




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Edwards, Hon. Sir LR, AC

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (10.32 am): Sir Llew Edwards, a giant of the Liberal Party, a stalwart of Queensland political business and community life and a well-known figure in the Clayfield electorate, passed away peacefully on 26 May this year. A state funeral for Sir Llew was held on 3 June and, like many in this place, I was honoured to join the hundreds of others at St John's Cathedral to celebrate Sir Llew's achievements and mourn his passing. At that service Sir Llew's friends and family spoke warmly and fondly of his love for them, of his engagement with his friends and, indeed, his love for all of Queensland. In particular David's words were heartfelt and gave a deep insight into Sir Llew's life and times and his achievements.

Many thousands of words have been written about Sir Llew's life and contributions. No doubt more will be written and said about his career and public achievements—the Ipswich Grammar boy who trained as an electrician. From what I have heard about his acuity on ladders, the electricians' loss has probably been the medical profession's gain.

Sir Llew went on to obtain a medical degree and became a much loved local GP. He was convinced by another great Liberal leader Sir Gordon Chalk to run for the seat of Ipswich and was elected to this place in 1972. He was quickly recognised as a man of intellect and talent and was promoted to health minister in very short order. He was seen as a potential leader of his party early on and was elevated to that position in 1977. He went on to secure outstanding results leading the Liberal Party in the subsequent two elections, seeing the coalition rise to their highest numbers in this place.

Sir Llew was both a health minister and a treasurer and went on to secure huge reforms for the people of Queensland, including finalising a Medibank deal that saw 40 new hospitals built or rebuilt. He saw in the value of home ownership the aspirations of all Queenslanders and introduced stamp duty concessions for young people buying their first home. He was a cooling and moderating influence in a cabinet that, as has been said, had strong voices and strong personalities and perhaps not a few hotheads. He knew when the time came how to retire from the battlefield of politics with his honour and reputation intact. Having retired and returned to private medical practice, he then again answered the call to serve when asked to chair the World Expo 88 organisation and he subsequently went about that task with his usual charm, diligence and efficiency.

Sir Llew's legacy from those years changed the face of Brisbane forever. More importantly, he changed the way we thought about ourselves and our state. He made us confident about who we were, no longer playing second fiddle. That perhaps is one of the greatest legacies that Llew left behind. The confidence that the successful Expo imbued has never left us. Those who were there in those heady days will never forget. Perhaps they will not forget the entirety, but a few nights might be a bit hazy. I still have my six-month Expo pass, a gift from my then girlfriend and now wife—in fact of 28 years today I might also add. I might also add that for 16 of those years I have been doing budgets.

Even after those achievements, he contributed even more as a company director and University of Queensland chancellor. These are, indeed, mighty achievements. They are achievements unlikely to be matched any time soon. Of course, honours and accolades have followed as well as the numerous parks, roads and buildings that are littered throughout the state that have been named after Sir Llew.

I also want to talk about the Llew I knew and saw in my electorate. When I listened to the speeches at the service, as I have listened to them here today and as I have spoken to his family and friends, it only reinforced my experiences with Sir Llew. Yes, he was honoured and respected for his public achievements, as he should be, but it was the simple kindnesses and the humanity of Llew that stood out most to many people. It was never a surprise to see Llew and Jane out walking their beloved Schnauzers, shopping at the local Sirianni's IGA or, as the Premier has mentioned, as part of the Harvey's Breakfast Club at Newstead. Just as much, it was never a surprise to see them in deep conversation with any and all who came across their path.

One such event was when I was shopping with my daughter, Kate, a few years ago at the Sirianni IGA. I was walking through the car park with Kate. Llew and Jane had just been inside and were coming out. We stopped to have a few words and I introduced Kate. Without any hesitation at all, Llew started chatting away to her, a 15-year-old as if she was someone he had known for years. He did it in that way that Llew had of never talking down to someone but listening up to them. That conversation continued for some minutes until the dangers of the Range Rovers and the Mercedes in the car park became a little too great and we had to move on.

Llew also handed out for me at the 2012 election, faithfully manning the election booth at Brothers at Albion for a few hours. While I did have some qualms and felt it might have been a bit of an impost on him at that stage, I did make sure that he was at a booth with a reliably high LNP vote and where there was a good chance he would at least know most of the voters. I think the vote improved as a result of Llew's efforts there for me.

In recent years Llew's health had declined and the steady march of dementia saw him increasingly under care. It was during that time that the support and love of his family and friends was so important. I know David was frequently with him and, without doubt, Lady Jane was the rock of his last years and months. While he was unable to live the life he and Jane so much enjoyed—travelling, dining and the company of friends—he and Jane were still very much a partnership.

I join with not only members in this place and not only his friends and colleagues but also the hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders whose lives he touched and made so much better in extending my condolences and sympathy to Jane, to David, to Mark and to the entire family. While the carnival is over, the music plays on and the memories will remain.