




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

Hansard Tuesday, 11 October 2011

SMITH, MR C

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (11.15 pm): Charlie Smith was born on the evening of the 29 February 1924, but his birth was registered on 1 March because his mum wanted him named after St David on St David's Day. By the time his grandmother had visited all the pubs to celebrate his birth on the way to the registry office she had forgotten what his name was meant to be. She decided to name him after his dad, Charlie Smith.

So started the life of an incredible human being. Charlie's early life was full of adventure as he travelled the world before settling in New Zealand. His eldest son, Charlie, spoke at his funeral on behalf of his siblings, Warren and Valerie, and their respective families in New Zealand. His wife, Christine, paid tribute to a man who was quite literally a legend. Charlie and Christine's son Matthew, husband to Jodie and father to grandchildren Charlie boy and Claire, spoke of wearing his dad's shoes but never being able to fill them.

We heard from Councillor Donna Gates, who spoke of Charlie's determination in establishing the Wasp Creek Rural Fire Brigade at his then age of 70 in 1994. She spoke of the larrikin he was, and joked about being high on the list of Charlie's 800 or so girlfriends. Charlie and Christine's home became Wasp Creek Station in November 1994. Charlie dedicated 100 per cent of his effort to the brigade from that moment on.

We heard from some of the volunteers from Wasp Creek. The most telling aspect of their stories was that Charlie was someone who expected 100 per cent effort from everyone but that he was also a father figure, an inspiration and someone they all looked up to. I knew Charlie for less than three years, but on reflection I feel honoured to have known him and to have been regarded as a friend. Earlier this year I had the honour of presenting Charlie with a dedicated commitment award, which came as a result of the men and women of the brigade voting unanimously that Charlie should be the recipient.

I was one of hundreds who came to pay our respects out in the front paddock at Charlie's place just two Saturdays ago. On arrival I was amazed at the number of fire appliances and crews that were lined up to honour him. After all the eulogies, a huge bonfire was lit—with appropriate approvals from the fire warden, of course—and then Charlie departed. It was without doubt the noisiest funeral I have ever attended. Thirty or more fire appliances turned their sirens on in a final farewell to Wasp Creek Rural Fire Brigade's first officer—a very moving tribute.

In true Charlie style, though, there is a postscript. Charlie managed to extend his days to make up for the one he lost at the start of his life. You see, Charlie passed away on 26 September but the date is registered as 27 September because the doctor arrived after midnight. So officially Charlie got his extra day anyway. To paraphrase Ralph Waldo Emerson, he certainly lived a most successful life and, yes, he definitely succeeded. Charlie Smith, a legend, may he rest in peace.