




Speech By
Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2022

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Dollin, Mr RH

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (9.45 am): I rise today to talk about one of my mentors and a great man in the Maryborough electorate, Bobby Dollin. We did not call him Robert, we called him Bobby. For many years he kept it very quiet that he was born in New South Wales. I first met Bob when I joined the Australian Labor Party branch in Maryborough as a young man. Bob was coming and going in the timber industry in those days. To be honest, I did not know Bob was a Labor man, because most in the timber industry were old Nats. I got to know Bob very well. The Leader of the Opposition was correct when he said he was a fantastic boss. The men and women who worked for him talked about how good he was. You realised the true Labor values of this man by how he treated his workers.

In 1989 I was living in Mount Isa when the Goss government was elected. The then member for Mount Isa, Tony McGrady, invited me down to parliament and I had a few ales with the member for Maryborough. He was talking to me about the future of Maryborough and the way he wanted the timber industry to go. After the devastating loss in 1998 I called back through Maryborough and spoke to Bob. We talked about the decline in the great city of Maryborough after Bob Dollin. Very graciously the Premier's father stepped up as a pseudo member after 1998 until he retired. He was the shadow member for Maryborough and kept Maryborough alive in those days.

Bob was one of the best men you will ever meet. He was a man of his word. You did not have to have a contract or write anything down. Bob shook your hand and told you that was it. When I went back to Maryborough we kept in touch. In 2014 I rang him and said, 'Bob, I'm thinking about running for Maryborough,' and he said, 'Oh, we better have a talk.' We caught up a few times. He gave me some really good advice about winning the seat. We followed that advice and that is why the Palaszczuk government came to power.

On one occasion I thought I would have a talk to Bob about timber. Four days later I was still there talking about timber. As the Premier said, any time anyone wanted to know about timber—and the member for Gympie will know this—they would ring up Bob. You would have about 15 or 20 minutes spare, but an hour and a half later you would still be on the phone talking about timber. There is not a man I know who knew about timber like Bob Dollin. As the Premier said, he could tell you about the leaves, the trees, the country it grew in and what they used it for. Every time we talked about timber at a branch meeting people started looking at their watches because we all knew it was not going to be a 10-minute talk.

Bob was a tremendous member. As I said in my adjournment contribution when Bob passed away, I ran into a bloke at the markets one day and he said to me, 'I've made two mistakes in life, mate,' and I said, 'What are they?' and he said, 'I didn't back a tip I got on the Melbourne Cup and I voted against Bobby Dollin.' When Bob was the member, Downer Rail, or Walkers as it was called in those days, had 772 staff. It went down to 122. This bloke said to me, 'I was one of the blokes who lost their

job. We didn't realise we had a fighter like Bob Dollin as our member. We thought we could do that protest vote and go with Pauline Hanson to show the Labor Party what we thought of them. It taught me a lesson. It cost me my job. It nearly cost me my home.'

As I said before, they broke the mould with a man like Bobby Dollin. He was well respected in Maryborough. His family are absolutely brilliant. They are good people and Bob was a good man. He and his wife, Verlie, married in 1966. Besides trees, Verlie was his next love. Verlie is a tremendous woman. The Labor members and the union members of my area are going to miss Bob. I miss him.

Bob always ran the Burrum Heads booth for me. I would say, 'Bob, you're getting a bit long in the tooth, old mate. You don't have to run the booth all day if you don't want to.' He would be there setting up at six o'clock in the morning and he would still be there counting the votes at nine o'clock at night. We are talking about a man who was in his late 70s and 80s, but Bob was always there. He knew everyone in Burrum Heads. We would go to 'speaker's corner', as Bob called it, at the beachfront of Burrum Heads. Every day he would be there lecturing people about the values of the Labor Party and the values of the timber industry.

The Premier came to town for a cabinet meeting in Maryborough and she said that Maryborough was going back to being a timber and train town. I have never seen a bloke stand so tall as when the Premier announced that Maryborough was going to be a timber town again, because it was Bobby's dream for Maryborough to be again recognised as the timber city of Queensland.

We are going to miss Bobby. Every day that I walk into my office I see a corflute of Bobby Dollin's on my wall because it reminds me of the great things that he did in the nine years that he was the member for Maryborough. He was a man of his word and a man who, I am proud to say, stood for Labor values. He stood for the values that we stand for in the Labor Party and the union movement. You could see that at his funeral as the ex-workers came up. His electorate officer Adele talked about some of the meetings that they had had. I was talking to one of his ex-workers who told me—as I was saying to Penny, his granddaughter—that on a Friday afternoon they used to knock off work and Bobby would take all the workers down for a few beers. I do not know if that would pass today's OH&S rules but it was pretty good in those days.

Bob Dollin was a fine man and Maryborough will miss him. We respect our Labor elders in the Wide Bay and, particularly, in the Maryborough electorate. We call them 'Labor legends' and we have only one left now, Maryborough's first lady: Mrs Moira Hansen. Bobby was one of our Labor legends and everyone misses him—particularly me. Every time I need timber advice now I do not know who to turn to, because I used to be able to talk to Bobby.

I again pass on my condolences to the family. It is great to have Penny here today. Penny was telling me what a great grandfather he was. He was a good man: a good man for his community and a good family man. I wish we had more in society like Bob Dollin. From the Maryborough ALP and all the union people in my electorate, I say to the family that we are going to miss Bob Dollin.