




Speech by  
**Curtis Pitt**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

Hansard Friday, 14 September 2012

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**DAVIS, DR RJ**

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (8.42 pm): I wish to place on the record a short tribute to Dr Raymond J Davis, who passed away on 27 August 2012. One of three children, Ray was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1926 to William and Germaine and grew up with his older sisters, Grace and Joan, in the United Kingdom. He excelled at school, winning an open scholarship to study medicine at King's College, London, one of 10 scholarships awarded annually in a county with a population about the same as that of Queensland. It was there he met nursing sister Mary 'Gill' Chaldecott in 1947. The gun medical student and the best casualty sister in London were married in 1949.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Please suspend the clock. I am sorry, Manager of Opposition Business, but there is too much noise. Members, please cease your conversations in here and leave the chamber quietly. Show respect to the person who has the call.

**Mr PITT:** Their union lasted 59 years and produced five children: Jonathan, Yvonne, Harry, Paul and Tina. The mid-fifties was a difficult time for Doc. He contracted tuberculosis and required extensive surgery and rehabilitation. The warmer climate of Australia beckoned and Doc and Gill decided to migrate to Australia in 1957. He flew ahead while Gill and the children came out by boat on the Australian government 10-pound scheme. The six-week voyage was particularly memorable as the three children contracted measles.

From Sydney, the family drove to Gordonvale in an old Austin van, Doc having accepted the position of Medical Superintendent at the Gordonvale Hospital. Later that year, Doc Davis opened a private practice from the front of the house in Templeton Street, with Gill as resident nurse, receptionist and chief organiser. Doc was an old-fashioned doctor who operated an old-school practice, being on call 24/7, rarely taking holidays and making frequent house calls. He never forgot his upbringing where money was scarce and frequently waived fees and provided medicine when patients could not afford to pay.

Doc was heavily involved in matters in Gordonvale. Education was a particular passion. He sponsored many students and was proud to have been involved in lobbying for Gordonvale State High School, which was established in 1965. Indigenous health was very dear to his heart and Doc took on the additional responsibilities of Commonwealth Medical Officer at Yarrabah from 1973 to 1991. He never missed an opportunity to lobby for improved medical services for the Yarrabah township.

In 1974 Doc and Gill moved house and surgery to 74 Norman Street and it was there that he operated his practice and worked until he retired. Doc followed his children's careers with fascination. Advice was always thoughtfully and regularly provided, whether to his sons in business or his daughters in dealing with the education system. As his children married and had children, Doc's focus changed again, of course.

Doc and Gill were inseparable and totally devoted to each other. As Gill's health tragically deteriorated, Doc stepped up to care for her and treasured the support he received that enabled Gill to stay at home rather than be hospitalised until her passing in 2008. Life was further complicated by Doc's car accident in 2007, which resulted in him losing the use of his legs and spending extended periods of time in Cairns and Townsville hospitals.

When I was growing up a couple of doors down from Doc Davis's surgery, my parents started a sporting goods store and I would spend most days after school working there. My main interactions with Doc were through tennis, where I saw firsthand his unique style. He was my doctor, too, and it was always a comfort to know he was only a stone's throw away if you needed him. He was an independent thinker, a good family man and a man of respect. His legacy is the many people he helped. He will be sorely missed. Doc Davis was an iconic Gordonvale figure and stories about him will continue to be told for many years to come.