




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 10 November 2015

ADJOURNMENT

Sutherland, Mr G

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (7.05 pm): I rise to pay tribute to Greg Sutherland, a valued and respected member of the Mackay community sadly taken from us on Sunday, 1 November. Greg was honest, focused, compassionate, respected and very persuasive. He has been remembered by many as 'Mr Rugby League', but this was only a snippet of our community leader's talents. Greg was a husband, father, Rotarian, volunteer, businessman, educator, visionary and a friend to many. He was awarded the Mackay Regional Council Citizen of the Year in 2012. He was also awarded Rotary's top honour, the Paul Harris Fellow, for his charitable works.

As a member of our strong South Sea islander community, he worked tirelessly for the betterment of the South Sea islander people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and also non-Indigenous people. He believed that all people were deserving and he would never tolerate racism of any kind.

At Skills Training Mackay, Greg supported many students through training courses and into the workforce. Many young Indigenous youth got a start in life with work ready skills that they would never have gained without Greg and his team. When funding was cut by the former state government for training programs, Greg was determined to look after his staff. When things got tough, he did not put his staff off. Instead, he sold office furniture and cars and used personal money to ensure that his team was looked after.

In 2010 Greg was hospitalised for weeks in intensive care in Townsville. A lot of people would have taken the opportunity after recovery to put their feet up and slow down a bit, but not Greg. He took another stint at being the Mackay Rotary Club's president. He organised shipping containers of disused school desks, clothing and toiletries for the disadvantaged in Vanuatu. He put his shoulder to the wheel and raised money for the victims of Cyclone Pam. He supported local scouting groups. He continued to fundraise and do many charitable works.

He got the title 'Mr Rugby League' when he was chair of Mackay Rugby League for 13 years. He also wrote a Rugby League column. Greg had a vision for Mackay—to have a football stadium. Greg persisted until we got it.

The world is a much better place because of Greg Sutherland. He did many kind acts for Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of our community. Many of them we do not know about because he did not look for recognition and he did them because it was the right thing to do. Thank you, Blanche, Kirsty and Tyson, for sharing Greg with us.