



**NORTHERN TERRITORY
of AUSTRALIA**

THE OPPOSITION

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
GARY HIGGINS MLA
Member for Daly

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
LIA FINOCCHIARO MLA
Member for Spillett

HANSARD EXTRACT

TRIBUTE

Mr Grant Heaslip

(Thursday, 14 March 2019)

This extract is taken from the Draft Daily Hansard of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, and will be subject to further edits by the Hansard Unit before incorporation into the Parliamentary Record.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett):

Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I rise to pay tribute on behalf of Gary Higgins, the Leader of the Opposition and myself, to Grant Heaslip. I do so knowing that whatever I say will be totally inadequate as a tribute to this great man from Central Australia.

Born in Adelaide in 1939, Grant and his wife Jan moved to Alice Springs where they purchased Bond Springs Station in 1965. They arrived in the middle of an eight-year drought. Every dam was dry. The country was dry and according to Jan, there was no garden. There were only dust storms.

Once the drought broke in the late 60s, there was only a short reprieve. The grass grew but this was followed by bushfires and everything was wiped out. For Grant and Jan, life was tough until the decision to start breeding cattle and selling them to make money. Grant hung on and over time made a success of running Poll Hereford cattle on the 1500 square kilometre property, just 15 kilometres north of Alice Springs.

He was a shining example of a Territorian can-do approach with the energy and tenacity to match. He was a man who was small in height but a mighty man of great stature who was a passionate and active advocate for pastoralists, the cattle industry and a proud Territorian.

Grant was a man who cared deeply about the land, livestock, the environment and the land's sustainable uses. In 1977, Grant was

appointed a member of the Livestock Producers Consultative Group to the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation. He was subsequently appointed the Chairman of the NT Rural Land Advisory Group.

In 1977, Grant led a Northern Territory trade mission to the Middle East including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iran. The delegation's purpose was to convey to the countries visited some of the basic details relating to the Northern Territory and the immense potential displayed in this part of the country; to establish closer ties with countries to our north; seek out markets for our cattle and beef, particularly the possible reopening of markets for live slaughter cattle and if necessary, to examine ways our produce could be made more acceptable to their markets; to explore potential markets for NT agriculture products to complement the beef industry's falling income; and to explore interest in possible joint venture arrangements.

In providing their report, Grant expressed the delegation's thanks for the opportunity given to them to officially represent the government overseas and to play their part both in the expansion of the Northern Territory export trade and the economy as a whole. He was a trailblazer in his endeavour to contribute to the future economic prosperity of the Northern Territory.

Inevitably, this esteemed pastoralist became the inaugural President of the NT Cattlemen's Association in 1984. In that

capacity, Grant demonstrated exceptional leadership until he was stood down in 1987 to make way for John Dyer. According to an article in Queensland Country Life, Ken Wilcox wrote:

Grant was the logical choice to lead the newly formed association when it came into being in 1984. He possessed initiative and a pioneering spirit and earned high respect in the community for the pivotal roles he played in sporting, economic, political and educational organisations at Territory, national and international levels.

Those qualities were also expressed in his business interests and resulted in a diversified and vertically integrated pastoral operation involving feed lots, abattoirs and retail as well as property development and investment interests.

His stewardship in the formative years of NTCA is evident from the fact that within one year of its establishment, the association was representing 117 full members accounting for over one million cattle which equalled 77% of the NT herd at that time.

Grant remained a selfless industry champion throughout his life and that contribution was recognised with the award of NTCA Life Membership in 2005.

Then NTCA President, John Armstrong, paid tribute to Grant through a poem he work in the spirit of Kipling's Jameson. To quote:

*If it weren't the vision of our
forebears bright
And the encouragement of dignitaries
like De Vos
If they'd not had the courage to light
the light
We'd be forever bushed as sad and
sorry loss.*

*If there'd been none to stick his hand
up to be the leader
For all those who could skite
leadership or give lip
If we could see for the Herefords
there was from the centre
His name, ladies and gentleman, was
Grant Heaslip.*

During his stewardship of the Cattlemen's Association, his achievements are too many to mention in the time I have tonight, but please let me name a few—the funding of the Mudginberri Abattoirs to fight their claim against the unions, the incorporation of the association, the support by the Perron CLP government to purchase the Rowe Creek cattle yard complex, the purchase of associate own offices in Darwin, government codes of conduct on pastoral properties, declaration of brucellosis and tuberculosis-free properties, modified registration of station vehicles was agreed by the Northern Territory Government, instigation with the Northern Territory Government of an economic study to lay down a blueprint for the future investment and development of the industry, the instigation of a drought relief scheme with the Northern Territory Government on environmental and economic basis, establishment of the NT cattle and buffalo industry group, to name a few.

