




Speech By
Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Record of Proceedings, 15 July 2015

ADJOURNMENT

O'Leary, Mr K

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (11.02 pm): I rise to advise the House of the sad passing of a friend and Labor treasure, Kevin Joseph O'Leary. Kevin was the longest continuing serving member of the Australian Labor Party, with 85 years of outstanding dedication to the party. Born in Warwick during World War I, his life spanned the Labor prime ministerships of Hughes, Scullin, Curtin, Chifley, Whitlam, Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard. Kevin joined the ALP on Labour Day, 3 May 1930 when he was 15, in the midst of the Depression. It left an indelible impression and he spent the subsequent 85 years standing up for what he believed in: fairness, equality and opportunity for everyone in our community.

In 1929 he began life as a boarder at Nudgee College in my electorate, and later moved to Zillmere permanently in 1951 where he remained until his death a week ago, on the 8 July 2015. He worked as a clerk in the Department of Transport until the outbreak of war in 1939 when he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force. It was in the RAAF that Kevin met his future wife, Iris 'Fairy' Collins. Following his discharge from the RAAF after the war ended, Kevin returned to his former position at Main Roads where he worked until retirement in 1978.

Kev turned 100 earlier this year and was as cheeky and irreverent as ever. He had Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk at his birthday, former prime minister Julia Gillard at his bedside when sick some years ago and the Deputy Premier to honour his life at his funeral. At all of these was friend Wayne Swan. I also acknowledge my colleague, the member for Sandgate, who was there also. But while Kev amassed many accolades and friends in high office, it is his family that is his truest and most meaningful legacy. His children, Pat and Barry, grandchildren, Craig, Murray, Adam and Natasha, and great-grandchildren are a credit to him and wife, Iris, who passed some years ago. They were dedicated to him and made many sacrifices in recent years to fulfil his desire of remaining at home—the mark of deep love and affection.

Kev engendered loyalty in those around him. It was his character, dedication and loyalty that inspired the same in others. He held fundraisers in his shed, had signs in his yard and put up signs in others' yards. He letterboxed, handed out material at railway stations and on polling day. He was booth captain and scrutineer with good mate Les Thorpe at Zillmere State School for more local, state and federal elections than I can imagine. And he loved it all and we loved him.

It is an honour to have the opportunity to honour Kev's memory and I do so also on behalf of former members for Nudgee Jack Melloy, Ken Vaughan and Neil Roberts. He was a loyal foot soldier to each. Kev always had an encouraging word and story to share. He wanted to see more women in parliament and I will always be grateful for his encouragement to run over the past decade. Kev, thank you. You made a tremendous contribution and will be deeply missed. You have fought the good fight and you have finished the course. You have kept the faith. Rest easy, friend.