




Speech By
Robert Skelton

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Record of Proceedings, 16 September 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENT

Gallacher, Mr A

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (2.46 pm): I rise to honour the legacy of Senator Alex Gallacher and his service to the working people of Australia. Alex Gallacher was born in New Cumnock, Scotland, on 1 January 1954. He immigrated with his family at the aged of 12 to seek a better life here in Australia, one of thousands of families from the UK like my own who became known as ten-pound Poms. Alex came from a working class family and, like so many of us on this side of the House, knew the value of an honest day's work for a fair day's pay.

After leaving school he worked as a truck driver and labourer before becoming a ramp services operator for Trans Australia Airlines. Alex became an active member of the Australian Labor movement with a long involvement with the Transport Workers Union. He started as an industrial officer in 1988 before working his way up and eventually becoming state secretary of the SANT branch in 1996 and federal president in 2007. Senator Gallacher was elected to the federal parliament in 2010 and vowed to be a staunch advocate for road safety and aviation workers. He took leading roles in foreign affairs and economics committees and was a long-time member of the Rural Affairs and Transport Committee. It was in this role that I met Alex as a representative of the UFU Aviation Branch.

Alex gained a reputation for being a straight shooter. You would always know where he stood on any issue. I can testify to this, as I watched and listened during Senate inquiries. He was a no-nonsense operator with a laser-like focus on improving the lives of the workers he represented all his working life. Although diagnosed with lung cancer in 2019, Senator Gallacher continued to represent the people of South Australia, the Labor Party, the trade union movement and his constituents with diligence and passion.

He was a loving father, husband, brother and grandfather and a giant to those for whom he was a champion. He will be sorely missed by his family, his constituents and his colleagues, in particular Senator Glenn 'Sterlo' Sterle, because they were always on committees together. Alex's life story is emblematic of our proud Labor movement—solidarity forever. Rest in peace, comrade. Vale Senator Alex Gallacher.