The success of the organisation that Grant helped create can be judged from NTCA's

standing as the Territory's peak industry body now representing 90% of the pastoral industry. At the time of Grant's passing in January this year, current NTCA President Chris Nott said Mr Heaslip will be sadly and deeply missed by all. NTCA would celebrate and acknowledge Mr Heaslip's contribution to the industry at an appropriate time after a private family service at Bond Springs.

His passion for advocating for the pastoral industry and training continued throughout his life. In fact, just before he passed away station owners and cattle industry leaders gathered in Alice Springs in late 2018 to see the official opening of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association's specialised training facility. The facility was named after Grant, and in doing so, Chris Nott said of Grant:

He is an absolute stalwart of the industry and we are very pleased to have an opportunity to recognise his contribution to the NTCA and the Central Australian pastoral industry by naming this facility after him.

Unfortunately due to his failing health, Grant was unable to attend the opening, but he would have been pleased to know that the NTCA will use the facility to train the participants of the pastoral Real Jobs program, including Indonesian students. The Bohning Yards facility is equipped with an in-site workshop, cattle yards, horse area, cattle, horses and motorbikes for use in training, as well as a variety of common farm machinery.

The Leader of the Opposition reflected that he could just imagine that wry smile on Grant's face as he thought, 'Well there is another great outcome for our young people, who will be trained correctly and safely to look after and respect the animals, the land and themselves.' I am sure you will all agree that Grant was so much more than a pastoralist. He was a father, husband, friend, industry leader, political party leader and a supporter of young people.

Grant was President of the Country Liberal Party from 1987–1988, at a time of the formation of the National Party in the Northern Territory. The CLP is forever indebted to his contribution to the party. Grant's support for young people and the good of the wider Alice Springs community included the Heaslip Arid Zone Research Scholarships, the Heaslip Research Project through St Philip's College; Grant's patronage of the Alice Springs Cycling Club, Pioneers Football Club, community clubs and events over many decades.

He also held a vision to promote local product through the Territory and throughout the 1980s and 1990s worked cooperatively with colleagues to supply and promote local beef products in butchers' shops in each major town throughout the NT. Grant further supported his wife Jan's great passion for restoring and preserving Bond Springs station. Their four children all received their primary education in the little old school room which is also, along with all the historic buildings on Bond Springs, heritage listed.

Here a governess taught them lessons sent from the correspondence school in Adelaide and also broadcast from the School of the Air, which is situated in Alice Springs. Grant and Jan have run Bond Springs Station and Bond Beef, and with their children have created a private tourist operation at the station where tourists can see a fully operational cattle station and have home cooked meals.

In 2014 Jan opened the historic Bond Springs Station to the general public as part of Heritage Week. The Opposition Leader at the time was the minister for Arts, and he had the pleasure of visiting Grant and Jan to celebrate this historic occasion. I read with interest some thoughts from Grant's wife, Jan, from *The Times*' archives. It read:

Station women, although generally independent and hearty, are not trained for the job. "You have to have a feeling for this life," said Mrs. Heaslip, who grew up in a small town in the south. Before she married Grant Heaslip and they bought Bond Springs Station she had that affinity for pioneering life and had tested it. "I was a governess on a station," she said. "I knew what it was like."

Mrs. Heaslip believes that station men choose their wives carefully: "Marriages do fail, but not many. Men look for a woman who will share the load. A woman works hand in hand with her husband. Because its such a hard land, a man needs his wife with him."

Husband of Jan; father of Tania, Meliss, Brett and Ben; father-in-law of Steve,

Chris, Fiona and Laura; Grant had eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

The Territory is privileged to have had the benefit of Grant's wisdom and friendship. I know Gary Higgins, the Leader of the Opposition, is grateful for Grant's friendship and loved catching up with him when he was in Alice Springs.

The vast Northern Territory is a better place because of him. Rest in Peace.