



Speech By  
**Jarrold Bleijie**


**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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## **MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

### **Laming, Mr BE**

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (9.57 am): It is an absolute honour and privilege today to pay my respects to a true gentleman, a statesman, a loving husband and a father of three. Bruce Laming, born 14 June 1938, passed away on 11 September 2017, a husband to Estelle and a father to Suzanne, Julie and Andrew. I take a moment to pay my respects to the Laming family who are here today, including Estelle, Julie, Andrew, Suzanne and grandkids, Jazz, Jinja, Jack, Sophie and Isobelle. I am sure their love and support throughout Bruce's life and political career was precious and irreplaceable in ways we can only imagine. I have no doubt that Estelle and the entire Laming family are left with the cherished memory of Bruce, his life, his legacy and the many wonderful family times spent in each other's company.

Bruce Laming moved to Buddina in Kawana in 1975. This was a time when Nicklin Way was a single-lane road. There was a successful seafood shop, Bridge Seafoods, on the edge of the Mooloolah River and little between it and the 'Unexploded Ordnance' signs throughout Currimundi. Up until it was sold late last year, the iconic Bridge Seafoods, operating since 1965 on the edge of the Mooloolah River, was still thriving. Upon moving to Buddina, Bruce purchased waterfront land at Adaluma Avenue for \$15,000 and built the family home in which he lived for many years until his passing. This block of land, bought for \$15,000, in today's estimate would be worth well into the millions of dollars.

I wish to reflect on the many branch meetings we held at that beautiful home on the waterfront in Minyama. Bruce, Estelle and their entire family were all so welcoming. Bruce believed in the Liberal Party and he believed in our philosophy. He also believed in bringing young people through the Liberal Party, as it was at that time, and Bruce and Estelle opened up their home to people such as me, way back when.

In 1979 Bruce joined the Sunshine Coast Newspapers as circulation manager. As has been talked about already today, Bruce formed part of a small team that launched the *Sunshine Coast Daily* the following year. Ironically, in 1980 the paper supported his run for council while he remained on the staff. I ask our Sunshine Coast members to reflect on that for a moment. If only we could get the endorsement of the *Sunshine Coast Daily* these days.

Bruce was a tireless advocate for his local community. He was particularly passionate about preserving our local environmental treasures such as Point Cartwright and the Mooloolah River. Today, local residents of the Kawana electorate are thankful for his efforts. His signature achievement was securing the Landsborough and Maroochy council agreement to preserve both sides of the Mooloolah River upstream from the bridge, enabling bikeway connections along the river in perpetuity. In 2018 we may take for granted those achievements, but without Bruce's commitment and dedication to preserving the waterways along the edges of the Mooloolah River we would not have the wonderful La Balsa Park where we celebrate Australia Day, as well as all the other parks that have been preserved in perpetuity through Bruce's efforts.

Bruce stood down from the council after a single term. In 1992 he entered state politics after the new state seat of Mooloolah was formed. I was 10 at the time and had recently moved from New South Wales to Queensland with my family. However, I remember the toll-busting campaigns that the member for Maroochydore spoke about. Bruce was a whip, a housing and public works spokesperson and deputy speaker. The combination of local government experience and access to state departments allowed him to focus on desperately needed infrastructure such as transport routes, rail corridors and Mountain Creek schools. As the Leader of the Opposition described, his final act in the 1996-98 Borbidge government was to spend precious pre-election minutes with the then premier to authorise a high-voltage powerline relocation at Sippy Creek to ensure that the Sunshine Coast University Hospital happened. Today, that university hospital is so important for the many residents of the Sunshine Coast, as well as people from throughout Queensland and Australia, who train there and the patients who receive top-level care there.

At the 2001 state election, the electorate of Mooloolah was renamed Kawana, as it is now known. Demonstrating that no seat in Queensland is safe, after nine years of loyal service to his community there was a 19 per cent swing against Bruce and the LNP lost the seat. That was a great loss to the Kawana community, with external factors influencing the 2001 election outcome. However, after losing in 2001 Bruce continued his legacy, even though he could have left community service and left politics, as we see happen so often these days. He could have been angry with the community, but he was not. He stuck it out. He never displayed any anger. He kept working with the community. Indeed, he increased his community participation. That is a testament to the gentleman who was Bruce Laming. As I said, it is apparent that Bruce's legacy is still favourably remembered by many Kawana residents. Many of his achievements while in office are seen throughout the electorate every day. While our community continues to grow, the contribution he made to our community will never be forgotten.

