



Speech By  
**David Crisafulli**


**MEMBER FOR BROADWATER**

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**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Barton, Hon. TA**

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.36 am): The death of Tom Barton, the former member for Waterford, sees the passing of a man who transferred seamlessly from trade union advocacy to parliament and to executive office. Few have the opportunity to make such a transition and even fewer do this successfully. However, Tom Barton managed to achieve this at the same time as never losing his optimistic outlook on life, his dedication to his task and, most importantly, his commitment to the labour movement.

Tom Barton was born in Ayr and, despite living in the state's south-east and working across the entire state, always regarded himself as a North Queenslander. Like many sharing his background, he left school at 15 and commenced an apprenticeship as an instrument fitter in 1964. His involvement in the Metal Workers Union led to his taking on leadership roles in the Trades and Labor Council, culminating in his appointment as its general secretary.

It is instructive in helping to understand the role Tom Barton believed a contemporary trade union should play in society to read the budget speech of 1992-93. He spoke of the interaction between industry and unions. I quote—

As a trade union leader, I developed good relationships with business in this State. I was privileged to participate in a great deal of direct business involvement as diverse as financial investments of billions of dollars, the management of large superannuation funds, the management of an international hotel, an aged and disabled persons' hostel, and a consulting business which has given me a great deal of knowledge about business needs, problems and strengths.

These skills were significant factors in propelling Tom Barton through his political career. In his interview with the Queensland Speaks website in 2011 he paid tribute to his grandfather for inspiring his interest in politics, including encouraging him to read *Hansard* as a child. He described his grandfather as 'a very strong influence' and as being responsible for 'a big injection of labour politics'.

The redistribution after the 1989 election provided an opportunity for Mr Barton to enter state parliament through the new seat of Waterford. As Waterford's first member, he saw his role as furthering the interests of those he described as 'the backbone of society, the ordinary working class people who go to work every day'. Tom Barton acknowledged the positive role that parliament can play and in his first speech recorded his opinion on this. I quote—

The institution of Parliament is very important ... our responsibilities as members of Parliament are a necessary mixture of our broad responsibilities ... to our ... electorates. Those values do not always mix perfectly, but they can be mixed effectively with hard work and, more importantly, goodwill. I am sure that all members of Parliament, from whatever party, genuinely believe that they are taking action in the best interests of their electorates and all Queenslanders.

After a relatively short period in parliament, he was elevated to the position of minister for environment and heritage in the final months of the Goss government, and the election of the Beattie government in 1998 saw him extend his ministerial career through a range of portfolios including police and corrective services, state development and employment, training and industrial relations and sport.

In 2006 Tom Barton retired from parliament through a combination of ill health and a desire to encourage renewal. In 2011 he revealed that one of his regrets was not being able to complete a skills plan to encourage further trades and skill training. Drawing on his early career and his involvement in the union movement, he understood the role that training could play in improving opportunities for workers. This had driven much of his own career and he realised how he could help others.

Tom Barton had a wide and varied career. He will be recalled as a member with a genuine concern for others and a willingness to try to improve conditions for all. To his wife and other members of his family here today, we extend our condolences on Tom's passing. We acknowledge his contribution to this parliament and the government of Queensland and trust our words today will provide some measure of comfort for their loss.