




Speech By
Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

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ADJOURNMENT

Nilon, Mr D

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (7.27 pm): I will be talking about the story of Don Nilon, who passed away on 15 March. Don was a great old Labor man. Don was born on Wednesday, 26 August 1931 in Forbes, a small town in central New South Wales. His father, Francis Bede Nilon, who served in the 1st Light Horse in Gallipoli, married Margaret Harriet Casey and had 10 children. Of all 10 children Don was the last surviving sibling.

Don met Dorothy, and after moving to Sydney on 29 September 1951 they got married. They remained married for 67½ years. Their first child, Jim, is a very good friend of mine. I class Jim as a brother from a different mother. He was born on 3 July 1953. Don joined the ALP in 1957. He was one of the original 'true believers'. He was appointed as a volunteer director of the Australian Institute of Political Science and ran as a candidate in the seat of Macarthur in the 1961 and 1963 federal elections, on both occasions falling shy of the win. He constantly reminded us of that.

On 11 May 1966 Don and Dorothy welcomed their second child, Danielle. Don also commenced work as the state organiser for the New South Wales ALP. By 1971 the family had relocated to Rockhampton in Central Queensland. Don worked as a property officer with the Capricornia Regional Electricity Board and was admitted as an honorary member of the Australian Valuers Institute. Don developed an enormous cultural appreciation and affection for our first nation peoples throughout the course of his work. In his travels he monitored sacred sites and took pride in educating people about our first nations history.

In 1994, post retirement, Don served on the Capricornia community corrections board and spent a period of time administering the state government's community rent scheme in Rockhampton. Both Don and Dorothy formally retired to Lake Macquarie in 1996 and moved back to Queensland in 2005. Don was honoured with life membership in 2008. I was very proud to escort Don to get his life membership. Don Nilon was a fantastic man—a true believer. Former member for Greenslopes Gary Fenlon spoke highly of Don.

As a young man, as a political candidate I had a lot to do with Don. The first time I met Don was in Gregory before the 1989 election. The then AWU district secretary said to me, 'Come and have a beer with the candidate and his father.' When you live out west, a beer could be one gallon or 10. You did not know. I rolled home at four o'clock in the morning after hearing Don's many stories of being an organiser in New South Wales. The Nilons became very firm friends of the Saunders family. On behalf of my wife and my children I pass on my condolences to the Nilon family. As Don would say, vote early and vote often.