



Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**


**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Freeman, Ms C

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (9.15 pm): Ipswich recently lost an exceptional woman. In fact, the Labor Party lost an exceptional woman—Colleen Freeman. She was born into the Labor Party and she lived out Labor values her entire life. She passed away last month at the age of 91 and she is going to be greatly missed by everyone who knew her, including me. Her grandparents were founding members of the party in North Queensland, and her father, a strong unionist and ALP member, encouraged Colleen to always be prepared to stand up and speak out against injustice, especially on behalf of those less fortunate.

Many people in Ipswich knew Colleen as the wife of the late, great Des Freeman, mayor of Ipswich from 1979 to 1991. Her contribution to the ALP was considerable and should be rightfully acknowledged here in this House. Some of Colleen's significant contributions include being the first woman to sit on Labor's administrative committee. She ran as a Labor candidate for the Senate in 1975. In fact, in that case she got pipped by Mal Colston. That is possibly not the best decision the party has ever made.

She was president of Labor Women in Queensland from 1973 to 1979. She was the founding organiser of the North Booval ALP Branch, which was the precursor of the Ipswich Central Branch, which is my branch and which is a few members away from being the biggest branch in the entire city.

She founded and established the Labor True Believers group, which is a group of older Ipswich branch members who met during the 2000s and 2010s. During that period a lot of our branch base was aging and a lot of them did not want to come out to meetings at night. Colleen, who was battling ill health and her husband had macular degeneration at that time and was caring for him, started this True Believers group, which ended up being a very dynamic branch in Ipswich.

During her husband's time as Ipswich mayor, Colleen set up the Mayoress' Welfare Committee, which raised funds to help children from disadvantaged families in Ipswich maintain their involvement in sport, education and the arts. Probably her greatest claim to fame was that she was a person of interest to Joh Bjelke-Petersen's special branch for her involvement in the labour movement and social justice issues.

Colleen said in a *Courier-Mail* article in 2016 that women like the late Vi Jordan, the Labor politician who was the second female ever to be elected to Queensland parliament, set an example for her. But Colleen herself also blazed a trail for women in politics. She was always a great supporter of mine and the Labor member before me, Rachel Nolan, who was the first woman to ever be elected to Ipswich. She was a very strong supporter. She was always there at the end of the phone for us whenever we needed her.

It is rightly fitting that we celebrate 30 years of Labor's affirmative action rule this month when we acknowledge women like Colleen who set a path for Labor women to become leaders within the party and within Australian politics.

I pass my sincere condolences to Colleen's children—Rachel, Phillip and Paula—their spouses, her nine grandchildren and her great-grandchild. Vale, Colleen.