



Speech By  
**Michael Healy**


**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**De Lacy, Hon. KE, AM**

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (9.53 am): I rise today to pay tribute to Keith De Lacy. As we have heard, Keith Ernest De Lacy was born on 7 August 1940 in Cairns. Keith grew up on a tobacco farm in the Dimbulah area and received the Diploma of Agriculture from Gatton College. Later he earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Queensland as a mature age correspondence student.

Keith had many jobs prior to entering politics, as we have heard, including being a tobacco farmer, being a miner and working up in Papua New Guinea. He then owned the Railway Newsagency in McLeod Street, Cairns, which kept him in contact with many in the community. Keith also served in the Citizen Military Forces in the 1950s.

Keith came from a staunch Labor family. Members of my branch of the Labor Party recall his dedication to the party over many years. When Keith reached the position of the state Treasurer, it was not below him to return to Cairns at the end of a busy parliamentary sitting week to work behind the bar of the Workers Club on a Friday night with his beloved wife, Yvonne.

It would be fair to say that I personally did not know Keith that well. We did speak on a number of occasions. During COVID I recalled that he was the member for Cairns at the time of the pilot strike, which was extremely detrimental at the time, so I had a chat with him then. I do recall the time when I called Keith to inform him of my intention to run for the seat of Cairns, hoping that he might pass on some sage words of advice. His response to my intentions was blunt and to the point: 'Politics is only one peg up from a used car salesman.' It was at that stage that I decided not to mention the fact that I had indeed been a used car salesman. I may have even felt comfortable knowing that my career path was heading in the right direction based on his assertion.

Keith De Lacy served the Cairns community and Queensland with consummate skill and devotion. During Keith's time in office, the Far North and indeed the state underwent great transformation and positive reforms that were very much needed. Keith was first elected to the state parliament in 1983 following the retirement of the former member, Ray Jones. Cairns in 1983 had a population of approximately 63,000 people. By the time Keith passed the baton on in 1996, the city had grown to 110,000 and had become a modern provincial capital, the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and a major economic driver for the tourism sector in Queensland—not just in our little part of the world in Cairns.

Keith was instrumental in guiding and shaping this growth and oversaw significant investment in key infrastructure in the Far North. Under Keith's watch, Cairns welcomed its first international passenger flights, its first five-star hotel and the opening of our world-class Convention Centre. Also, a university campus was established and the Cairns Marlin Marina and trawler facilities were upgraded and expanded. These were the economic foundation stones of our city's existing and new economy.

When Keith De Lacy took over the management of the economy and the finances of Queensland as treasurer in 1989, there was a huge debt, but over the next six years Keith certified Labor's fiscal credentials by paying this debt off while still expanding the state and delivering for every Queenslander. It is not surprising that Keith was so well regarded on both sides of politics. He was an outcomes based politician. I am confident in saying that his strong Labor economic pedigree lives on to this day with sound monetary policy prevailing in uncertain times.

It was the disciple Luke who said, 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' To that end let us remember Keith De Lacy, the committed family man. Keith had a deep and abiding love for his late wife, Yvonne, who died four years prior, after they had been married for 56 years. In 2014 Yvonne was battling kidney failure and as a result Keith donated a kidney to his wife.

Keith De Lacy's contribution to the city of Cairns and the state of Queensland can best be described as enormous. I would like to pass on both my and the Cairns community's deepest condolences to his three daughters, Jacquie, Jonnie and Toni. I know many of the family members are here with us in the gallery today. Vale, Keith Ernest De Lacy.