



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONDOLENCES

Randall, Mr Donald James

SPEECH

Monday, 10 August 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Fletcher, Paul, MP

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Mr FLETCHER (Bradfield—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications) (15:38): In this condolence motion for Don Randall, we have heard many speakers reflect on where they were when they heard the news about Don's sudden and untimely death. In my case, I had just finished a community meeting in Turramurra. As we were leaving, a member of my staff, without saying a word, handed me a smart phone with the news item that was running. Like everybody else who heard this news, I was shocked, and I found it difficult to believe that this large and vigorous personality, this man with such a zest for life, was suddenly no longer there.

I was a parliamentary colleague of Don's for a little over five years, and he made an impression on me in a number of ways, as he made an impression on so many of us. He made an impression first because he was so clearly a knockabout bloke, a man with a broad life experience, not a silvertail—a man who demonstrated in every aspect of his life that ours is a party for all Australians and that parliamentarians in the Liberal Party come from all walks of life. We have heard about Don's 20 years as a teacher—a special needs teacher—and it is hard to imagine a more important and worthwhile contribution than that. We have also heard about Don's many other life and work experiences. And softly be it said, but there is no shortage of former lawyers and corporate executives in the parliament, but it is very important that the parliament reflect the full diversity of our community. In his background, in the way that he conducted himself, and in his vigorous use of the Australian vernacular and the rich and colourful language for which he was so well known, Don is somebody who demonstrated the diversity of our party and our aspiration to represent everybody in Australia.

Don, of course, made an impression on me, as he has upon so many, through his remarkable effectiveness as a campaigner in not one but two seats and as an advocate for his electorate and the people he represented. Of course, the numbers speak volumes. The first election he won in Canning he won by a narrow margin and, as the years went on, the margin got stronger and stronger and stronger. It is a reminder to all of us in this place of the importance of the work that we do as local representatives and the fact that the individual efforts that we make, the meetings that we attend, the doors that we knock on, and the times that we spend standing on railway station platforms or in shopping centres are noticed. And, over time, if you work hard, you can build up some credit in the bank. Nobody has done that more effectively than Don Randall, and the numbers speak to that powerfully.

At its worst, politics can be pretty disappointing. But, at its best, politics can deliver outcomes that no other process can deliver. It is timely to be reminded, in the life and work of Don Randall as a politician, of the importance of representing your electorate and of the outcomes you can deliver for individuals. Not always—perhaps not even on the majority of occasions—but from time to time, as a local member of parliament, you can deliver an outcome for a constituent which makes their life better. And Don did that so many times. One of the reasons that he did it was, as so many speakers in this debate have remarked, that he was a fearless, relentless and consistent advocate for the interests of his electorate.

In March last year, I visited his electorate for a series of meetings that Don had organised in relation to the question of whether there were any locations in his electorate that were suitable for the provision of new mobile phone base stations under the Mobile Black Spot Program. Don very effectively arranged for a number of local leaders and local citizens to make the case for the needs of their communities.

We were able to deliver one new base station on the Pinjarra Williams Road. But Don made it clear to me that, while he welcomed that, he felt we could have done better. Indeed, in a moment that I think was pure Don Randall, at the media conference when we announced the national outcomes of the Mobile Black Spot Program, after a series of questions that were not tough questions because the program had been well received, Don decided that he was not going to wait for an opportunity. He stood up and asked the question why his electorate had received only one new base station. I thought that was absolutely Don, not missing a chance to stand up for his electorate and make the case as to why the people he represented deserved outcomes. That was an example of his determination to do everything he could to deliver them the outcomes that he believed they deserved.

The final aspect of Don that I want to reflect on briefly is his character and his conduct as a wise, experienced, long-serving, very senior parliamentarian in this place. Don was generous to a fault with his counsel and his support for more recently arrived colleagues. I recollect very fondly just three or four months ago a dinner at Italian and Sons, I think it was, with the member for Swan, the member for Longman, the member for Wright and, of course, the member for Canning, Don Randall. I was a late ring-in. The table was a little too small for the group, but Don was very, very generous and welcoming. It was a privilege to share some time with him then, as it has been a privilege to share time with him on other occasions during the all-too-brief time that I was able to be a colleague of Don's.

Like all in this place, I am saddened at his untimely death. I want to convey my sympathy to Julie, Tess and Elliott and to Team Randall—Chloe and the team. Don was known for having an efficient, hardworking office. Certainly on the occasion of my visit to the electorate of Canning, I was extremely impressed. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to be a colleague and friend of Don's for a period of time. I only wish it had been so much longer than it was.