

**STATEMENT BY SPEAKER**  
**Reverend Jim Downing AM – Death of**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, it is with deep regret that I advise of the death of the Reverend Jim Downing AM on 4 January 2009, a Minister in the Uniting Church in Australia, a former Moderator of the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church, the instigator of the Institute of the Aboriginal Development, a fighter for justice, and a great Territorian.

Honourable members, I advise you of the presence in the gallery of many visitors who have come here today to listen to this condolence debate.

I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the family and friends of Jim Downing: his widow, Shirley Downing; his two sisters, who travelled from Melbourne to be here; his daughters Bronwyn, Kathy, and Sue; and many distinguished visitors as well.

Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the official officers' gallery of the former Administrator of Norfolk Island and former member of this Chamber, the Hon Grant Tambling; former member for Macdonnell and former Deputy Labor Leader, Neville Perkins; the Synod Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia, Mr Peter Jones; the Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra OAM; Bishop Ted Collins, the former Bishop of Darwin; Reverend Wendell Flentje, the Moderator of the Uniting Church in Australia; the past Moderator of the Uniting Church in Australia, Reverend Steve Orme; and Hon Brian Martin, former Chief Justice of the Northern Territory. On behalf of all honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I would also like to, as an aside, say there a number of people who are here today who are neighbours and friends of Jim, from Shackle Street in Anula. As Australians, we are very aware that many people do not know any of their neighbours whatsoever. It is a tribute to the man that, in fact, almost the whole street is here today. On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome those people from Shackle Street in Anula.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**CONDOLENCE MOTION**  
**Reverend Jim Downing AM**

**Mr HENDERSON (Chief Minister)(by leave):** Madam Speaker, I move - That this Assembly:

- (a) express its deep regret at the death of Reverend Jim Downing AM, a valuable member of the Territory community, and
- (b) sends its profound sympathy to his family and friends.

In paying tribute to the Reverend Jim Downing in the Assembly this morning, we celebrate the life of a man whose contributions to the people of the Northern Territory is not measured in bricks and mortar or in the accumulation of material wealth, but in the lives of the people he worked with for over 40 years. He was a man of faith and a man of vision. He was always convinced that the Northern Territory could be a far better place and that the lives of Aboriginal Territorians, in particular, could be vastly improved. For this last reason alone, he was also - in the best of possible traditions – a stirrer and something of a troublemaker. This is, perhaps, no better summed up than his experiences gained in childhood and as a youth growing up in the Great Depression in Melbourne. He was the eldest of six children, living in the working class suburb of Footscray, one of the heartlands of Aussie Rules - Jim took up Rugby Union.

In World War II, he was an apprentice patternmaker, and then a tradesman - a role vital to the war effort. At the same time, he was heavily influenced by the union movement, workers clubs, and the church. However, it was the church that provided a greater calling than union or party politics. Against his father's wishes, he joined the Brotherhood of St Lawrence and began social worker training in 1957. The same year, he married Shirley, his partner for more than 50 years.

In 1959, he was ordained and assigned to work in Redfern, where he spent six years. It was the beginning of a ministry with Aboriginal people, but a ministry - also in the words of Dr Stuart Philpott - of working with many others amongst the 'homeless and marginalised'.

Redfern was a time, too, of building a family, with three of his children born in Sydney, followed by the youngest born in Alice Springs where Jim was sent in 1965. It was the beginning of four decades of service to the people of the Territory. Eloquently described in this way by his daughter Kathy at Jim's memorial last Saturday: 'His ministry was simple: meet people's needs'.

That he did. He recognised early that the massive changes occurring in Central Australia at the time ill served Aboriginal people, whose levels of literacy and education were wholly inadequate to cope with the cash economy. He established the first courses for Aboriginal mothers in dietary and budgetary matters. From the beginning, he realised the necessity to provide language training and took it on himself to learn Pitjantjatjara as his parish took in the Pitjantjatjara lands in northern South Australia and south-east of the Territory. Thus began the internationally recognised Institute for Aboriginal Development which, to this day, provides educational, language, and publishing services.

It was work that led to Jim receiving an Order of Australia in 1978. Just as significantly, the same award went to Yami Lester, the Aboriginal man who was to succeed him as the Director of IAD in 1980.

