

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 5TH APRIL 2012

BAKER, HON. D.S.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (14:44): I rise to support the condolence motion for Dale Baker. Former Liberal member of parliament, Dale Baker died in Adelaide recently, on 28 March, at the age of 73. Tributes from both sides of politics soon appeared in the city press for the man who was opposition leader from 1990 to 1992, when he held several ministerial roles. Dale was born in Millicent, as we heard earlier, on 30 January 1939. He was educated locally and also at Scotch College in Adelaide.

Dale was the elder of two sons. His late parents, Bob Baker and his wife, Jean, who was a member of the local Spehr family of the South-East, were English migrants. Dale was a successful grazier who later turned his hand to native flower production, vineyards, the Simmental stud and broadacre farming. Among his other business interests were olives, the Padthaway Homestead and winery, and swimming schools. He even owned the freehold of the Tiger Hotel at Tantanoola for a while.

His local community service was marked by over 20 years as the chairman of the Millicent Hospital Board, as well as player life membership of the Millicent Football Club, with more than 200 senior games. I also share the passion for Port Adelaide that Dale had. Dale was the Liberal MP for the Millicent-based seat of Victoria (which turned into MacKillop) between 1985 and 1997. As I indicated earlier, this included time as opposition leader from 1990 to 1992. In recent years, Dale suffered from motor neurone disease, and this forced him to step down from chairing the Limestone Coast Regional Development Board, now known as the RDA.

I want to add a few of my own personal thoughts. I first met Dale in 1984. I was a young learner shearer and I went down to shear for six weeks, I think it was, in Dale's brother Dean's shed at Callendale. Then we went down to the sheds at Furner and Woonallee. We had been going seven days, and I was only doing about 75 or 80 sheep a day. I am sure the President in the other place would be quite appalled at that low number of sheep. Be that as it may—

The Hon. I.F. Evans: Quality shorn.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, quality shorn. Margaret, the workmen, and I think there might have been some of the kids there then, turned up with a pet sheep. I said, 'There's no way I'm shearing a pet; I'm only a learner.' We were already calling Dale 'the politician', even though he had not been elected. I said, 'I am not cutting up the pets for a politician.'

Certainly, since that time, I have had a fair bit to do with the family, especially his brother, Dean. I worked for him as a shearer for many more years, and it was always an enjoyable time. I met Dale's father, Bob, who was a true gentleman. He would walk into the shearing shed with a white coat and always come down the board and have a chat to the shearers. I saw Dale over the years at many Liberal Party events and many local fundraisers involved with my branch, the Lower Murray. I will finish with a couple of thoughts. Dale never let his position get in the way of who he was and the true character he was. My sympathies go to Dale's family and friends.