




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2024

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Wood, Mr B, AM

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (9.42 am): I rise to give my support to the condolence motion. I want to associate myself with the comments of both the Premier and the opposition leader. Bill Wood was the first member for Barron River from 1972 to 1974. If you go on Wikipedia and look up my seat, which I am sure plenty of political experts do, his name pops up very early. It was one of the first names that I saw when I researched this seat many years ago when I was planning on challenging for it. Of course I never had a chance to meet Bill because he had obviously gone to the ACT many years before.

It was a privilege this morning to catch up with his wife, Beverley, and daughters, Andrea and Wendy. It has been commented on that they have travelled some distance from the ACT and Darwin to be with us here today. Beverley was remarking to me that Bill was not really happy with the electorate being called Barron River. He did not like the idea of 'barren', referring to a bit of a nothingness dust bowl. I can assure everyone that about eight months ago the Barron River proved that it is far from a dust bowl.

I asked the Parliamentary Library to see if they could dig up a map for me of what Barron River looked like back in 1972. It was remarkable in size. For the people who know that part of the world—and the member for Cairns and the member for Cook certainly know this—back in Bill's day the Barron River electorate ran from about where the Cairns Hospital is on the Esplanade, including all of those northern suburbs like Edge Hill, all the way up to the coast to the present-day Wujal Wujal on the Bloomfield River and then all the way inland past Mareeba and beyond. That was the Barron River seat back in 1972. Coming from the Cook seat before that, of course Bill was certainly well accustomed to long-distances.

The opposition leader mentioned him placing a request for a casual typist. We all know what correspondence is like, but could you imagine for a moment what it would be like driving around Far North Queensland in 1972. Air conditioning was few and far between: you basically wound the window down on the car—which was your office, of course. There were dusty roads and one-way bridges, if there were bridges at all, a wet season that probably cut you off many times, and then having to find time at the end of the day to write letters to premiers and ministers et cetera. I do look at that time and wonder what it would have been like to be an MP back then when there was no social media or mobile phones. I imagine that in a way it would have been nice, because people would write you a letter and then you would write them a letter back, and they would be happy for that to be a couple of weeks apart as opposed to 10 minutes. I think we can all appreciate what that would have been like. The Annexe here at parliament did not start construction until after Bill's time here, so parts of the precinct look rather different and others look much the same. In fact, I think this chamber we are in even had a modification done to it after his time here.

It has been remarked that he had an identical twin, Peter. I too found that in my research and I was talking to Beverley about it earlier. She did not elaborate on any examples, which is probably a good thing, but you could imagine the skulduggery they would have got up to. Imagine having two people who are identical twins in this place at the same time when we are only supposed to speak on one bill at a time and we are supposed to be in our allocated seat when we vote. I often wonder what would have gone on.

On behalf of the people of Barron River, I want to thank the Wood family for their service. I thank Beverley, Andrea and Wendy for coming to see us today. On behalf of the people of Barron River, thank you, Bill Wood. I extend my condolences to his family.