




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszcuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 6 August 2014

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE: THACKERAY, MR MH

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.08 pm): I rise to speak in relation to the passing of Merv Thackeray, a member of this place from 1957 through to 1972. As the Premier stated, Mervyn was born in Mackay in 1925 and he was educated at Mackay primary school. Before entering parliament he worked for Queensland Rail in a number of jobs, including as an engine cleaner, fireman and engine driver. His work took him around Central Queensland and he had stints in Rockhampton, Gladstone, Emerald and Alpha. The love and respect Merv—or 'Big Thack' as he was known—had for the railways and its workers is evident in many of his parliamentary speeches.

Merv was elected to the seat of Keppel in 1957 at the relatively young age of 31. He went on to serve as the member for Rockhampton North when the seat of Keppel was abolished in 1960. The electorates of Keppel and Rockhampton North were substantially similar. So while Merv served as the member for two electorates, he represented the same community for the 15 years that he was a parliamentarian. He was extremely affectionate towards the north of Rockhampton and Yeppoon. As he boasted in his inaugural speech—

The Yeppoon district embraces some of the most glorious beaches in Australia.

Merv clearly knew the benefits tourism could bring his local area and he worked to promote the industry during his career. Merv was an effective representative for the people of his electorate in an era when parliamentarians had far fewer resources available to them. In those days MPs did not have electorate offices; they generally worked from home. Merv was looking for ways to connect with his constituents, so rather than coming to him he went to them. He was well known for being in certain locations in the community at certain times each day so that people could catch up with him. These days we tend to call these arrangements mobile offices and they usually take place in parks and shopping centres. Merv, however, went one better. His mobile offices were in places such as the Scariff Hotel, the Anchor Hotel and the Post Office Hotel in Rockhampton. He was an MP who had an affinity with the community and his unusual office arrangements no doubt contributed.

Merv was a passionate supporter of public education and he made it his mission to fight for the state schools in his electorate. From his first speech to his last in this place, he fought for better services and facilities for schoolchildren. He could see that the schools in his electorate had become overcrowded and that class sizes were too large for teachers to provide sufficient individual attention to each student. We thank Merv Thackeray for his service to the Queensland parliament and on behalf of the opposition we extend our sympathies to his family.