



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**Main Committee**

**CONDOLENCES**

**Hon. Kenneth Shaw Wriedt**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 25 October 2010**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<p><b>Date</b> Monday, 25 October 2010  <b>Page</b> 42  <b>Questioner</b>  <b>Speaker</b> Sidebottom, Sid, MP</p>	<p><b>Source</b> House  <b>Proof</b> Yes  <b>Responder</b>  <b>Question No.</b></p>
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**Mr SIDEBOTTOM** (Braddon) (4.29 pm)—I rise as a proud Tasmanian because I think it is important that I support the motion and acknowledge the significant contribution of a passionate adopted son of Tasmania, Kenneth Shaw Wriedt, better known as Ken Wriedt. Through his efforts both in this place and in the Tasmanian parliament, he has indeed earned himself a prominent position in the history books of this nation.

Like my late father, Ken Wriedt was born in Melbourne and came to Tasmania following wartime service, as has been mentioned by several of the condolence speakers, with a career in the merchant marine. Indeed, he had a passion for all things maritime and pursued these throughout his life. It was not that long afterwards that his more than half a century of association with politics began when he joined the Labor Party. This was also the time he struck up another longstanding partnership, with his wife, Helga, which also lasted half a century till very recently when she too, sadly, passed away—a passing that grieved Ken greatly.

Ken's rise through the Labor Party was hardly swift, with three attempts before he was preselected to run for the Senate. In 1967 he was elected as part of a new Whitlam team and entered what is still one of the most memorable—indeed, some would regard it as infamous—periods of politics in Australian history. It was a time that shaped the political aspirations of many in this House today, including my own.

By the early 1970s his talents saw him made the Minister for Primary Industry from 1970 to 1975 and Minister for Minerals and Energy, also in 1975. Ken also became the government leader in the Senate and later Leader of the Opposition in the Senate from 1975 to 1980. He played an important role in the reformist agenda of the Whitlam years, seeking to bring Australia's agricultural sector forward to a new global future which is still today being realised. I know Ken would have been very honoured to have the current leader of the Nationals pay tribute to his significance both as the minister and also as a mentor to him and someone who gave him the inspiration to continue his political career.

He was well known for admitting that as a merchant seaman he could not tell a merino from a Corriedale but he proved his worth, as we have had testified today, and gained the respect of the agricultural sector by listening and consulting—something that is not amiss at any stage when dealing with that very important sector. Ken's federal ministerial career came to an abrupt halt, along with others, in November 1975 and one really does wonder what he might have achieved had fate not taken such a twist. As Senate leader he was one of the key players in the famous dismissal of the Whitlam government, something that the current Attorney-General attested to with some personal information in relation to his father, who was a friend of Ken Wriedt. It is something that political historians will discuss and debate for many years to come.

He finished his term in the Senate in 1980 but his contribution was not over. He turned his focus to Tasmania and won a seat in Franklin in the Tasmanian parliament in 1982. It is great to have the current federal member for Franklin in the chamber today and I know that she will be paying special tribute to Ken Wriedt very soon after me. He became Leader of the Opposition soon after, from 1982 to 1986, and was a minister from 1989 till 1990 in the Michael Field government as Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Roads and Transport. His links to parliament continued until recently, with his daughter Paula also a significant contributor to Tasmanian political life. She was a minister and successful member for Franklin from 1996 to 2009.

Ken Wriedt is survived by his daughters, Paula and Sonia, and four grandchildren. I join with others in this place and extend my deepest sympathies to Ken's family and friends and also thank them for his fantastic and considerable contribution to his state and nation. I note also that the state funeral for the Hon. Ken Wriedt will be held at the Federation Concert Hall in Davey Street, Hobart at 11 am on Wednesday, 27 October 2010. Unfortunately, not everyone in this place who sought a pair to be able to attend the state funeral of this very significant contributor to Tasmanian life will be able to attend, so I ask those who are attending to please pass on my deepest sympathies to those of Ken Wriedt's family who will be there.