Jim's work also led to the provision of interpreter services and the desegregation of wards in the Alice Springs Hospital whilst he served on its board. At the same time - as the Administrator, Tom Pauling, has pointed out - Jim's work in the courts assisted in the establishment in 1976 of the Supreme Court Anunga Rules relating to the questioning of Aboriginal witnesses. As a great lover of music and singing and, as a footnote to history, Jim would have been happy to know that it is probable that the Anunga Rules is the only judicial ruling ever set to music by a rock band.

Jim worked with the people of northern South Australia to establish the Pitjantjatjara Council, a precursor to the APY land rights act passed by the Tonkin government in 1981. Jim was also involved with the Alyawarra people who were evicted from Lake Nash and assisted them to gain title to traditional land at Alpururulam. A successful agreement was finally reached with Lake Nash management and the CLC in 1988.

Much of Jim's work with people on remote communities and outstations led to the publication of the book *Country of My Spirit* in 1988. Having handed over leadership of IAD to Yami Lester, Jim moved to Darwin in 1980, where he worked for many years at the Aboriginal Advisory and Development Services or ARDS. Amongst many other projects over this time, Jim undertook organisational training with Aboriginal organisations throughout the Northern Territory and the Kimberley, particularly with the CLC and the Kimberley Aboriginal Pastoral Association. This included the seminal publication *Understanding Constitutions* released in 1982. This was the sort of fundamental governance training that was not picked up by governments for a decade.

Mind you, Madam Speaker, much of the work continued well after his formal retirement. In 2003, he was working in Epenarra on a project with World Vision. His last project was in 2007, successfully working with the people of Mutitjulu to lift the suspension of that community's incorporated association. In an irony, that work was completed a week before the announcement of the Northern Territory Intervention.

Jim's daughter, Bronwyn, last week recalled that her father, Jim, was often away from home as part of his work, but their close-knit family always looked forward to his return, 'with a fresh handful of stories'. I can only imagine what it must have been like sitting around the kitchen table at the Manse in Alice Springs. He would have had more than a 'handful', there would have been thousands of stories to be told as he and his work touched so many lives.

The Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra from Galiwinku, who has described Jim as a spiritual father and mentor, first met Jim in Alice Springs in the 1970s, and was told their job was not just as a pastor in parish, but 'We must stand with the people'. That really sums up Jim's life; he stood with the people. He stood for social justice for the people. It was why the Pitjantjatjara people gave him the title '*Tjilpi*'. It is a word that means more than 'old man', it implies the possession of wisdom. In this case, as Reverend Gondarra said, it was wisdom from his heart.

More than five decades of Jim's life was in partnership with his wife, Shirley. I will leave it to others to speak of their marriage, but draw the Assembly's attention to a small corner of Nightcliff in which this partnership lives on. It is a humble reminder: the Uniting Church clothing collection bin. Shirley, the artist

of the family, designed the artwork for the collection bin. For days, the two of them, working side by side, painstakingly painted it together. Over a decade-and-a-half later, it is still there as a small memorial to a loving relationship, as well as Jim and Shirley's enduring commitment to the life of the church and their community.

My sincere condolences to Shirley, your children and grandchildren. Today, we all stand proudly in this Assembly, Madam Speaker, to speak passionately about the great difference that Jim Downing AM made to the Northern Territory. All of us try, in small ways, to make a difference, and Jim really did make an enormous difference and touched the lives of many thousands of people. May he rest in peace.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, the opposition joins in this condolence motion to recognise the passing of a man - a man who can rest in peace - who has made a great contribution to others lives. His legacy continues in the thoughts and the words of others. You can have no greater legacy than that which you leave written in the lives of people, and there is such a legacy.

One only has to read the record of letters that Jim had written to editors over many years, and the message was constant. There was a burning passion for justice behind every one of those letters. I did not know Jim well, but I had met him on a couple of occasions. They were memorable occasions, because he made sure he never missed an opportunity to keep that fire burning; to ask a question; to drill down and to ensure that you were accountable. He spoke the truth and he spoke it boldly, and with dignity. I still remember being stopped on two occasions. He made use of that time to pass on a very important message which went beyond the superficial and straight to the core issues, and it stays with me today.

As I have seen in so many letters written by Reverend Downing, the core of the message when he was speaking of the need to look at the past was to gain the tools to move on: you cannot ignore the past, we cannot live in the past, but we must learn from the past. These were his words. His legacy is contained in these words, because these words should motivate us to continue.

