



Speech by

RACHEL NOLAN

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard 30 April 2003

MR D. COOPER

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (12.32 a.m.): On my mother's side of the extended family I come from good National Party stock. It is a point I make with pride, not because of the politics but because of the family's contribution and sense of civic responsibility. The most significant contribution was that of my great uncle Des Cooper who died in Warwick yesterday. Uncle Des was the youngest of five children raised on a farm at Bony Mountain near Warwick. His father died in a farm accident when he was two and the family of women worked hard to keep the dairy farm for Des. As children, my grandmother Gene would harness the Clydesdales for Des to work because only she was tall enough to reach the yokes over their heads. The family did keep the farm for Des and he worked it all his life. It was extended and is now worked by his sons Gary and Tom.

Des Cooper was a leader in his community. A long-time member of the National Party, he sat on the Rosenthal Shire Council for more than 30 years and was deputy chairman for the seven or eight years to amalgamation in 1992. He was one of the first farmers to realise that there had to be regulation of water and began working towards that in the late 1970s, well before the environment was a popular public issue. He was involved in a number of Condamine catchment committees and river trusts.

The Coopers are horse people and Des was patron of the Cunningham Polocrosse Club. He was instrumental in the club securing its grounds, grounds which have hosted the best players in the world this week. Most recently, Des was instrumental in organising the Bony Mountain school centenary, and he was determined to live to see it through. Most importantly, Des was the cornerstone of a big, close family. He worked hard all his life for his family and is survived by his wife Venetia and six children—Gary, Janelle, Glenda, Sharon, Robin, Tom—and his grandchildren. The member for Cunningham, Stuart Copeland, and Leader of the Opposition, Lawrence Springborg, have also expressed their condolences. My uncle Des Cooper was a committed and kind man. I was always touched by the pride he showed in me, though he thought I was a little misguided in my politics. It is very hard to think of our family without Des. He will be sadly missed.