



Speech By  
**Bryson Head**


**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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## MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

**Harper, Hon. NJ**

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (9.47 am): It was lovely to spend time with the family of the late Hon. Neville John Harper this morning, sharing stories of various kinds. His daughter Louise was here last year for a parliament tour with the Wandoan State School only weeks before his passing and she and the school were taken through by the member for Bonney as I could not make it down, such is the life of a rural MP. I was never fortunate enough to meet Neville; however, my parents did through their time involved in the National Party. My father remembers Neville advocating to improve the young farmers scheme. As a young farmer himself at the time, this certainly piqued his interest.

The electorate of Auburn existed from 1972 to 1992, and Neville served as the member for Auburn from 1980 to 1992. The electorate of Callide now largely encompasses what was the electorate of Auburn, with key towns including Wandoan, Taroom, Monto, Eidsvold, Cracow, Theodore and Moura. The industry is very much the same today as it was then, albeit with some larger properties. Neville, while growing up in the south-east, very quickly became acquainted with rural life and worked on cattle properties across rural Queensland. This no doubt gave him the breadth of experience for his life ahead, and as the member for Auburn this very much meant that he understood the issues of many of his constituents.

In 1944 at the age of 18, along with a school friend, Neville enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force. They were accepted for air crew training, however were anxious to serve in the armed forces. Because of the delay in being called up by the Air Force they decided to join the Royal Australian Navy. Neville entered full-time war service on 1 February 1945. This was the beginning of a lifetime of service to his country.

Post war, Neville undertook structural reconnaissance training and started working on a rural property called 'Burrandowan'. With his Queensland government tool allowance, he purchased a saddle which served him well for a total of 50 years, I am told. Through work experience at various properties and a short course at Gatton college, Neville learnt wider farming skills. In 1952, he commenced employment as a stock clerk for Mactaggarts Primary Producers Co-operative Association Ltd. This position required bookkeeping and attendance at cattle sales. I have been told that Neville had a very meticulous nature and this saw him rise through the ranks. After being transferred to the Cunnamulla branch, he subsequently became the youngest branch manager and then the first manager to make the branch profitable.

In 1953, Neville entered into the War Service Land Settlement Scheme ballot for land. He was most surprised when he received notification that he was successful for a block of land at Wandoan in late 1953, at the age of 27. This property at Wandoan went on to be named 'Bungarra'. Neville worked to develop this property over the coming years, purchasing dairy and beef cattle, constructing accommodation, the dairy itself and dams, among other things. Apparently, the best location for the house was about half a mile off the road. One of Neville's former National Party colleagues recounted

that he would sometimes drive the four hours home from parliament only to find that it had been raining. He would then have to leave his car at the roadside and walk the remaining distance through the muddy black brigalow soil to his house. Having grown up on brigalow country, I can safely say that that would not have been an easy trek.

Neville's career in public life formally began in 1976 when he was elected to Taroom Shire Council. Following his election to the seat of Auburn, Neville served on policy committees, including lands and forestry, mines and energy, and commerce and industry. Between 1980 and 1983, Neville was chairman of a select committee on rural policy and the effects of mining on rural lands. This goes to show that some issues never really do cease to be of concern.

I have been told about a time when a new policy regarding a particular chemical was introduced. There was an uproar by affected shareholders, so Neville called a special meeting to take place in the Parliamentary Annexe. The purpose of this meeting was to give shareholders a chance to put forward their views and propose alternatives. Lively discussions were held. I am told that at the end of the meeting it was decided that Neville and the committee had in fact made the right decision; it just took some good old-fashioned debating to convince the other parties.

From all accounts, Neville was hardworking, passionate and always well-prepared. One thing I have not delved into much is the many little things he did along the way that had a huge impact on those he was doing it for. I know members of his family, including his daughters, Sally and Louise, are still learning about the things Neville did for people from all walks of life, in many ways. It is these seemingly little things that are far from headlines, but are some of the most rewarding things that any person and any member of parliament can do. My thanks to the family for being here in this special place today. Vale, the Hon. Neville John Harper.