



Speech By **Michael Berkman**

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (10.16 am): I certainly did not know Mark as well as the government members and do not have quite those stories to regale you with, but I did want to add some words in support of this condolence motion. Mark and I only overlapped in here for three years, as my first term was his final before his retirement. Although we were perhaps the proverbial chalk and cheese in terms of not so much our politics but our experience of this place and our understanding of how it worked, he was an absolutely invaluable mentor throughout my first term as we served together on the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, where Mark was the deputy chair. I spent that time on that committee along with the member for Nicklin in his first term, the member for Lytton and the then members for Thuringowa and Rockhampton. It is fair to say that that committee dealt with some of the biggest and most complex issues that were put before the parliament in that term, including abortion law reform and the inquiry into aged care, palliative care and voluntary assisted dying. Those were the early years of the COVID pandemic as well, so the health committee had a major role to play there.

As others have indicated, Mark came to these issues with such a genuine interest in what was going to be the best for the state, what was the best work we could do as a committee. While often times we might have landed on opposite sides of a given issue, I know that Mark approached it with nothing but the highest of integrity and the best of intentions. I suspect he probably might have personally liked to bring a level of nuance to his contribution in that committee that a two-party political system makes very difficult sometimes. I learned more from Mark in that time, not just about the actual business of committee work but also about how he carried himself and the way he contributed to those processes. I should mention as well that it was a bit of an all-star team back then, with not only Mark's experience in parliament but Rob Hansen as the committee secretariat that year. They had seen it all and it was an incredible schooling for me.

Mark really was the consummate gentleman. He carried himself with a kind of old-school chivalry that he somehow managed to not make stuffy but was very endearing, and there was a warmth to him. Committee work, as we heard from the member for Greenslopes, is a very rare opportunity for us in this place to connect personally and to develop relationships that can put aside, at least for a time, the political division and acrimony that is all too common here, and Mark was certainly great at that. He was all too eager to discuss the detail of whatever it was the committee was working on and the rest of the big issues in life. I recall one night when Aaron Harper, the member for Nicklin and I decided we were going to take a 'tripartisan' approach to solving all the state's issues. He wisely left before we got to the last of the 'too many beers'. He loved that kind of engagement and I really appreciated his contribution to my experience in the committee during that term.

He has always struck me as a humble, respectful and generous person and, as I have said, he really was genuine and straight talking. He was not especially gushy or overly effusive, but he always spoke with the greatest of love and affection for Judy and for his family. Of course, you cannot contribute as much as Mark did to the parliament, to the state, to his party and to his community without that

coming at a really substantial cost to your personal life and to that of your friends and family, so of course I want to offer my sincerest condolences to Judy and the family, especially in circumstances where Mark was taken far too soon. I know I speak for others on the crossbench who may not contribute in saying that. Vale, Mark McArdle.