



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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DR HILDA DES ARTS

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (11.46 a.m.): On Sunday Dr Hilda des Arts died in Ipswich at the age of 86. Hilda led a wonderful life and made an extraordinary contribution to our community. On behalf of the people of Ipswich and the many members of this parliament I wish to record that contribution.

Hilda was born to German and English parents in 1915 during the Anglo-German war. As a child of both countries and both cultures, Hilda grew up to understand the animosity that a failure to understand and communicate can bring. Hilda's life was committed to sharing the spirit of humanity.

Unusually for a woman of her time, Hilda went to university and completed a PhD. She entered business, starting a printing company that eventually employed 300 people and she raised two daughters on her own. Midway through her life Hilda moved to Ireland, where she ran a hotel. In 1978 upon retiring from formal work, Hilda decided to move to Australia and chose Ipswich without ever having been there because she thought it would be a city with a strong community spirit. Her next career, she had decided, would be working in the community.

As a resident of Ipswich, Hilda made a driving contribution to a number of organisations. Before she came to us, Hilda had had the tragic experience of watching her daughter die in her early 20s. Hilda was distressed that hospital was not an appropriate place for a young person to die and she became committed to the idea of hospices for palliative care. In Ipswich in the early 1980s Hilda banded together with a number of other local people and established the first steering committee for the establishment of Ipswich Hospice Care. While the process was an extremely long one, the hospice is now an established haven in which six people at any one time can receive palliative care in a peaceful environment.

In the last decade Hilda had established Senior Net in Ipswich and, as the movement expanded, became its national president. Senior Net brings older people together, giving them the skills and support to use the Internet and, hence, to be part of the modern world. The organisation lists among its objectives bridging the generation gap between seniors and computer literate youth and being part of the present, not just clinging to the past. As part of her role promoting Senior Net, Hilda spoke to almost a dozen organisations and travelled as far as Perth last year. Hilda was a founding member of Youth Serving Australia, a counsellor with Lifeline and was closely involved with the Aboriginal youth organisation Teen Care. She was committed to bringing people together and breaking down social barriers, particularly the generation gap. She was a proud old person and lived in old age well. She fervently believed that there is a place in society for older people to contribute and that it is up to older people as much as it is up to society more broadly to create that place.

Hilda once said to me that she had no desire to be young again, only to be old well. Hilda made an immeasurable contribution to the Ipswich community and her death on Sunday has left a gap not just in our organisations but in our community spirit.

I was one of the many people who counted Hilda among their personal friends and that has been one of the privileges of my life. She had tremendous faith in me and encouraged me to contribute, to believe that good can be done and to be true to myself. Hilda showed a wonderful lesson that it is possible to contribute throughout life and taught me to look forward to, rather than dread, getting old. Hilda had been ill since before Christmas and she had sometimes been in serious pain. I feel that Hilda was ready to go and I wish her well on her journey.