




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Gordon, Mr WJ

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (10.05 am): I liked Billy Gordon. I liked dealing with him and I liked talking to him and, possibly more than anyone on this side of the House, I had occasion to speak to him when I was opposition leader from May 2016 to the election in 2017. I reflected on whether I would say a few words today in respect to the condolence motion and I decided to do so because in a condolence motion we extend our sympathies and our condolences to those who loved Billy and those who are loved by Billy, and I welcome them to the House.

To speak to a condolence motion is not to excuse Billy, nor is it to sanctify him, it is to recognise the service that he provided to his people and to this place. It is a time to reflect on the complexities of someone like Billy and the struggles that he faced—and he did face many struggles. The brief history we have heard here today shows the struggles that he faced as a young man growing up in an area of undoubted disadvantage and prejudice at the time. He struggled against all of that but still managed to make a life for himself and succeed in many ways.

He came into this place with great hopes and expectations. I remember the day of his swearing in. The former member for South Brisbane was particularly happy to see him in this place, if I recall correctly, as well as other members. That was not to last long, because his history caught up with him in a very rapid way and the Premier acted in the way that she did and so we saw Billy join the crossbench. I think Billy was ultimately very lonely there and had difficulty adjusting in the sense that he was a person who liked speaking to people. He enjoyed company. That was my impression when I spoke with him.

Like all good opposition leaders in a hung parliament where we sit until three in the morning, I decided to take as much advantage of that as I possibly could and spoke to him quite frequently. We had some notable successes. The great success we had was with the vegetation management legislation. Perhaps none were happier in this place than Andrew Cripps that night, as I remember it. That did not come about because Billy was not thinking about what mattered to the people of his electorate, it came about precisely because he was thinking about what mattered to the people of his electorate.

I have to say I thought we were going to have another moment of success amongst those all too brief successes that we enjoyed in that period of time on the sugar marketing bill that we debated when Billy came in and voted with us on the second reading speech. The then member for Ashgrove did not show up at that stage. I thought, 'We are going to get there!'. There was a recount on the second reading speech and again it failed and then on the third reading speech, for some reason—unknown to anyone, I think—Billy voted with the government. We won on the second reading, but we lost on the third reading, which is something that has plagued me ever since. As I always say to people who say they do not vote for you, 'It is never too late to change.'

In respect of those late-night votes, what I can say is that whatever you might think about the way Billy voted at least he always came in fully clothed. That was always bit of a benefit for those members who remember things which none of us will forget, unfortunately.

To remember some of the events of that very fraught period between 2015 and 2017 and to speak to this condolence motion is not to paint over the cracks of Billy's life and to say that he was without faults. Like all of us, he was with faults. Some of them were magnified and obviously most of them we know about, have heard about and have read about. That is also not to deny the essence of the person who was Billy and what he tried to achieve over a lengthy period. In that respect I join with other members in this place in offering my condolences to his partner, sister and niece, who are all here today.