




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2019

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Tenni, Hon. MJ OAM

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.36 am): It is an honour to stand today to pay tribute to the remarkable legacy of the Hon. Martin James Tenni. The contributions Martin made as the National Party member for Barron River will live on forever. Roads, universities, airports and schools all advanced under his conviction to deliver projects that would stand the test of time, and Martin's passion for life and commitment to service will live on in his family and friends. On behalf of the opposition, we would like to place on record our most sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Martin shaped the far north of this state, and life in the far north shaped Martin's values and ideals. He was born on 4 April 1934 in Cairns. He was educated at Freshwater State School, Cairns North State School and Cairns Intermediate State School. He began his working life at the age of 14 with Northern Builders' Services, a hardware store in Cairns. He worked his way up to store manager before he left to form his own business called Tenni's Hardware in Mareeba. His outlook was to provide service to people, and that brought him success. The business expanded and Martin opened three more stores in Cairns and one in Cooktown.

Martin married Marion Dawn Hickling on 3 March 1956 and they had a son, Wayne, and a daughter, Raelene. In 1969 he was living in Mareeba when some 'silly bugger', as Martin described them, said he should become a local councillor, so he put up his hand for Mareeba shire division 3 and successfully entered the Mareeba Shire Council. This marked the beginning of Martin's lifelong commitment to serve his community, and he got to work straightaway. By 1973 he was chair of several committees, running his hardware businesses and serving as the chairman of the Mareeba Shire Council. It was during this time that some 'silly clown' told him to go into state politics, and Martin decided to put his hat in the ring. In 1974 he won the seat of Barron River from Labor on a margin of 0.7 per cent. Martin was full of purpose, and his maiden speech to this House set out what he wanted to achieve. He said—

I am conscious of the honour bestowed on me as the elected representative for the Barron River electorate, which was held by the Labor Party for countless years. It is my intention to get things on the move in Barron River and to see the area developed into one of the most prosperous in Australia.

Martin remained the chairman of the Mareeba Shire Council throughout his first term in parliament. He survived on three hours sleep, such was his devotion to Mareeba and Barron River. The signs of his commitment to the community are all over the region today. Martin knew how to get things built. His leadership saw roads constructed to connect Cairns to Mareeba, out to Walkamin and Bilwon and on to Mossman, Daintree, Cape Tribulation and Wujal Wujal. New primary schools were built across the region, including the Daintree and Mount Molloy. He delivered the new Smithfield high school and ensured other local schools received the extensions they required. Law and order was helped by the building of new police stations. The Mareeba Hospital and the Cairns Base Hospital were rebuilt and the Mossman Hospital was completely renovated.

Everyone who knew Martin knew he loved fishing, and he built facilities that local boaties could be proud of, including new ramps and jetties. Generations of Queenslanders will benefit from what the Hon. Martin Tenni delivered for the Far North. He was tenacious in ensuring the services and infrastructure in Barron River were as good as any electorate in Brisbane. He claimed his electorate received as many dollars per head of population compared to the south-east over a five-year period.

He not only delivered for Barron River but his ministerial service to Queensland was immense. When he was appointed to cabinet in 1983 as the minister for environment and administrative services, he had the distinction of being the Far North's first state ministerial representative in 26 years. He was also responsible for Queensland's water supply, ports, harbours and dams when he managed the portfolio of water resources and marine services. Martin's time as the state's minister for mines and energy came during difficult world commodity prices and fierce overseas competition. The mining industry turned in a very credible performance in 1987-88, with production valued at \$2.145 billion.

Mr Tenni also devoted his time to many organisations. He was a former chairman of the fundraising committee for the Mareeba Garden Settlement aged persons home, a founding member of Yorkeys Knob Boating Club and chairman of the Mareeba branch of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Board. He was also a member of the James Cook University Cairns Campus Committee which raised funds and purchased the land for the campus at no cost to the government.

Martin's long stint in public office ended when he retired from the Queensland parliament in November 1989. Every day across his 15 years as an MP, he rolled up his sleeves and committed to delivering more opportunity and prosperity to Far North Queensland. In his retirement, Martin spent two years on the National Party management committee and has been National Party campaign manager for Barron River, Cook, Mulgrave and Leichhardt. In his retirement, he grew vegetables in foam boxes as a hobby to give away to his many family and friends. Martin's lifetime commitment of service was recognised earlier this year in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. When awarded his Order of Australia medal in June, Mr Tenni told the *Cairns Post*—

My main aim in life was to do things that were going to last forever and create employment and that's exactly what's happened. Every police station, every hospital, including the Cairns hospital, every school, and every piece of road ... and every bridge across the Barron River, all of those things were done by my pressure on different ministers.

Today I thank the 'silly clown' who told Martin to enter politics because Far North Queensland would not be what it is today without him. On behalf of the state Liberal National Party, I extend sincere condolences to the friends and family of the Hon. Martin Tenni and our heartfelt gratitude for his contribution to Queensland. May he rest in peace.