



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

23 AUGUST 1977

### CONDOLENCE MOTION - MR. R. F. X. CONNOR - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

I move -

"That this House expresses its deep regret at the death, on 22 August 1977, of the Honourable Reginald Francis Xavier Connor, Member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly 1950-1976, Member of this House for the Division of Cunningham from 1962 and a Minister of the Crown from 1972 to 1975; places on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service; and tenders its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement."

It is my sad task to speak today of the death of one of the best known Members of this House, the Honourable Member for Cunningham, Rex Connor. Rex Connor was the son of a waterside worker from the city of Wollongong, a city which he was to serve faithfully throughout his life.

He was Dux of Wollongong High School, and subsequently qualified as a solicitor by working in a solicitor's office and studying part-time for the Solicitors Admission Board Course. He had a long and notable record of public service. For six years he was a member of the Wollongong City Council. In 1950 he was elected to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly seat of Wollongong-Kembla which he held continuously until 1963 when he resigned to stand for Federal Parliament. He won the seat of Cunningham at the 1963 General Election and retained it until his death in Canberra yesterday.

From December 1972 to October 1975 Mr. Connor was Minister for Minerals and Energy, and on two occasions during that period he served as acting Prime Minister of Australia.

Rex Connor had a great capacity for work. He enjoyed wide support in his electorate and in his party. He was assiduous in looking after the affairs of his electorate. Doubtless they recognised him as a committed nationalist, a committed socialist, a lifelong enthusiast for the Labor cause in which he so fervently believed.

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His primary interest, particularly in more recent years, was Australia's energy resources. His policies on this issue were quite distinctive and controversial. As a Minister, he was unremitting in his determination to bring those policies to reality. While many disputed the wisdom of his minerals and energy programme, none doubted for a moment the strength or sincerity in which he held and espoused his views. Indeed, he has almost passed a word into Australian language - "Connorism".

Whether or not one agrees with the sentiment which underlies that term, it is a mark of the impact that Rex Connor had on this House and in the wider international community. I found on my recent overseas trip that there are many overseas who still remember him.

Rex Connor exhibited at all times since he joined this House complete loyalty to his party and to his leader. When he was in difficulty he made no attempt to clear himself at the expense of others. That of itself indicates an uncommon degree of dedication and commitment.

Our late colleague was a significant Member of this House. All Members were ever conscious of his presence. He will be sadly missed. I am sure I speak for all of us when I say to his sons and grandchildren that we offer them our deep sympathy in their loss.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I think I should add that Mr. Connor must himself have been deeply saddened in recent times, for his own wife died only last April.

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