



Speech by

## Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Wednesday, 4 June 2008

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### PROBERT, MS S

**Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (9.18 pm): I rise tonight to put on the record my deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Shirley Probert, who passed away on Monday, 19 May 2008 aged 80 years. Shirley Probert was born Shirley Wilson on 6 August 1927 and lived in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada. After leaving school she worked as a secretary for a finance company. Shirley married Frank Probert on 23 December 1947—61 years ago. Their son, Gregory, was born in Canada. The Proberts made a decision in 1956 to come to Australia to get away from the subzero temperatures of the Canadian winters.

On arrival in Australia they decided to take up tobacco growing at Millaroo but the cigarette manufacturers became unwilling to purchase the Burdekin leaf. In 1960 they moved to Sawpit Gully south of Bambaroo near Ingham to establish a new tobacco-growing enterprise.

Not only were the Proberts faced with clearing the land and erecting buildings for curing and storing the leaf, they were faced with the construction of dams to provide the necessary irrigation for the crop. These were major challenges. Growing tobacco entailed a wide variety of activities including planting seedbeds, preparing ground, laying out irrigation, harvesting and processing the leaf. The Proberts were innovators when it came to reducing costs and improving leaf-curing techniques.

Shirley became a jack-of-all-trades. Unaided, she would make ready the seedlings for the day's transplanting. Shirley was also the bookkeeper. During the tobacco harvesting and grading season, there was a high demand for farm labourers. Shirley always prepared an abundance of sandwiches and cakes and brewed coffee for the crew to look after their valued employees.

The Proberts were enthusiastic supporters of stock-car racing. When the Savannah race track in Townsville closed down, with the help of volunteers a track was built on the Proberts' property at Bambaroo. Shirley was involved in the running of many successful meetings. Shirley, along with her husband, Frank, was a strong advocate for the National Party, regularly attending local meetings and travelling to many destinations around the state to participate in party conferences. If Shirley had an issue to raise, she made others attending the meeting well aware of her point of view. Shirley was very involved when there was a fundraiser to support the party and to help at polling booths on polling day.

Shirley supported the Nationals through many successful periods and through many difficult periods, but always faithfully and proudly, believing strongly in the policies and philosophies of the party. Shirley's health deteriorated in recent years. She and Frank made the decision to move to Townsville to be nearer to services and their son, Greg. Despite her difficulties, she made a determined effort to remain active and participate in the activities that she took an interest in, including politics and the National Party. Shirley Probert was a devoted wife, a loving mother and a loyal friend and will be sadly missed. My thoughts and prayers are with Frank, Greg and Shirley's friends during this difficult time.