

We The People
Program 158
The Member for Ducks



We Australians are pretty good at recognising our fellow countrymen and women when they excel. This happens through war and peace and its part of our nations DNA to acknowledge the works of good people. Our country has been built by a united folk who strive for freedom and peace and in terms of technology we have always punched above our weight and contributed on a global scale. Its good we remember the fine Australians who have contributed and the nation applauds it. Today however I wanted to reflect on ordinary folk like us, who by and large are not known for our works but nonetheless do good things in our everyday lives. Mostly these things are not recorded in histories pages but they count for so much.

Elizabeth Sharp is one of these people and a quiet achiever who passed away at 92 just a few weeks ago here on the Gold Coast. You probably will not have heard of Elizabeth but that matters not because Elizabeth Sharp represents the ordinary Australian who built this country. Elizabeth was born in 1922 and spent most of her life as a school teacher with various qualifications and a love of French. Her focus however was primarily on English and she taught the way we were taught reminding students of verbs and passive participles. Mind you in the class room there was nothing passive about this fiery principled school ma'am who was kind enough but stern when it came to the Queens English. She recounted a day when she came into class and a room of softly giggling students only to see the following written on the black board.....**Sharp is a battle axe**.....her immediate and silent response was to walk calmly to the blackboard, taking up chalk and to write in perfect script.....**yes and the battle axe is Sharp**. Thus began their English education.

Underneath that formidable front was a caring English teacher who loved the language and who we would be proud to have our children taught by today. I remember once actually sharing my opinion about a certain Southport councilor who I found to be a very poor representative of the people. Elizabeth flew back at me and said.....“don't you say that about her or I'll give you lines”. I said hang on I'm 61 and you can't give me lines. She responded without hesitation..... **"I'm 86 and I'll give you lines anytime I want"**. Listeners, it goes without saying that no one except for Elizabeth gives me lines, not even Hilton, although he tries.

The thing I liked about Elizabeth apart from a sense of occasion even for afternoon tea, was her love of wild life and the planet. She served in the local chapter of the Wild life Preservation Society as well as giving to various wild life funds such as Green Peace and Gecko. Her donations were modest but consistent and isn't that what counts in life, in the end. I suspect she had a lot less time for people and a lot more time for the ducks on the lake next to her home in Robina. It was common place for my long standing neighbour Elizabeth to invite me over for drinks on the patio and discuss all manner of things. I have a penchant for politics and parliament and so because of Elizabeth's predisposition toward wild life I seemed to fall gently and easily into refereeing to her as the **Member for Ducks**. It didn't take long for her to return that friendly volley and refer to me as the **Member for Dogs** because of my love for German Schnauzers. So the aging Member for Ducks would pontificate on high and hold court in her fenceless back yard watching carefully as the contractors mowed the park often roaring at them to leave the grass longer for the ducks. What fun and what dedication and most of the park contractors were on Prozac but the ducks got more than a fair go.

So I will miss Elizabeth and while most will not have known her, many will benefit as we do through the small works of so many which when summed, amount to a lot. The park is a little quieter now and I feed the ducks and the magpies and water dragons because should I forget I know a voice will thunder from above and *give me lines*. Good bye my old friend, the Member for Ducks.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley