




Speech by

Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Tuesday, 11 September 2012

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE—STEPHAN, MR LW

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.45 am): I rise today to offer the condolences of the Queensland opposition to the family of Len Stephan, former member for Gympie. Len was born in Brisbane in 1935 and spent much of his life working as a farmer before entering parliament at a by-election in 1979. As a farmer, Len logically took a great interest in primary industries during his 22 years in this place. Many of his speeches drilled down to technical issues facing farmers, which only someone with firsthand experience and a deep interest in the industry would have the expertise to contribute. It is in some ways fitting that this condolence motion occurs on the same day as the 2012 budget will be released, as Len's maiden speech to this place occurred during debate on the 1979 budget. There is a touching symmetry that this chamber both welcomed and farewelled Len during budget sittings. In his maiden speech Len focused on the importance of education, saying—

When I think of faith in the future, I realise that we have no better asset than that possessed by our children—youth itself. There is no better way of showing confidence in our youth than by training them and educating them to take their places in the workforce and in the society in which they will soon find themselves.

Len was first elected in a 1979 by-election and was then re-elected at seven subsequent elections. That should be proof enough that he was doing something right and working very hard for his constituents. Len's last re-election to this place was pretty close run. The 1998 Queensland election took place at the height of One Nation's popularity, but Len managed to hang on with Labor preferences. I am told by former members of his time here that Len was hard working, a true gentleman and cared passionately about his electorate. I understand that he was particularly passionate about the dairy industry and was a very vocal advocate for agriculture. Len is survived by his much loved wife, Ruth, his three daughters, Helen, Gayle and Lynette, and four grandchildren. I am pleased to place on record the opposition's appreciation for Len's service to not only the Gympie electorate but also the people of Queensland. I extend my deepest sympathies to his family and to his friends.