



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Overington, Ms Karen

SPEECH

Wednesday, 17 August 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker King, Catherine, MP

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Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (09:58): I rise to give my condolences on the passing on 11 August of Karen Overington, the former state member for Ballarat West and someone who has been very influential in the political life and the social life of Ballarat and of many people within my electorate. I particularly want to record the condolences of Mathew Jose and Rick Youssef, who have both contributed to the remarks I want to make today. Karen really was a remarkable person and was, I think, very much larger than life. She lived her life throughout very much helping others. She came from a fairly tough background and brought all of those experiences into her civic life. Ballarat is very, very much a richer place for her decision to participate in civic life. She certainly knew political success, which we were very pleased about. She spent 16 years in local government in the borough of Sebastopol, including as mayor, and the city of Ballarat. The people of Sebastopol returned her to local government at every opportunity—she was very much a champion of that community. She also spent 11 years in state government as the member for Ballarat West. She was elected and re-elected at three elections and served for the duration of the Bracks and Brumby Labor government, but unfortunately had to retire due to her ill health. She spent a great deal of time listening to local residents and working with them to ensure that Ballarat was a better place to live, raise a family and work.

She also knew political failure. She failed in her first attempt in state politics and experienced the abolition of the borough of Sebastopol, something she was very opposed to, at the hands of the Kennett government. She played a central role in the party in Ballarat during the wilderness years from 1992 to 1999, before taking the seat from the Liberal Party and building a healthy electorate majority. She did not seek election just for the sake of it; she took all her responsibilities to the community very seriously. She will be remembered very much by me for some of the achievements that never made it into the newspapers: her quiet dignity in looking after people and standing up for people in the community who were often very disenfranchised.

We did not always agree. Karen was a fierce arguer, and there were times when we would have fierce disputes over issues. My own political upbringing is all the better for that, for having those arguments with her and learning my craft from her. She certainly delivered on basic services that mattered. She was very fierce, not having had the educational opportunities herself, in making sure that working-class people in her district did have them. Ballarat is very much a better place for having had Karen as our member and for having had her engaged in civic life. I certainly will celebrate her life at her funeral on Friday. We say, 'Vale,' Karen Overington—you will be deeply missed in our community.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper): Order! In accordance with standing order 193 the time for constituency statements has concluded.