



Speech By  
**Robert Skelton**


**MEMBER FOR NICKLIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2023

## ADJOURNMENT

### Smith, Mr CJ

 **Mr SKELTON** (Nicklin—ALP) (6.15 pm): This evening I rise to honour my late cousin and best friend Christian James Smith. Before I do, I want to acknowledge the member for Southern Downs and the member for Macalister for their advocacy and courage. Mental health issues are something that affect all of us from time to time. Everyone is touched in some way—themselves or others whom they love. Regrettably, it sometimes claims lives.

Chris was a year younger than me. From my earliest memories we were together. As kids we used to see each other often and we grew to be great mates. We both had the same warped sense of humour and a willingness to take risks. In fact, given the type of mischief and things we used to get up to, it is amazing we got this far. I know my mum and Auntie Sonya were certainly given some grey hair from the pair of us. I cannot describe some of our shenanigans as some are things I would not like anyone else to attempt. Even when we were separated by the tyranny of distance, any chance we could find to be together and muck up we certainly did. Chris was the manager at Tyrepower in Frankston, Victoria, and a keen fan of all things motor and fast. He was a bloke who had a great sense of larrikin. He was also a big kid and loved my children as if they were his own.

Over the last week and a bit I have thought long and hard about our lives together. It has been so difficult and I have gone through the whole grief cycle. I have worried about my aunty, cousins and Nicole. I have been erratic and emotional. I am very thankful that Aggie and the kids have endured and been there for me. I am grateful for all of the calls from relatives and friends and my staff, who are both. Dan, you are my good lieutenant. After the emotions subsided, I became reflective and enjoyed thinking about Chris and our memories—so many, so much fun and so much laughter.

Chris, I tried to call and left messages, but you were in a place that was hard to reach. I know the feeling and I wish I had just got in my car and come down to see you. Life is complicated and so is the end of it, I suppose. I hate the fact that I cannot say to myself, 'We'll eventually catch up for a beer.' I am glad though of our time together. You were my best mate. I will find you on the other side because you owe me a beer, old son. I love you, I miss you and I hope that you have become 'comfortably numb'.