



Speech By  
**Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe**


**MEMBER FOR SANDGATE**

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**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Warburton, Mr NG**

 **Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (9.48 am): I too would like to offer a few short remarks on a life well lived by a predecessor of mine as the member for Sandgate, Nev Warburton. I was fortunate enough, as the Premier has mentioned, to make a short eulogy on behalf of the government and the Queensland branch of the Australian Labor Party at Nev's funeral a few weeks ago. I acknowledge his children, Ross, Kym and Sandy, in the Speaker's Gallery today.

During my time in the Labor Party and at his funeral one word came up time and time again when Nev was mentioned: humble. A former colleague in this place, Dean Wells, the then federal member for Petrie, recounted when he first met Nev at the Carseldine train station. Nev went up to Dean, shook his hand and said, 'Hi, I'm Nev Warburton.' Dean was incredulous that the leader of Queensland's parliamentary Labor Party would not be so presumptive as to assume that everyone knew who he was.

Before being elected as the member for Sandgate at the 1977 election, Nev had made a name for himself in a number of different spaces, but particularly in the Brisbane Rugby League, playing for the mighty Norths Devils during the 1950s and early 1960s, including a stunning run of premierships. The Premier has made mention of his great record as an outstanding Rugby League player. As we have heard, he was also a committed surf lifesaver and later in life a dedicated lawn bowler.

Nev also briefly served on the Brisbane City Council as alderman for the Bramble Bay ward. It was wonderful to learn at the funeral that Nev did his electrical apprenticeship at the BCC and that his grandson Luke is apprenticed in the same trade at Brisbane City Council. Nev was a proud member of the ETU and was a tireless advocate for the Electrical Trades Union members in parliament during the 1985 power strike when 920 hardworking members were sacked by the anti-worker Bjelke-Petersen National Party government.

A year later, Nev went to the 1986 election presenting as the 'honest choice for Queensland'. Despite being unsuccessful at that election, hampered by the malapportionment, Nev was the last Labor leader to be defeated by the National Party at a general election. He went on to be a successful minister, as we have heard, in the Goss Labor government after the 1989 defeat of the Nationals. As Minister for Industrial Relations, he reformed our IR system to tip the balance back to make it fair for the worker, despite opposition from the conservative forces in this state. As police minister, he continued to implement a number of those post-Fitzgerald reforms, restoring the good name of our Queensland Police Service.

Of course, I would like to remark on the work Nev did as the member for Sandgate. We have heard the Leader of the Opposition acknowledge his support for a range of local organisations, particularly the sporting organisations. I wear my Sandgate-Redcliffe District Cricket Club tie in his honour.

Nev and his late wife, Fran, resided at Silvan Road, Deagon until shortly after his retirement from parliament in 1992. To this day, a number of older long-term residents of my electorate still recount what an excellent asset his late wife, Fran, was to him not only as an immense support personally but also as a hardworking representative for Nev in the electorate when he was busy in George Street, fighting Joh or undertaking his ministerial duties.

A number of our local Labor branch members also recount Nev's candour, something reflected in the 1986 slogan. Two late Labor stalwarts in Sandgate, Mick Cowen and Brian Taylor, both told me before their passing that Nev Warburton was not a 'gunna'. If he said he would do something, there would be no doubt it would happen. That brand of honesty also extended to when it was not comfortable. If hard words had to be said, Nev would not shy away from saying them.

I did not know Nev well; we were a generation apart like the member for Cooper and me, but we were also from different traditions in the party, unlike the member for Cooper. However, when I was seeking preselection for Sandgate, I did call Nev from the Deagon branch list. By that stage he was living on the Sunshine Coast and enjoying life and did not ultimately have a say in that preselection. He was as blunt and practical as his reputation. He told me, 'If you're looking for my blessing, you don't need it if you have the numbers.' Thankfully, I did.

To Nev and his family I say thank you for your service to the state. Nev Warburton: a great sportsman, a great union man, a great local representative in council and in this place, a great minister, a great family man but, most of all, a great Queenslander. As a state we are indebted to his service. Vale, Neville George Warburton.