We have nothing to put in the place of people's roots and sources of renewal which were contained in their ceremonies and traditional beliefs, and vested in their science. I know of no convincing social work or sociological evidence which supports the need to cut off these roots in the name of advancement of their lives. To the contrary by doing so we produce social and psychological disruption to a people with costly, though never adequate, social service remedies. There was something deeper constantly behind the words expressed by Reverend Downing. It would be wise to listen carefully to these words. They live on, there is a legacy there. When the opportunity arises to speak for justice, it must be deep justice that is delivered.

The man's work, given an understanding when you understand that man's motivation, is that of a man of faith. That is a faith which believes that all are created equal; a faith that believes that all are created in the image of God. If that is the case, then how noble is the task to champion the plight of those who are disaffected or disconnected from a dominant culture? How noble is that task? That is why we pause today to honour and respect one who has made that a life's cause. It must touch us, it must challenge us, otherwise our activities are but dust.

Jim gave 40 years of devoted service – devoted, hard, genuine, heartfelt service that I am sure caused him sleepless nights, such was the depth of his passion and the cry for justice. He stood for those who felt they had no voice, and was the voice for those who felt they could not express, be understood, or understand.

He came to the Territory in 1965. It is a further testament and reinforcement of his character that there are people who lived in the same street here to witness today's proceedings. He had 50-plus years of marriage. That is a lesson to all of us – loving, enduring, constant marriage in a time when relationships are challenged by the forces of this world; to see that endurance and to see his neighbours and others living in the same street here today to celebrate his life. It is a challenge to every one of us.

He lived in Alice Springs and then, in Darwin. However, those who know the record of the man know that his home was with those who needed representation, those who felt they were disconnected or who felt they had no home or place. That was where his home was. Home is where the heart is, and his heart was alongside the underdog - even extending to East Timor. His heart could not cause his mouth to be silent on issues that concerned him and he spoke up. He never hid it inside himself. As I said at the beginning, he spoke. He spoke to me on a couple of occasions, and I remember those words.

He was a writer of books. Those words were expressed and were written down. It is good to write books. It is good to have something to write about. He had something to write about and his words remain with us in his books.

Importantly, I believe, he was an advocate for cross-cultural understanding. That is the core of it: an understanding of those who are our fellow citizens. He saw the evidence of a lack of understanding nationally and the effect that has had on decisions that were made by the powerful. He was a pioneer of Indigenous education and a promoter of Indigenous leadership.

My colleagues, this is a man who will rest in peace. As his heart led him to speak, to struggle and to fight, now he is in the arms of the everlasting; a man of faith who has come to the end. I am confident to say that the end of a journey such as this should be noted, not only noted with words in this Chamber in recognition of the legacy he left, but we should be challenged by his testimony, with the added words: well done, good and faithful servant.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mrs AAGAARD (Nightcliff):** Madam Deputy Speaker, it is with great sadness that I speak in the condolence debate for the late Reverend Jim Downing AM, who died on 4 January 2009 at the age of 82 at the Darwin Hospice, surrounded by his greatly loved wife of 51 years, Shirley, and his family.

I knew Jim as a friend, spiritual mentor and dogged fighter for justice, particularly for the poor and oppressed. It is impossible for me to speak of Jim Downing without speaking of faith, so I apologise to members for the move away from the secular in my speech. I reflect on the comments of former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in a recent interview on the ABC *Compass* program, who chose not to speak of faith during his time as Prime Minister for fear of people thinking him a nutter. I will take the risk in memory of my good friend.

I first got to know Jim and Shirley Downing around 16 years ago when I became a member of the Nightcliff Uniting Church. I had met him a few times socially before that when I was a member of the Darwin Memorial Uniting Church. He was a Moderator for the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church, which is similar to a bishop, and was respected throughout the country for his work with Aboriginal people, the poor and the oppressed.

The President of the Uniting Church in Australia, the Reverend Gregor Henderson, who sends his apologies to the parliament for not being here today, paid tribute to Jim as one of Australia's churches great saints. He said for those who had known Jim since the 1970s his contribution to the life of Australia, to our Aboriginal sisters and brothers, to good relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, was way up there. Reverend Henderson said that Jim had made that contribution with courage and with sacrifice and he was supported unfailingly by Shirley, who is no less of a Territory hero and saint. Reverend Henderson went on to say that Jim's commitment to justice for Aboriginal Australians had been a most significant influence throughout the Uniting Church, and a major factor in the establishment of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress in 1985, and in the Uniting Church's strong stance with and for Aboriginal people ever since.

