




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Hewitt, Mr WD

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (9.52 am): How do you define character? I will give it a go in three words: William Douglas Hewitt. When I was first preselected in 2010, Bill Hewitt was one of the first people I turned to for advice and mentoring. His strength of character and of having, as author Tom Wolfe would say, the right stuff was best exemplified to me back in 2011 when I was first running for Bill's old seat of Chatsworth. I can distinctly recall a hot summer's day when my campaign team was out and about letterbox dropping and I asked who had taken the whole area of Carina Heights to drop, with all the undulating hills in that area. I was informed by my campaign team that 80-year-old Bill Hewitt had taken several bags and did not stop for two solid days delivering pamphlets.

William Douglas Hewitt passed away peacefully on 23 November, aged 86. As has been previously stated, he was the state Liberal member for Chatsworth from 1966 to 1977 and also the state Liberal member for Greenslopes from 1977 to 1983. From 1975 to 1980 Bill served as the Chairman of Committees and from 1980 to 1983 Bill served with distinction as minister for the environment, valuation and administrative services. It was in this role that he focused on water purity and improvements to the funding of fire services. He also served as the minister for welfare services in 1983.

Bill was born in 1930 in a tent on a railway siding in Mooloolah. He was the youngest of six children and his father, William, worked as a fletcher and their life was itinerant. His father, as has been previously outlined, was a survivor of World War I and suffered many of the psychological issues which befell many veterans of that terrible conflict. During this era Australia was emerging from the Depression, so it is no wonder that he related that two of the highlights of his childhood were about food or the lack of it. His family advised me that early report cards showed Bill had an inquisitive mind and had a strong aptitude for English and maths.

At 15 his scholarship was complete and he joined the workforce. In 1946 he began in what many people would say would be a dream job, as an office boy at Castlemaine Perkins XXXX Brewery, and was extremely pleased when it offered to pay—at this point in time it was extremely rare—for his night school fees to complete an accountancy qualification. It was during this period that his interest in politics began. Lifelong friend Ian Bunsley invited him to be at the fourth ever Young Liberals meeting, which was held in the city on a Thursday night. Bill immediately, as has been expressed earlier, caught what we all know is the political bug. He was absolutely captured by it. He was hooked. It was at one such meeting where a young lady, Shirley, caught his eye and a 64-year love affair began. They married in 1956 and, as has also been stated, celebrated their 60th anniversary on 15 September this year.

By this stage Bill had a full-time job, raced bicycles at weekends, his first child was born in 1959 and from 1957 to 1959 he was president of the Young Liberals in Queensland. Bill Hewitt was indeed a busy man during 1960 and 1961. He contested Belmont for the Liberal Party. He loved campaigning and he loved the public debate. Campaigning was indeed different then. In those days it was common

for candidates to put out a sign at 8.30 in the morning on the street corner telegraph pole saying words to the effect 'Bill Hewitt speaks here tonight at 6 pm'. Bill would honour those promises, often in heavy Brisbane storms.

In 1961 he signed up to be Jim Killen's campaign manager. It was Sir Robert Menzies's toughest election, and Jim Killen won by about 120 votes on Communist Party preferences. In the run-up to the 1966 election he gained the support of Sir Thomas Hiley, the Liberal treasurer of the day and member for Chatsworth, who was retiring and who supported Bill to get the endorsement. Bill ran and won the seat, and so began the 17-year political career of Bill Hewitt.

It is interesting to note that Bill got on well with most Labor men. He had a great respect for and great friendship with Labor luminaries like Tom Burns, Terry Mackenroth and Clem Jones, amongst others. Bill and Clem stood side by side as conveners of the Crackerjack Carnival for many years in the Carina electorate. Bill often said to me that no one side of the political chamber had a mortgage on the best and brightest.

From 1975 to 1980 he served as Chairman of Committees and was also the Deputy Speaker in that role. Bill adored—absolutely adored, according to his family—the procedure of parliament and the whole committee process. The highlight during this time was a trip to the United Kingdom to examine its parliamentary systems. In 1980 Bill was elevated to the ministry in the portfolio of valuation, environment and administrative services. In this ministry he found a fire service that had no funding and whose infrastructure around the state was literally crumbling. I believe one of Bill's great contributions was that he devised a fire levy scheme to be collected by local government from rates notices which effectively is still in use today.

Then came the split of 1983 and Bill was defeated in his seat. Through contact with research papers and contact with his family, there was one lady who did not live in the Chatsworth electorate or the Greenslopes electorate but who wrote to Bill Hewitt stating—

You seemed to be one of the few MPs prepared to stand up for principles rather than court popularity. I believe you were genuinely concerned about parliamentary reform and matters of public accountability not merely related to the issue of a Public Accounts Committee. I saw you as one person willing to fight for true democracy no matter what the odds.

After politics—he was never one to sit still and it was no surprise—he bought a couple of newsagencies, in Mount Gravatt and Toowong. Throughout it all, he continued to assist and mentor LNP politicians such as Gail Chiconi, Ian McKenzie, Ian Walker, George Brandis, Graham Quirk, David Jull, Don Cameron and many others. Bill was deservedly awarded life membership of the Liberal Party, which he regarded as a great honour, and in the late nineties he started to regularly attend Rotary meetings.

It will not come as any surprise that Bill went on to become chairman of the Stones Corner branch and was presented with the prestigious Paul Harris medal for his services to Rotary. Bill continued his Rotary work and his mentoring and his interest in current affairs until recently. I was proud to have Bill as a mentor, because he stood firm in his beliefs, even though it cost him at times politically. He was willing to wear that cost because, in the end, Bill said to me, 'You must be able to look at yourself in the mirror.'

In closing, beside every great man is an equally great woman. I acknowledge Bill's wife, Shirley, and other family members in the gallery today. I extend to them my personal condolences and also those of the Chatsworth state electoral council. I want Bill's family to know that just occasionally someone enters your life who makes a lasting impression. Bill Hewitt was one such man. Rest in peace, my friend.