




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 13 August 2020

ADJOURNMENT

Correction to *Record of Proceedings*; Toon, Mr BC

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (6.04 pm): During my contribution to the cognate debate of the Treasurer's bills yesterday I referred to Treasurer Cameron Dick in relation to the 2019-20 fiscal and economic review. I should have said 'former treasurer Jackie Trad'.

Bernard Charles Toon, known as Bernie, was born on 6 March 1934 and grew up in Mackay the eldest son of three children of Frederick and Louisa Toon. Bernie Toon was a pioneering communicator, a champion of people, professionally an influencer of industry and political leaders, and a keen sportsman. At an early age he experienced the family home being destroyed by fire and faced struggle with poor eyesight. These issues did not dampen Bernie's zest for life. Instead, it defined Bernie's mission in life to extend an extraordinary capacity to care for others.

Bernie was an A grade school student as well as a keen sportsman. He excelled at cricket. It was through cricket that Bernie's career took some interesting turns. At the tender age of 13 he set about to find a job. He wanted an apprenticeship but he was too young. He found a job with Roadmaster before moving to Hollis Hopkins. Bernie started a new career with Australian National Airways. The manager Tom Garvan was a cricket fan and was aware of Bernie through his cricket reports in the *Daily Mercury*. Bernie played first grade cricket in Mackay and became a bowler to remain competitive because as a batsman he could not pick up the sight of the ball quick enough.

Cricket led Bernie on a pathway to his ultimate professional career—journalism. He started at the ABC Radio in Mackay doing weekend sport reports and reading local news. Bernie married his beloved Heather in 1958. They celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary four days before he died. Soon after their first child was born in 1959, Bernie became a news freelancer, earning the equivalent of 40 cents for a story read on the local news, 70 cents for state news and \$1 for the national news. He set himself a target of eight stories a day, which he met with ease, causing a unique challenge for the *Daily Mercury* which offered him a graded job, bypassing the usual requirements of a cadetship.

After working in newspapers in Kyogle and Lismore in northern New South Wales, Tamworth and Bundaberg, Bernie made a big decision in 1970 to join the department of primary industries in Rocky in a newly created role as regional information officer. He excelled in the role, becoming a champion for the Central and North Queensland beef industry and challenging outdated and out-of-touch rules set by the Public Service in Brisbane. The history of Bernie's work in the beef industry has shaped Rockhampton's famous Beef Week, which led to an honorary membership of the Rockhampton Show Society. Bernie was seconded to the state minister's office as a ministerial media adviser, a role in which he continued until his official retirement when he was able to devote more time to his passions: golf, grandchildren, church and supporting his wife, Heather, who in 1988 was ordained—

(Time expired)