Jim was not your average church man; he hated false piety. He particularly hated the Bible being used as an instrument to discriminate against others, and the misuse of passages of scripture to justify things such as slavery, the subjugation of women, the oppression of non-Caucasian people which led to racism and, in his later years - after much prayerful consideration and, particularly as he was a very conservative man - the use of the Bible to discriminate against gay and lesbian people.

In his first parish in Redfern in Sydney, he worked with Aboriginal people for the first time. He was a social worker as well as a minister of religion. In those days, ministers of religion wore full black suits with a white jabot, similar to ones used by judges and barristers. On the first occasion that he had to appear in court for a young Aboriginal boy as a character reference, he realised that he was dressed in almost identical garb to the magistrate, and he decided from that moment that he would never wear the uniform of a minister for fear that people he was serving would consider him to be judging them. He preferred the simple suit which, I might add, became even more casual when living in the Territory – simple shorts and shirts with sandals was his standard dress code.

Jim was a man who was intent on changing the world for the better, particularly for Aboriginal people and, as such, he became friends with many politicians over a 40-year period. While he was political, he was not party political, and he was a great admirer of the Liberal Aboriginal Affairs minister, Fred Chaney

who, he claimed, was Australia's best Aboriginal Affairs minister; and also Ian Viner, who played the same role. He spoke warmly of former Legislative Assembly member, Neville Perkins; Warren Snowdon; the member for Macdonnell; and many others.

When I was first elected in 2001 and appointed as Health minister, Jim was very pleased for me. He hoped that I would meet his very good friend, Victorian Liberal Senator, Hon Kay Patterson, at some stage. Kay had been a family friend of the Downings since the Redfern days. As a teenager, she would spend most afternoons after school at the Downing home and used to babysit the Downings' son, John. Kay, who attended the memorial service for Jim on Saturday, told me if it was not for Jim and Shirley, she would never have finished her education nor had a lifelong passion for music. Jim used to relate the story of how, when Kay was first elected to the Senate, he rang and told her how proud he was of her and her achievements. He then went on to say: 'Do you think the Lord got the party right?' When Kay became the federal Health minister soon after I was appointed, he said to me: 'It looks like the good Lord got the party right after all'. Indeed, Kay and I went on to become quite good friends because of our link with the Downings. I can say we worked very cooperatively for the Territory and remain friends.

Jim was a man well ahead of his time and believed strongly in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. He had close friends across the religious spectrum - and I acknowledge Bishop Ted Collins who is here today, who I know to have been a close friend of Jim. Jim believed that it was important to work on the things that unite us as human beings and as people of faith, rather than concentrating on the things that divide us; to always look for the good in people and assume that they are your friend.

As an aside, Shirley was telling me a story yesterday about Jim when he was Moderator of the Uniting Church. He was supposed to appear at St Mary's Catholic Cathedral for the opening of the legal year. He arrived early and it was teeming rain, and he had had to borrow a Moderator's robe - because, of course, he never wore robes - from a previous Moderator. It was immaculately dry-cleaned, covered in plastic and on a coat hanger. He was carrying his minister's stole and a pair of shoes. He got to St Mary's and, instead of going to the main entrance of the cathedral to find the vestry, he decided to dash through a side entrance because it looked faster. He ended up fully immersed in the pool beside the cathedral with the beautifully laundered robe saturated, as well as his shoes. He staggered out of the pool and found the vestry, where he found Bishop Collins who asked what on earth had happened to him. After explaining, Bishop Collins found him a Catholic priest's vestments, which Shirley noted were more transparent than the Uniting Church version. I am not quite sure what that means, exactly. He was wearing his sandals and, apparently, there were comments after about him wearing sandals. Nevertheless, they did the job and, after the service Jim had to get back into the pool because his glasses were still at the bottom. While he was trying to find the glasses, Bishop Ted came out and started throwing things into the pool. Jim asked: 'What on earth are you doing, Bishop Ted?' and he replied: 'Throwing the fish back into the pond that you blasted out during your immersion'.

