




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 17 August 2016

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Hewitt, Mr NTE

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.07 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this state by the late Neville Hewitt, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland and Minister of the Crown.
2. That Mr Speaker be requested to convey to the family of the deceased gentleman the above resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Parliament of Queensland, in the loss they have sustained.

I pay tribute to Neville Hewitt, a former member of parliament for the Country Party and the National Party and minister of the Crown. I am honoured to stand in this House today to speak on behalf of the Queensland government. I pass on the condolences of the people of Queensland to the Hewitt family. I am advised that Lisa Hewitt, Neville's great-niece, is in the gallery today. Welcome to this parliament where your great-uncle made such an important contribution over almost a quarter of a century.

Neville Hewitt was held in the highest regard by all sides of politics. I am indebted to two members for Rockhampton, the police and corrective services minister and his predecessor, Robert Schwarten, for my contribution today. Both spoke at Neville's funeral. As the minister said at the service—

Neville Hewitt embodies the saying—a life well-lived. He served his country in wartime, he served his state at the highest level and he served his community and his family all of his lifetime.

On learning of Neville's passing, Robert Schwarten told the *Morning Bulletin* that—

The old political divide they talk about does not divide decent people.

That is a sentiment rarely expressed in this place and, when it is, more often than not it is reserved for motions such as this one. Robert and his father, the late Evan Schwarten, a stalwart of the Labor Party in Central Queensland, were close friends of Neville.

Central Queensland was a very different place when Neville Hewitt was first elected to parliament in May 1956, winning the seat of Mackenzie by just 46 votes after a recount. In his eulogy, Robert Schwarten told how Neville was in Nebo on the night of the 1956 election when he received a telegram from his wife Nancy telling him the results coming in for him were positive. Upon receiving such hopeful news, Neville decided to drive back to Theodore that night. Unfortunately, near Woorabinda his car was bogged. He spent the rest of the night in the car before the manager found him the next morning and towed him out. Politics can be a lonely business, but I am not aware of any other politician who celebrated their first victory night in such a way.

In May 1969, Neville Hewitt was appointed minister for local government and marine activities and went on to become Queensland's longest serving minister for water resources. One of his last tasks in parliament was to introduce legislation to build the Burdekin Dam. In 1971, in his capacity as minister

Neville inaugurated Rockhampton's water scheme, championed by the city council and Mayor Rex Pilbeam. Respected historian Dr Lorna McDonald, who celebrated her 100th birthday in Rockhampton last week, wrote of this milestone that—

At last the city had adequate water to supply all the thirsty adjuncts of modern living, and even in drought time, to allow garden sprinklers six hours daily.

Neville's legacy is commemorated in Rockhampton with the Neville Hewitt Bridge over the Fitzroy River and near Baralaba with the Neville Hewitt Weir on the Dawson River. As a member of parliament, Neville played a part in having hospitals, secondary schools and the necessary infrastructure established to service both towns.

In terms of his military service, Neville was one of only two recipients for bravery medals for his actions in air and on land. The Airforce Medal and the Military Medal were awarded by the King at Buckingham Palace in 1944. Today I place on record our thanks for the years of service Neville gave to the institutions of our democracy and to the Queensland community.

Once again I acknowledge Lisa Hewitt, the great-niece of Neville Hewitt, who is with us in the gallery today. On behalf of the government and all members of this House, I take this opportunity to extend my sympathy to Neville's family. Vale, Neville Hewitt.