




Speech by

David Kempton

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard Thursday, 1 November 2012

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE: DEERAL, MR E

 **Mr KEMPTON** (Cook—LNP) (9.52 am): I acknowledge and welcome the family and friends of Mr Eric Deeral who have travelled from Hope Vale in honour of their father, brother, relative and friend. I first met Eric Deeral in the late 1980s at his home town in Hope Vale in Cape York. Mr Deeral had constructed a traditional dwelling on the banks of the Endeavour River as part of an initiative to bring mainstream tourism into connection with traditional practices. Tourism was a lifelong ambition of Mr Deeral's and, as in most things, he was way ahead of the game on this occasion. His belief that there was an economy in traditional based ecotourism has only come to the fore in Cape York in recent years.

My first meeting with Mr Deeral was over 10 years after he had served a term not only as the first conservative member for Cook in a lifetime but as the first Indigenous member of this House. Mr Deeral's dedication to his family and his community and the plight of Indigenous peoples had not waned in the years since he had served in this House but rather had developed into a passion. Mr Eric Deeral believed absolutely that self-determination for Indigenous people was inextricable from land rights, and he devoted the remainder of his life to this pursuit. This was as well as the many other duties, offices and undertakings that will be mentioned here in the House today and have been already.

I was privileged to work with Mr Deeral and others in the years leading up to his passing on the resolution of varying and competing rights and interests of the Guugu Yimithirr people. This was a very complicated and often anxious process that brought high emotion and a plethora of agendas and often brought people into conflict. Mr Deeral acquitted himself throughout all these years with great insight, calm and intelligence which set him apart as a true leader. I never saw Mr Deeral raise his voice or treat anybody in this whole process with anything other than respect and dignity. He subscribed to the theory that once you resort to offensive language or behaviour you forfeit your right to an opinion in the debate. It was a pleasure and honour to be able to work closely with this great man, and I am humbled to be able to call him my friend.

Mr Deeral has left a legacy of self-determination, courage and community spirit to his family, his friends, the people of Hope Vale and the Indigenous community in particular in Cape York. To me as the member following him, I have the legacy of hard work, integrity and open communication, and this is a task I will pursue with vigour. I offer my condolences to Mr Deeral's family who are here today. He will be sadly missed in the Hope Vale community in Cape York.