I also have a short comment from the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier, who, as members would know, was the Anglican Bishop for the Northern Territory, who also asked me to pass on his condolences to Shirley and family. Archbishop Freier had been a great admirer of Jim and his work with Aboriginal people, and talked of him as one of Australia's saints.

I did not know Jim during his years in Alice Springs, but I would like to use some of the comments that were made by Dr Stuart Philpott, a well-known Australian who has worked with Aboriginal people for more than 40 years, and who also worked with Jim and Shirley in Alice Springs:

*In 1965, Jim and Shirley received a call to accept a role as a Minister of the Word with the Flynn Church in Alice Springs, with a special ministry to Aboriginal people. Alice Springs then was a remote town, small and not more than 5000 people, and was heavily reliant on the pastoral industry, the railway which ended there, some mining, and government work. At that time, the majority of Aboriginal people in Alice Springs and the surrounding regions were wards of government, award wages were not on the agenda, and most Aboriginal people were paid in rations, clothes and some cash.*

*The Manse was in Hartley Street and it backed onto the prison cells behind the police station where the cries of prisoners could regularly be heard. It was also alongside the Griffith Hostel and was part of the United Church in Northern Australia complex that provided support to the patrol padres and other Australian Inland Mission staff. Today, it is the site of the Yeperenye Shopping Centre.*

*It was at the kitchen table in the Manse that Jim Downing's ministry began. It was here that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people would receive hospitality, be listened to, counselled and*

*guided. It was here that political agendas with Aboriginal leaders were discussed and strategies planned. It was here that the first language course for non-Aboriginal staff and the English language, and numeracy courses for Aboriginal adults were discussed, designed and prepared.*

*It was at the Manse and its surrounds that vulnerable bush mothers and children sought day time refuge under the trees in the back yard, where white and black kids played together and where, at night, families camped further inside the Uniting Church in Northern Australia block.*

*Amongst Jim's first challenges were the desegregation of the hospital wards and the improvement of police procedures in the treatment of Aboriginal suspects and witnesses. He was well placed to address both as a hospital Chaplain and, later, as a member of the Alice Springs Hospital Board. He witnessed the differential treatment and the fear and anxiety many Aboriginal people experienced when dealing with legal or health authorities. It was the observation of the stress Aboriginal people experienced when communicating with non-Aboriginal people that led Jim Downing to conclude that language was a crucial aspect of his ministry, and he commenced to learn Pitjantjatjara. It was this initial interest and learning that would evolve into the language programs for the future Institute for Aboriginal Development.*

*As Jim's language facility grew, his relationships with a number of Aboriginal people intensified, particularly among the Anangu of northern South Australia and south-west Northern Territory. In part, this was due to the Ernabella connection, and in part due to the agreement between the churches as to which church would minister to which language group. This relationship with Anangu was to lead to the beginnings of Jim Downing's involvement in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara land rights struggle. However, as his relationship with the Anangu was developed a new challenge emerged.*

*In 1967, the Northern Territory Administration replaced the rations system with an early form of CDEP called the Training Allowance. This, effectively, introduced Aboriginal people to a cash economy and the need to buy goods and services instead of being provided. At the same time, Aboriginal infant mortality was increasing. At one stage, it was second highest in the world after India. Jim, together with doctors Kerry Kirk and Barry Wittenburry, quickly recognised that there was an urgent need to educate nursing mothers on the nutritional value of store bought food. So began the first courses for Aboriginal adults run by what was to become the Institute for Aboriginal Development.*

*In 1969, the Uniting Church established the Institute for Aboriginal Development with Jim as its founding director and, by 1971, this program had a full-time nurse educator and translators. Concurrent with this activity, language training now began to be offered to non-Aboriginal people and a language laboratory was established on the Hartley Street site. Throughout the 1970s, IAD continued to grow and, finally, moved to its current location on the banks of the Todd River.*

*In 1978, Jim was honoured with the award of the Order of Australia. A large part of this growth was due to the partnership that developed between Jim and Yami Lester, also honoured with an Order of Australia. Together, these two men encouraged the leadership cohort amongst the Anangu culminating in the formation of the Pitjantjatjara Council in 1976. The formation of the Pitjantjatjara Council provided a basis for arguing for land rights, and Jim and Yami were intimately involved in this as interpreters, advisors and advocates. Negotiations were formidable, with several stops and starts, and included the occupation by Pitjantjatjara people of the Adelaide Showground. Finally, the struggle was over when the Tonkin government passed the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981.*

