




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszcuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 7 May 2014

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Ardill, Mr LA

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.11 pm): I rise to honour the memory of Len Ardill, a former member of this House and a former deputy mayor of Brisbane. From the outset, I acknowledge his wife, Noelene, who is with us in the gallery today, and his friends and family.

Len was born in 1931 into a Brisbane which was very different from the one we know today. He was raised on the family farm at Ekibin, or Tarragindi as it is now known. Just seven kilometres from the general post office, in 1931 Ekibin was on the outskirts of Brisbane city. Today it is a fairly comfortable middle-ring suburb in a city which spreads significantly beyond it.

Len grew up helping his father with the morning milk run. This was in the days when milkmen did not bring separate bottles of milk to each house; they had a large jerry can which filled up people's milk bottles at each stop. Back then people did not lock their houses at night, so Len and his brothers used to haul the jerry can up the back steps in the predawn light to let themselves in and fill up the family's milk bottles. In those days it was not strange to wake up to hearing someone in your kitchen and know they were just filling up the milk.

Delivering milk was tough work for young boys even when their father was driving the cart. One day, however, Len's dad was injured so Len and his brother Wilf had to do the milk run in their father's place. At some stage during the milk run, the horse pulling the cart was startled and bolted down the main street. With milk spilling all over the road, the boys tried desperately to pull the horse up and eventually they ended up crashing milk and horse into a nearby creek. After extracting themselves from the creek and cleaning up the mess, the two boys decided it was too late to go to school and gave themselves the day off. Not surprisingly, they liked it so much that they continued to give themselves days off from school until they were caught. They were just boys being boys, and their childhood reflected different times from what kids experience now.

When Len was growing up on the family farm, helping out with predawn deliveries of milk to the neighbours, no-one would have predicted the role he would have in shaping the city of Brisbane. Len was educated at Junction Park State School, and unusually for the time went on to study at Brisbane State High School. In 1946 he topped the railway exam and started a decade working for Queensland Rail, which would take him around the state—from South Brisbane, to Walloon to Alpha and to Bundaberg.

While Len did not join the Labor Party until 1958, after he had left the railways, his Labor values shone through in that period. While working in Alpha, Len had something of a disagreement with the railway authorities, giving up the house he was entitled to in favour of a fireman with children who only had access to a tent. Len was told by his superiors that he had to live in the house, but he stuck to his principles to ensure a family had a roof over their heads.

By 1948 the Ardill family had moved to Currumbin after the Ekibin farm had been resumed as part of Brisbane's ongoing expansion. In late 1956 Len quit the railways and moved to Currumbin to be closer to his family, where he was surprised to discover that his younger brother Wilfred had the exact same idea at the same time. Len spent a couple of years in Currumbin and met his first wife, Dianne, who had grown up there. Len and Dianne married in 1959 and had three sons in the next five years who would be brought home to a block of land at Sunnybank which Len cleared and levelled himself.

Len was again living on the outskirts of Brisbane city with no water, sewerage or sealed roads. This time it was a further eight kilometres from the Ekibin farm Len had grown up on. Len and Dianne separated in 1971 before Len was elected to council as alderman for the Sunnybank ward in 1973. Len spent 12 years on council and during that period served as chairman of the Planning and Traffic Committee, chairman of transport and as deputy mayor. One of the key projects Len worked on during his time on council was the new town plan which preserved green space for the enjoyment of the local community. It required developers to contribute to the construction of footpaths and playgrounds and helped to shape modern Brisbane. Len knew what it was like to grow up on the outskirts of a city. He knew what it was like to raise children in a new suburb with access to fewer services than people living in established suburbs. He brought that life experience to his role as a councillor and later as a member of parliament, and it helped inform some of his greatest actions.

In many ways the story of Len's life reflects the story of Brisbane's growth over the last 80 years. Len built his life on the ever-expanding outskirts of our city, and when he was given the opportunity to shape our city's growth he did it not only as a councillor but as a man with real-life experience. Len's work in Brisbane City Council has had a major impact on the growth of our city and improved the lives of countless families who have access to parks, green space and public transport services that he pushed for.

Len Ardill was elected to this place as the member for Salisbury in 1986 and he was re-elected in 1989. In 1992, he ran for the seat of Archerfield after Salisbury was abolished. Len served as the member for Archerfield until his retirement at the 1998 election. He was a well-recognised figure around the halls of parliament due to his distinctive sideburns. Over his time as a member of parliament, Len worked hard to represent his constituents. By virtue of his upbringing and his character, Len was able to connect with people from all different backgrounds and properly represent their views in parliament.

One key area Len focused on was road safety—an issue which was close to his heart after the tragic death of his son Bill and nephew Robert in a 1982 car accident. The impact of this tragedy was felt—and I think is still being felt—by the families for many years. In his maiden speech Len clearly articulated that the three focuses of road safety must be education, enforcement and engineering. He worked on engineering solutions during his time in council, and he continued to work on enforcement and education issues in his 12 years as a member of parliament. He made the following call for action in his maiden speech—

I would also make a plea to reduce the speed limit in residential streets from 60 to 50 kilometres an hour. This would considerably reduce the accidents involving elderly people and children.

It took a few years, but the Beattie government legislated this change for South-East Queensland in the late 1990s and extended it across the entire state in 2003. Independent evaluations of the reduction in speed limits have shown that they resulted in significant reductions for fatal, injury and property damage crashes.

Brisbane historian David Gibson AO accurately described Len as a quiet hero. He lived according to his own principles and used his experience living in Brisbane, working as a railway man and as a loving father, to improve the lives of other Queenslanders. Len leaves behind his wife, Noelene, who I mentioned is here today. Thank you, Noelene, for coming into parliament. I know it is very difficult, but we all welcome you warmly and we pay tribute to a lovely man who will be remembered by many people in this House and will be remembered for many generations to come as a man who had a huge impact not just on his local community but also on the state of Queensland.