




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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ADJOURNMENT

Edwards, Mr T

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (7.05 pm): I rise to pay my respects to an esteemed member of the Ipswich community, Tom Edwards, who recently passed away on 16 February at the age of 87. Thomas Haddon Edwards led a remarkable life over his 87 years—one that was dedicated to service, family and faith. He was a familiar name to many Ipswich people, who knew him as the owner of the electrical store and family business RT Edwards & Sons.

Tom's father, Roy, started RT Edwards in 1931. When Tom Edwards finished school at the age of 15, he joined the family business as an apprentice electrician at RT Edwards, joining his older brother Llew, who also apprenticed as an electrician and went on to become Sir Llew Edwards, the former Liberal state member for Ipswich, Queensland deputy premier and Queensland treasurer. I want to acknowledge Tom's grandson Sam O'Connor, who now sits in Queensland parliament as the member for Bonney.

At the age of 19, Tom took over the RT Edwards business and turned it into a retail success story. In 1969, he opened the first RT Edwards electrical appliance store at Booval Fair, just across the road from my electorate office. After 77 years, the business that Tom's father started with just five pounds, employed 350 people and grew to 18 electrical retail stores, three furniture stores, a commercial division and an electrical contracting and service division. This is testament to Tom's business acumen and robust work ethic.

Tom started his career when electrical goods such as televisions, washing machines and fridges were becoming affordable household items to the majority of the population. Tom capitalised on this booming demand, but his real skill was in nurturing relationships with his staff and customers. He knew all of his staff by name and was widely known to have an open-door policy. He also knew his customers personally and made every effort to always put the customer first.

A great story recounted by Tom's son Gary was of the time a Panasonic delegation from Japan came to meet Tom at one of his stores to present him with an award. Tom refused to shut his office door during their meeting, and halfway through the delegation presenting his award he spotted a customer not being served and excused himself to attend to the customer. The Japanese were allegedly in awe of this display of exceptional customer service. It just sums Tom up perfectly.

Tom was known by many to be not only an outstanding businessman who had a passion to serve others; he was also a man of faith who loved his family and volunteered in leadership roles at his Raceview Congregational Church, where he was a life deacon. Tom's wife, Ivy, was the love of his life. For 64 years they were bound by their devotion to family and faith. Tom is survived by his wife, Ivy; their four children, Gary, Suzanne, Paul, and Anne-Maree; nine grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. I extend my sincere condolences to all of Tom's extended family and friends. Tom leaves behind a lasting legacy as a person who dedicated himself to family, his business and his beloved community of Ipswich. Vale, Tom Edwards.