*Concurrent with the struggle for the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act was a struggle for the Lake Nash community. In the 1970s, the new management of Lake Nash Station pursued a deliberate policy of driving traditional land owners off the station by cutting Aboriginal employment and closing the station's door to all but station employees.*

*The Alyawarra had, for many years, camped near a waterhole, an important sacred sight. The camp was just a kilometre from Lake Nash homestead. The Alyawarra elders approached Jim and the Central Land Council for help and legal advice, which resulted in the Lake Nash management negotiating on the basis that there was legal evidence of discrimination. The station management offered a number of alternative sites which the Rural Extension Program of IAD was asked to evaluate. This necessitated significant consultations between Jim, the community government, and the Central Land Council. This work laid a foundation for the final agreement negotiated by the Central Land Council to establish Alpururulam on land excised from the station in 1988.*

Dr Stuart Philpott, in his eulogy, talked about his long-term friendship with Jim. I would like to relate a story he told at the eulogy, which gives you a clear idea of the personality of Jim. Dr Philpott said:

*Jim was not always easy to work with because his pre-planning and preparation for a field trip often left family, friends and colleagues exhausted and devastated, for he is a master at winging it, both in life, work, and in the air. One example was travelling with him to Lake Nash during the struggle to establish Alpururulam. On this occasion Jim, Yami Lester and myself were flying by light aircraft to Lake Nash to discuss with the community a proposal put forward by the then Lake Nash management. Jim was the pilot. Yami, who is blind, dislikes flying, and particularly in light aircraft, and I do not like it either. We took off at first light and, after we took off, the wind, which was variable, dropped and immediately a warning - barp, barp, barp - sounded in the cabin. Yami, who was sitting in the back drifting off to sleep, became immediately alert and said: 'What is that sound?' Jim quietly explained that it was the stall warning, and that he had lost some power because of the drop in the wind, and that he increased the power to compensate. As the plane powered forward, the warning sound ceased and we went on our way.*

*After three days of discussion, we then began our return to the Alice. However, when Jim went to start the plane, the battery failed. After some improvisation, we eventually started the plane by jump-starting it from a beat-up Holden utility. Shortly after taking off and achieving the plane's designated height, the passenger side door - my side - popped open. There was a rush of air and all front cabin conversation could now not be heard in the rear of the cabin. I turned to Jim and rather anxiously said: 'What do we do?' 'Well', he replied, 'the book says we go down to 500 feet then reduce speed to stall speed, then you push the door open, then close it with all your strength and lock it down'. 'Okay,' I said, and Jim immediately took us down to 500 feet and reduced speed to stall speed and, as he did so, the stall warning started - barp, barp, barp. Then, over the combined sounds of the intruding air and the barp, barp, barp, he shouted: 'Open, shut and lock the door'. I obeyed and, with all my strength I pushed the door open and pulled it and pushed the lock down. It did not work. 'What will be do now?' I cried. 'Try again', said Jim. It still did not work. 'We will have to land and do it on the Georgina ground', Jim replied. 'We will land at the Georgina strip and do it there'. As Jim put the plane into a steep turn towards the Georgina strip, Yami, who, because of the noise had heard none of the conversation, but had heard the cabin door open and shut twice, suddenly spoke up with the question: 'Jim, Stuie, are you still there?' On landing and, after a cup of tea, Yami was heard to say: 'The way to solve problems with Aboriginal people and reconciliation was to go on a plane trip with Jim Downing, you all turn into white fellas'.*

Madam Deputy Speaker, Jim and I both celebrated birthdays in June, mine on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and his on the 10<sup>th</sup>. In 2006, we both had the landmark birthdays of 50 years and 80 years respectfully. We had both just been diagnosed with life-threatening tumours - mine of the breast and his of the colon. Being diagnosed with a life-threatening cancer is not your best day, and it started a number of very profound conversations between us, reflecting on the great questions of life and death, faith and friendship. One of the things we both reflected on was that if you have to have a life-threatening illness, cancer at least gave you the opportunity to talk to people you love, and also the people with whom you have differences, and to be at peace. In a sense, this diagnosis is a dress rehearsal for death itself.

