



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

McMillan Electorate: Mr Ranald Webster

SPEECH

Wednesday, 17 March 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP

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Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (9.53 am)—Madam Deputy Speaker, I must admit that I missed the little sign outside McGregor Gardens that said ‘Rita and Ranald will play today at two o’clock’, but once I was inside the building I heard the beautiful and melodic sounds coming from the dining room where Ranald was playing. Ranald Webster, who was in the Air Force in World War II, is a man with but one ambition: to serve others without charge and without favouring one above another.

You would know Ranald Webster, Madam Deputy Speaker. He became the charred, unrecognisable face of the Ash Wednesday bushfires. Burned within an inch of his life, the doctors said that Ran, as he is known by us all, had a four per cent chance of survival. Ran’s picture was on front pages around the nation and the world. Since then Ran, who survived miraculously, has been a mentor and a beacon of hope to burns victims.

Thank you for the music, Ranald. Standing in McGregor Gardens I was struck and somewhat emotional at the beauty of the harmonic sound only siblings can achieve as they drifted into *It’s Twilight Time* as they played for the gathering, and then when his most genteel wife Rae approached and spoke of his health and wellbeing, which was challenging.

Ranald and Rita are celebrating 65 years together on 21 March. They have been a very firm part of the music community. I first met Ranald at the Pakenham Town Hall when he was playing in a band. I did not know then that my future wife was distantly related to Ranald. He probably wondered what this young kid was doing hanging around the bands in our community and wanting to be part of the elite, which I surely was not.

Seeing Ranald play there with his sister the other morning, I was struck not only by the beauty of the sound, as I have outlined, but also by the songs out of my father’s era and out of my era. Then my wife turned to me and said, ‘Russell, go and sing with him one more time. Go up in front.’ But I said, ‘Bron, I actually can’t,’ because I would have spoiled the beauty of what was happening in that room.

Ranald, thank you for the music. Thank you for the contribution you have made to so many people in our community. Thanks for setting out in the cold on the days when you were collecting for Red Cross. Ranald, thank you for being yourself, for just being Ranald Webster, and thank you for the wonderful years of music you have given to our community.