




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNELL

Record of Proceedings, 18 September 2018

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Davis, Mr BJ

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.45 am): It is a great honour to contribute and support this condolence motion for Brian John 'Digger' Davis who passed away on 31 August 2018 at the age of 84. He was buried next to his beloved wife Jeannie on Friday, 7 September. For a boy who was born in Toowoomba on 7 July 1934 and who at the age of 12 was a polio survivor after given his last rites in an iron lung, he went on to build a remarkable life full of family, friends and achievement. Before entering politics he worked as a salesman, truck driver and taxidriver and was an organiser, president and life member of the TWU where he sharpened his skills as a proud unionist and fearless advocate.

In September 1966 in the *Transport Worker* magazine, Brian wrote about the need to join together in unionism in order to achieve any gains in the workplace and urged his fellow members to join up to the cause remembering that united you stand, divided you fall. He was a proud member of the Labor Party, serving as president of the Fortitude Valley branch and state president of the Young Labor Association in 1963. I remember how proud he was when he received life membership of the Australian Labor Party following a distinguished career in parliament.

Brian was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly in 1969 to 1974 as the member for the beautiful electorate of Brisbane. In 1972 he was promoted to the front bench as shadow minister for welfare, sport and tourism. He lost his seat in the 1974 election in which Labor was down to a cricket team of 11 members, but returned three years later in 1977 as the member for the wonderful seat of Brisbane Central. After serving on the front bench in transport, works and water resources and leader of opposition business, he became opposition whip in 1984 and retired in 1989.

It was around that time that I had the pleasure of knowing Brian and Jeannie. Little did I know that many years later my political career would somewhat mirror his. When I was a candidate for the seat of Brisbane Central in 2007 he told me to never forget the electors and where you come from. In fact, in his maiden speech in this House he thanked his predecessor and campaign manager, Speaker Johnno Mann, and wished to possess one of Johnno's fine qualities. He said, 'I wish for his sincerity to his electors. I know that they received that sincerity from him and that they expect the same from me.' He delivered in spades. In the same speech he also spoke about his views on one of the sports that he followed, namely midweek racing, and advocated for the allocation of extra days to the metropolitan midweek racing calendar and for better amenities. I believe he was a keen punter. He was often full of gratuitous advice when he had my ear as minister for racing. We often heard about his wins, but as we know with punters, we did not hear much about his losses.

He was a great local member, an inspirational figure to his family and friends and a charming, pragmatic and caring member for Brisbane Central. I fondly remember his quick wit and sense of humour. He was always at his best telling his hilarious stories with his trademark gravelly voice. I last saw Brian at the funeral of one of his best mates, Brian Mellifont, just a few weeks before he passed

away. Brian Mellifont was a councillor in the Brisbane City Council and together they were known as the two Brians and both became icons of the Queensland Labor Party getting up to all kinds of mischief but always to further the Labor cause and their constituents.

The two Brians worked tirelessly to promote Brisbane and build the infrastructure and buildings that would make this a great city and a true proud capital of Queensland. They were formidable family campaigners as they shared electoral boundaries in an era of no computers, no mobile phones and no social media. Those were the days.

Brian 'Digger' Davis dedicated his life to his community. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, uncle and friend. No longer will his one-of-a-kind gravelly voice be heard at Labor Party gatherings and it will be greatly missed. He was a true Labor man in every sense of the term: loyal, committed, proud and honourable—a true believer. I extend my sincere condolences and sympathies to Brian's sons, Mark and Rex Davis—I acknowledge Mark in the gallery; his daughter-in-law, Sophia; his grandchildren, Darcy and Xavier; his nephews, Sean and Brett; and his extended family and friends. He may no longer be with us, but I know that his legacy and his memory will live on for many years to come. May he rest in peace.