



### **Hon. David Tonkin Tribute**

4 October 2000

**Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders):** I wish to pay tribute to the Hon. David Tonkin, mainly because he is one of the major reasons I am here. He spoke at a meeting back in the late 1960s in Tumby Bay, where I was a very nervous 19 year old school teacher. It was on that occasion that I asked my first political question and became interested in politics, which became a lifelong interest. I did not meet with David again until after I had come back from 6½ years in Papua New Guinea and had started the Young liberal movement in Port Lincoln, where we had a very enthusiastic group of Young Liberals. When I heard of David's passing I thought back on it and remembered what I did to him, and I thought, 'My goodness; I hope nobody does that to me.' We had a walkathon and I asked David if he would please come across and walk to the top of Winter Hill which, as anyone who knows Port Lincoln well knows, is the highest hill, just behind Port Lincoln. We made David walk all the way up Winter Hill and, not only that, we made him walk all the way down. We raised over \$2 000 for anti-cancer, and in today's dollars that would be a considerable amount of money. We had a barbecue and it was wonderful. He was a most pleasant and hospitable person.

After that I was a very strong Liberal member and became the Chairman of the Liberal Party in Port Lincoln, much to the horror of some of the men of the district, who could not believe a woman would become President of a mixed gender branch on Eyre Peninsula, which was very conservative at the time—

*Members interjecting:*

**Mrs PENFOLD:** It has not changed very much. After we came back from Papua New Guinea my husband and I noticed that there was a problem with the distance and isolation on Eyre Peninsula. In particular we saw children with cross eyes, crooked feet and other quite obvious disabilities that were not being corrected. One of the reasons was that the parents could not afford to pay for the transport to take children to the specialists who were all located in Adelaide, and that also meant paying for accommodation. Many people had not even been to Adelaide in their whole life, and others had been perhaps once or twice. The cost of having these disabilities corrected was insurmountable for them, so there are still people there who grew up with these legacies.

We lobbied to have patient travel assistance put in place just before the Tonkin government came in, and the prospective Liberal government made a commitment. We did not really think they would get in, but we thought that if we could get this commitment maybe we could get patient travel assistance. With great pleasure we saw that when the new government took office that commitment was honoured. That strengthened my faith and belief in the political process and my understanding of it; and my continued belief in it has made me stand here today and pay tribute to a person whom I thought was a very great man. So, I extend my greatest condolences to his family and friends who grieve for him.