

4 September 2008

ADJOURNMENT

Mr Patrick 'Paddy' Koppman
Mrs Trish Spillane

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (5.44 p.m.) — I rise to pay tribute to two members of my local community who passed away recently, both of whom I knew very well and respected. They were both champions of my local community.

Mr Patrick 'Paddy' Koppman, born in 1921, was a life member of the Australian Labor Party and of his trade union, the old Federated Storemen and Packers Union. In 2001 Paddy was awarded a Centenary Medal for his service to the community and to politics. Educated at St Joseph's College as a boarder, Paddy was driven, from an early age, by a desire to serve his community and his God. He entered the Catholic seminary and began his training as a priest, but after a number of years this training suffered a setback after he contracted a bone infection in his legs and he spent two years in and out of hospital in plaster casts. It was during this time that Paddy met the woman who would become his wife, Josey, and discovered that his true vocation was as a loving husband and father.

Paddy's contribution to his community was guided by his devotion to Mary and his belief in the rosary. As a result, Paddy became a prolific maker of rosary beads, a set of which I was honoured to receive. He would make multiple sets of these rosary beads and distribute them to local schools, community members, members of his parish—to anyone whom he felt might benefit from praying the rosary.

Paddy's other great guiding light in life was his belief in the ideals of the Australian Labor Party, which he joined in 1946. He was a committed member of the trade union movement and committed to equity and social justice.

After living in Cabramatta for much of their lives, Paddy and Jo retired to Cambridge Park, in my electorate, in 1983. Whilst living in Cabramatta, Paddy worked tirelessly for the election and re-election of the local Labor Party representatives, which included the former Prime Minister and member for Werriwa the Hon. EG Whitlam. Paddy was a great supporter of mine, and during my first federal election campaign in 2001 he staffed the pre-poll booth on most days. I might add that he was approaching the age of 80 at that point. He broke down in disappointment when neither I nor Labor won that election, but I know that he would have been very proud on 24 November 2007. Elected Labor representatives are carried into office on the shoulders of great men like Paddy Koppman. To Paddy I owe a personal debt and so too does the Australian Labor Party. I pass on my regards to Paddy's wife, Jo, and his family. He was a great man indeed.

I would also like to pay tribute to another great community worker, Mrs Trish Spillane. Trish was a long-time member of the St Marys branch of the Red Cross, tirelessly raising funds for the numerous causes that are generously supported by the Red Cross.

In her early days, Trish was a keen swimmer, racing against Australian Olympic great Dawn Fraser at North

Narrabeen pools and selected for the train-on squad for the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. She could have been among the ranks of Australia's golden girls of the pool, but her family could not afford to send her to Melbourne. For Trish, this was probably a blessing in disguise. A few years later she met her husband, Joe, and they began their long life together. In fact, they would have celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary next month.

With three children, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild, Trish had her hands full but she never declined a request for assistance and she lent her great energy, commitment and good humour to every task. I valued my friendship with Trish and, along with my local community, I mourn her passing. Trish was a great local contributor and her absence will be sadly felt by many in the St Marys community. I pass on my condolences to Joe and his family and wish them all the best in the future.

Individuals such as Paddy Koppman and Trish Spillane, great community workers and advocates, are the very glue that binds together a community such as that in which I live. Today I acknowledge their tremendous contributions to our community and wish their families all the best in the future.