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Member : Mr STONE

Status : Chief Minister

Extract: Honourable members will be aware that, at the request of the Prime Minister, I represented the Australian government and, of course, the people of the Northern Territory, at the recent state funeral in Indonesia of Madam Siti Hartinah Suharto. Prior to the funeral, I conveyed condolences to President Suharto and his family at the Suharto home at Solo in central Java, along with visiting dignitaries including the President and Prime Minister of Singapore, the Sultan of Brunei, the Prime Minister of Malaysia and the Prime Minister of Thailand.

Some sense of the loss felt by the Indonesian people can be gauged from the fact that Madam Suharto was referred to as Ibu Negara - Mother of the Nation. We can well imagine the personal loss experienced by the President, who is a very valued friend of the Northern Territory. Madam Suharto, the mother of their 6 children, had been a pillar of support and a close adviser during their 48 years of marriage. Throughout his career, President Suharto was rarely seen in public without her at his side.

Known as 'Tien', Madam Suharto was a descendant of Javanese royalty and the daughter of a district officer in the Dutch colonial administration. The Suhartos married in 1947 when the President, a farmer's son, was an independence fighter, a Lieutenant-Colonel in Indonesia's revolutionary war against the Dutch. Tien was a volunteer with the Indonesian Red Cross and the Indonesian Women's Legion.

After Mr Suharto became President in 1966, Tien increased her community work through a number of charitable organisations, initiating projects that contributed to the health, education and social wellbeing of the Indonesian people.

A Muslim, who made the pilgrimage to Mecca, Indonesia's First Lady died of a heart attack at the age of 72, on the day of the Muslim festival of sacrifice. The passing of Madam Suharto is a sad loss to our friends and neighbours in Indonesia and I ask honourable members to join with me in expressing our sympathy to the President and his family and to the Indonesian people.