Australian friends from all walks of life. Despite numerous articles written about Danny over the years praising his amazing selfless generosity for those in need, irrespective of race, creed or social standing, Danny shied away from publicity. As a result of all of Danny's voluntary activities, he was awarded the Premier's Multicultural Service Award in 1997 and the Centenary of Federation Medal for 40 years of distinguished voluntary service.

While I cannot sum up Danny's life in three minutes, I can say he certainly epitomised what it means to be a volunteer, as he devoted countless hours of his own time to improve opportunities not only for Queenslanders but people from other nations as well. Danny's story is truly inspiring. While the Sri Lankan lion is a symbol of that nation, Danny David was, in Queensland, a lion of volunteerism, compassion, tolerance, service to others and understanding across all manner of boundaries and borders. Danny's passion for justice and a fair go for all remain an example to all of us.

My sincere condolences go out to Danny's wife, Bridget, and his children, Alex, Anne and Emmanuel. While words cannot ease the pain of Danny's passing, I hope that they are able to take comfort in knowing that Danny touched and changed the life of many, many people during his lifetime.