



Speech By

**Hermann Vorster**


**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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## **MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Welford, Hon. RJ**

 **Mr VORSTER** (Burleigh—LNP) (9.47 am): I rise to join with others in honouring the life and legacy of the Hon. Rod Welford. I must begin with a note of candour: I did not know Rod personally. He belonged to an earlier generation of parliamentarians, and by the time I arrived here his service had already concluded. But as I have reflected on his career and the tributes paid since his passing, it is plain that his echo rings strongly still in this parliament, in our society and in my own community.

It rings in this parliament. Rod Welford was elected in 1989 as part of a generation that carried the reforming spirit of the Goss government. Over 20 years he served as attorney-general, as minister for justice, as minister for environment and natural resources, and later as minister for education and the arts. In each and every one of those roles he left a lasting impact. Colleagues recall him as a change agent. Never satisfied with the status quo, he expanded Queensland's national parks, championed water efficiency and created the environmental protection agency. He confronted land clearing head-on—a policy debate that demanded both courage and conviction. As attorney-general he pursued the reform of our laws and institutions with intelligence and rigour. In education he drove innovation, building campuses and opportunities that continue to serve Queensland students today.

Peter Beattie described him as one of the smartest and most thoughtful members of his cabinet. Others remember his humour, his generosity and even his habit of sneaking in a swim before community cabinet meetings while his colleagues were still clinging to their coffees. His echo in this House is one of reform, intellect and contribution.

Mr Welford's legacy also rings across broader Queensland society. Rod did not walk away from service when he left politics in 2009. He led the Australian Council of Recycling, became an adjunct professor and remained active in the great causes that had animated his career: the environment, social justice and education. Perhaps most powerfully, his philanthropy ensured that his values will endure beyond his lifetime. Through a personal bequest of millions of dollars to Queensland Gives, Rod committed support to the causes closest to his heart, as two environmental organisations, two social change initiatives and a scholarship program at Griffith University will continue to benefit. That bequest tells us something important: his service to Queensland was not a chapter of his life; it was the whole story.

Finally, his echo rings in my own community. For more than 50 years Rod Welford was a member of the Burleigh Heads Mowbray Park Surf Life Saving Club. He joined as a teenager, earned his bronze medallion, patrolled the beach, trained others and even chaired the club's constitution committee. He was a swimmer of remarkable stamina, often joining his mates on the long swim from Burleigh to North Burleigh and back. Leaders of the club described him as fair-minded, practical and always generous with his time and counsel. For the Burleigh community, his contribution will not be forgotten.

These three echoes—in parliament, in society, in community—reveal a life devoted to service. Rod Welford was an environmental reformer, a champion of education, a thoughtful attorney-general, a philanthropist and a surf lifesaver. He was also, above all, a devoted father to his daughter, Lisa, and a much loved partner to Gayle. In the end, all public service rests on the private bonds that sustain it, and our deepest sympathy goes to them and to his family and friends as they grieve this loss.

Though I never knew him, I can say with confidence that Queensland is better because of his service. His echo continues to ring in this place. On behalf of the people of Burleigh, I extend my condolences and pay tribute to a life well lived. Vale, Rod Welford.