Not one to shy away, Bruce maintained community involvement during and after representative life. He was a member of the Alexandra Headland Surf Lifesaving Club and the Sunshine Coast Barbershop Chorus. I had many things in common with Bruce. I was also in a chorus, the Caloundra Chorale and Theatre Company. On many occasions I saw Bruce perform in the barbershop choir that he was involved with. They are great community champions and their singing is fantastic.

Bruce was a rear commodore and sailed out of the Mooloolaba Yacht Club. He won plenty of silver on his Sonata 8 Sunborn. He passionately supported Carlton and played Australian Rules for Townsville, Mount Isa and North Queensland. He toured Papua New Guinea to promote the sport. Stop shaking your head, member for Glass House and Collingwood supporter! Mr Speaker, I thought the member would take objection to that and ask for a withdrawal, but he has not.

Bruce completed a Bachelor of Arts at USC and in 2009 won the Fellowship of Australian Writers best short story on his first attempt. His books, essays and poems are among the few literary works emanating from someone who worked in Australia's shearing sheds, mines and construction sites in the 1950s. To my good friend the member for Bundamba I say: even though he was involved in the Mount Isa Mines and was a wool classer, he never joined the CFMEU.

Bruce Laming was part of the transition from National to Liberal politics on the coast and, while not directly involved, he was a strong supporter of the conservative merger. After launching his own career in public life at 42, Bruce played a key role in shaping the careers of other Sunshine Coast based conservative members of parliament, whilst also assuming a sergeant-major role in the federal elections his son, Andrew, has won since 2004.

Bruce helped young people in state politics. He encouraged us. In 2008 when I decided to run for preselection for Kawana for the Liberal National Party, I went to the home of Bruce and Estelle. The first people I sought advice from were Bruce and Estelle Laming. As Bruce was a former member for Mooloolah who had represented the area, I wanted his advice and his support, which he gave. I am forever grateful for that. In his late career I had worked as a campaign volunteer for Bruce Laming and, ultimately, as I said, he was one of the first people with whom I discussed my own ambitions to enter state politics. Bruce supported me in 2009 and in all future campaigns.

We know that politics is in the Laming family. Bruce's son, Andrew Laming, the federal member for Bowman, is here today. At the most recent election campaign, Julie and all the grandkids were at the Buddina booth. Julie was the booth captain. She set up early in the morning and handed out my how-to-vote cards. Although Bruce had been retired for some time, his family maintains an active involvement in and support of politics. I think that is a testament to Bruce. Often when people retire or lose elections we never see them again, but I think community involvement and support for other members of parliament should always continue.

As has been said, James McGrath's first job was in Bruce Laming's office. Bruce has a son in federal parliament. Andrew Laming and I have other things in common, like James McGrath. I recall Andrew Laming poured fuel or oil on himself in federal parliament to make an important point; I have worn a rat on my shoulder in this parliament to make an important point. However, I cannot say that we got that from Bruce, because I do not think Bruce was into gimmicks. I also think of James McGrath and the role he plays as a senator for Queensland. Bruce taught us many things, but we did not get the gimmicks or the theatrics from Bruce Laming, who was a gentleman—as I am, as well.

I recall at Bruce's funeral many people said that the best thing they can remember about Bruce Laming is that he never had a bad word to say about anybody. I sat at his funeral thinking, 'They won't be able to say that about me at my funeral.' Bruce did not have a bad word to say about anything. He loved his community; he loved his family; he loved his job; he loved Papua New Guinea where he worked as a patrol officer, building infrastructure for the region; he loved serving in the defence force.

I pay tribute to Jazz, Jinja, Jack, Sophie, Isobelle, Julie, Andrew and Suzanne. At Bruce's funeral, Jazz and Jinja sang a very moving song. It was incredible. Their grandfather would have been immensely proud of the young women they are today. A little earlier I spoke to Estelle who said that Bruce was a good man and she was a lucky lady. Estelle, Bruce was a good man but he was also a lucky man to have you in his life. Estelle told me that people aspired to be like the hardworking and decent man Bruce Laming was. I can attest to that.

I will finish by saying that Bruce's legacy will go on in the new electorate of Kawana that I represent. Bruce served nine years in this place. I have just served nine years in this place and I will forever be grateful for his service and for the true gentleman Bruce Laming was, which I see reflected in his wonderful family in the gallery today. Sally and I will be forever grateful for the support, love and encouragement that Bruce, Estelle, the Laming family and the broader community have given to us and our family in our battle for similar and important issues in the Kawana community that Bruce and Estelle love as much as I do. My condolences to Estelle and all the family.