



Speech by

Hon. Rachel Nolan

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard Thursday, 6 August 2009

HAEBICH, REVEREND B

Hon. RG NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (Minister for Transport) (5.46 pm): I rise to acknowledge the life of Reverend Bert Haebich, who died in Ipswich a little over a week ago at the age of 95. Bert Haebich, the eldest child of a family of German origin, was born in Hahndorf in South Australia at a difficult time in history—June 1914. He grew up in Hahndorf and had a clear recollection of having been taunted as a child for his different—German—background. Upon finishing school Bert went to Adelaide, where he studied at Concordia College and became a pastor in the Lutheran faith.

Just before the Second World War, as a young pastor Reverend Haebich moved to Queensland, where he ministered to the German Lutheran community at Dalby. During this time he also met his wife, Ruth. Once the war commenced, Reverend Haebich, like others from German background, came under police surveillance, though he always said that was not too bad because the policeman in Dalby had a German wife.

Inspired by that early sense of being singled out, Reverend Haebich's maturing ministry came to focus on the marginalised. When the war ended he was called to Brisbane, where he did a great deal of work with the first wave of postwar migrants. He also developed a particular skill repairing pastoral bonds in divided parishes and undertook this work when called to Newcastle and Wollongong. Later he was called back to Queensland, where he formed his most enduring bond, with the parish at Marburg.

Reverend Haebich and Ruth had four children—Bob, Joan, Lynette and Anna. He passed on his sense of justice to his children. Lyn, who has since passed away, worked as a children's nurse; Joan was a music teacher; Bob has done some wonderful legal work for Aboriginal justice; and my good friend Anna is an internationally renowned academic, who wrote the seminal history of the stolen generations.

Like many Queensland Lutherans, Reverend Haebich was a rock-solid Joh man, but in 2004, at the age of 90, he voted Labor for the first time when he supported my re-election. I did not know Reverend Haebich well—he was an old man when I met him—but it was clear to me from the outset that he was a profoundly good man with a sense of moral certainty, of justice and of compassion born of rich life experience and unflinching Christian conviction.

The Ipswich community and others were blessed by the good life of Reverend Bert Haebich. May he now rest in peace.