



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONDOLENCES

Mr Robert Wilson

SPEECH

Thursday, 17 September 2009

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Cobb, John, MP

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Mr JOHN COBB (Calare) (4.00 pm)—Mr Speaker, on indulgence: Robert Wilson was a legend in local government and a legend, with his wife Vicki, all around the Central West, particularly in the Parkes region. It is hard to remember a time when he was not involved in everything of note that happened in the region. Vicki was always with him, and she and Trudy and Ben are going to have a lot of support from all the people of the region in the time ahead; and obviously they will need that. As someone who knew Robert over many years—I do not know how long; he was always around—both as an agripolitician and as a member of parliament, I probably saw him a little differently to the locals. They saw him as somebody who fought, each and every day, for whatever it was that the people of the Parkes shire and the Central West needed or desired.

I guess, because of my position, I saw him more as somebody who was truly a leader. Every leader, I think, who makes a mark needs a vision, and Robert Wilson certainly had that vision way beyond just the local issues. He was, as the Leader of the House said, very much focused—and from my position totally focused—on Parkes and the Central West becoming the distribution centre not just for the Central West but for eastern Australia and even further afield than that. He did more than any other person to make that, what is fast becoming, a reality.

Robert was the Mayor of Parkes for about 23 years. Prior to being the Mayor of Parkes he was the mayor of the municipality of Peak Hill. He had, I think, 43 years in local government—and most of those as the president or the mayor of whichever municipality or shire he was in. Robert was a senior person who retired 14 months ago. I guess the quality of the man and the quality of Vicki, his wife, was such that they were forever besieged by people wanting them to do jobs for them. He had the respect and the love of everybody in the area. It is hard to imagine him not being around. I guess Vicki and Trudy and Ben at least know that their husband and father was one of the most respected people that I have ever known in the Central West.

Obviously we think also of Kevin Marshall's family. Kevin hailed from Orange these days, and not so many years ago lost a grandson in Dubbo who was killed on a bike. It was a very tragic thing. So the Marshall family have a lot to grieve over and our thoughts are with them as well. It has been a tragic time in the Central West for car accidents—there have been about five. I do not quite know how many people have been killed on the roads over the last week but I guess Tuesday brought the reality of it home to all of us.

The SPEAKER—I have no doubt that all members would expect me, on behalf of the House, to associate the House with the comments made by the minister and the member for Calare. We extend our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the deceased.