

Speech By

Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE; SULLIVAN, MR JA, MP

Dr ROWAN (Moggill—LNP) (9.45 am): I rise to contribute to the condolence motion as moved by the Premier in relation to the former member for Stafford, James Anthony Sullivan. Jimmy Sullivan's life was shaped by his family, his education and a strong commitment to public service. In his first speech to this House, Jimmy identified his family and his education as two important influences on his world view. I can certainly appreciate the lasting influence that both can have upon a person's life and values. Jimmy spoke with great appreciation and affection for his parents, both of whom were teachers by training. He reflected upon the example they had set through their hard work and commitment to social justice. Both Terry and Trish taught at St Laurence's College with my late mother, Virginia Rowan, in the 1970s. I did not know that fact until this morning, and I am very appreciative of that discussion I had with Trish.

Educated at Our Lady of the Angels school, Padua College and the University of Queensland, Jimmy Sullivan trained as a lawyer and served as an associate in the District Court of Queensland. That legal work, too, took him throughout our state, including to Cooktown and Thursday Island, and brought him into contact with community justice groups including in Cape York and Woorabinda. Jimmy had previously spoken about how those experiences shaped his understanding of government services, law reform and the diverse need of Queensland communities. He later worked in government and law reform, both in Queensland and Canberra, and also gained international experience in the office of United States Senator Ron Wyden, as the Premier has mentioned. He went on to work for the then state leader of the opposition, the Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk AC, before serving for more than five years as chief of staff to the Hon. Yvette D'Ath across a number of ministerial portfolios.

Elected as the state member for Stafford in 2020, Jimmy represented his local community with passion. He was an ardent advocate for the Stafford electorate and understood the responsibility entrusted to him as its elected representative. Beyond his service to the people of Stafford, Jimmy also contributed to the work of this parliament through a number of appointments. From November 2020 until February 2024 he served as a member of both the Education, Employment and Training Committee and the Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee. In December 2023 he was appointed Assistant Minister for Justice and Veterans Affairs, a position he held until October 2024.

As the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for education from 2020 to 2024, my responsibilities naturally brought me into contact with Jimmy through his work on the Education, Employment and Training Committee. Whilst we approached education policy from different political perspectives, those respective roles gave me an appreciation of his commitment to parliamentary committee work and his interest in education and training.

My impression and knowledge of the former member for Stafford was of someone who was deeply loyal to the Labor Party and the broader labour movement. Whilst our political beliefs differed, I acknowledge the conviction with which he pursued his cause and remained committed to the principles in which he believed, both before and during his representative career.

As I conclude my contribution I reflect on how the finality of death is deeply confronting. It leaves family and loved ones to endure extraordinary grief, heartache and loss. As a doctor, I have always struggled with the inevitability of death and the profound toll it takes on those who are left behind. The complexity of the human condition means that every life is marked by both challenges and successes. Every human life has inherent value and each person should be cherished for their unique individuality. Jimmy Sullivan made a notable contribution through his professional career and service to the labour movement and his time as a member of the House. I extend my condolences to Jimmy's parents, his siblings, his wider family, his friends and all those grieving his loss. Vale, Jimmy Sullivan.