



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONDOLENCES

Mr Peter James Andren

SPEECH

Thursday, 21 February 2008

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Questioner
Speaker Cobb, John, MP

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Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (11.10 am)—Like the member for Banks, I rise to speak about Peter Andren. For somebody without a political power base he was extraordinarily well known not just in his own electorate of Calare but throughout Australian politics and far beyond his ability to influence things—although he certainly exerted that whenever he could.

The electorate of Calare, which I am very proud to represent, is today a very different electorate. Instead of being one of the smallest rural electorates in New South Wales it is now the largest. The Calare that Peter represented had a little more than half the constituency of the new electorate of Calare that I represent, even though, funnily enough, it had only about five per cent of the total area.

Peter Andren was generally well known and very popular among the people of Calare—I am not worrying about the people in this place for the moment—probably because he dedicated himself to the individual rather than to the big picture. He certainly did that. He was very popular. He certainly took up the cause of individuals from the central west in a very strong fashion with whichever minister or organisation they had issues which needed addressing. As to the big picture of politics, Peter and I quite often disagreed. The one thing we certainly did agree on was dedication to the people at a local level. As the member for Banks just mentioned, Peter was born at Gulargambone and lived at Molong before he became the member for Calare. Funnily enough, while Peter and I are obviously from very different ends of the political spectrum, as it were, I too grew up at Gulargambone and lived at Molong prior to becoming the member for Calare—even though it was only a few months before.

Peter Andren entered parliament in 1993. He served four full terms in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Australian parliaments. He had chosen to stand for the Senate in the 2007 election but he resigned from that ambition once his medical condition became known to him. As I think the member for Banks also said, as an Independent he could do those things whereas the rest of us are probably a little more constrained by the organisations we represent on a wider basis.

Peter Andren represented the Calare electorate, which then included Bathurst, Lithgow and areas right up to the Blue Mountains. I think it is a measure of your sincerity when those who support you do so in a fanatical way. Peter's close friends and supporters did that. Even into the last election and after he had died, Peter's partner, Valerie, tried to carry on where he had left off. All those involved with him were very close to him and thought the world of him. They were people from very different walks of life. There were people from all over the old electorate of Calare at his funeral, and they were from all walks of life.

As I moved around the area prior to the election I found that, whether or not people actually voted for Peter, they were very supportive of Peter and felt that he had their best interests at heart. As a politician, you cannot ask for much more than to have people who do not support you in the ballot box still think you are a good person. You cannot beat that.

I speak today not so much as a political colleague but as somebody who now has the honour to represent the same seat and more than 50 per cent of the people whom Peter had represented. It is an electorate that, I believe, still needs to be represented in this forum today. On behalf of the people of the new and old Calare electorates I offer the sympathies of the people of this House to Valerie and the rest of Peter's family. Without doubt, he will be remembered for a long time in that region.