As a very humble man, I remember him being overwhelmed by the outpouring of kindness towards him and Shirley at the time of his diagnosis. I remember saying to him: 'Why should you be so surprised, since you are a man who has done so much for so many people?' It was now his turn to enjoy the love of others, just as he had shown great love and compassion to probably thousands of people over many decades.

During this time, our treatment often coincided and, on one occasion I recall, I was walking to my car after a chemotherapy session at the hospital and feeling very ill – and, I might add, very bald; we called ourselves the bald and the beautiful. Jim was recovering from one of his operations and was outside the main entrance of the Royal Darwin Hospital, holding court in his dressing gown and slippers, with a group of equally sick Aboriginal men and women, all in pyjamas, some in beds with drips attached, some in wheelchairs. He introduced me: 'Do you know Jane? She is the Speaker of the House. These are my new friends from Elcho Island and Maningrida. Come and join us'. We sat there on the garden bed edge and talked about many things. It was both bizarre and moving. Jim made friends everywhere he went.

Early last year, Jim was told that his cancer was so extensive that he was unlikely to make it to Christmas. After the inevitable sadness and, knowing that he would die within a certain time frame, Jim spent his last few months telling people how much he cared about them. When he went into the hospice late last year, I visited him a few times and, on the longest occasion, I decided it was important to ask him the main questions about life, because I knew that I would miss his wise counsel in the future.

I said to him: 'So, Jim, what do you think it is all about?' He paused and said: 'It is all about love, everything else is illusory'. Jim died on 4 January this year. He was determined that he would make it to Christmas and to his 51<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary which was on the 28 December. All during his time in the hospice, he would suddenly turn to his beloved Shirley and say to whoever was there: 'Isn't she a lovely girl?', with a look of such love and tenderness.

I will greatly miss Jim as a friend and mentor and as a fighter for justice. The world needs more people like him. How fitting that he should, as a faithful servant of Christ, die on the Sunday in the Christian calendar known as Epiphany, the day that marks the visit of the Magi, or the three kings, bearing gifts for the Christ child. I have a very clear image of Jim being presented as a special gift to God - to the God he loved and served faithfully to the end.

Jim, like Moses, spent many years wandering the desert, seeking the promised land of justice for all, equality and love. Also like Moses, I believe he was one of those fortunate people who had been to the mountain top and seen the Promised Land.

Vale, Jim Downing.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr TOLLNER (Fong Lim):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for moving this motion. It is a good motion; I am very keen to support it. Member for Nightcliff, that was a fantastic eulogy. You have certainly enlightened me and I am sure you have enlightened many of my colleagues about the Reverend Jim Downing.

I did not know him particularly well. I met the man a few times and always found him a decent fellow. On one occasion, however, I did manage to sit down with him for some time and share a cup of tea. He was very interested in my motivations for supporting the Aboriginal Intervention - the emergency response legislation - in the Northern Territory. As speakers have said, the fight for Indigenous rights and the betterment of the lives of Indigenous people was a priority of Jim Downing, and it was something he was intensely interested in.

It was quite obvious to me - and I believe most people - that he had some particular views on the Intervention and how it was being carried out. Most surprising to me, I suppose, was his interest in my views on it and what my motivation was in support of it. It was quite obvious to me that he was really looking to gain an understanding of exactly what it was we were doing and what we were trying to achieve. I did not have the impression that he was a strong supporter of that particular legislation at all, but he was very interested in knowing the motivations for it and the way it would practically pan out in communities. He had concern about long-term leasing of townships, removal of the permit system on townships and arterial roads and the like. I was quite happy and touched to be able to sit down with the man.

In the meetings I had with him, and knowing Jim Downing, I believe there are very few people in the Northern Territory who would not know of the man. As the Opposition Leader said, he was a prolific writer of letters; he seemed to be everywhere all the time, and he would pop up at most places that I would visit. I found him to be an inherently decent man, an exemplar of the Christian faith and, as the member for Nightcliff mentioned, Philip Freier called him a saint, and that is a pretty good summation of the man. He seemed to me to be the human encapsulation of everything that Christianity stands for.

To his wife and family, you can be very proud of the legacy that the Rev Downing has left for the Northern Territory and Australia as a whole. He was a man who made his mark on many people's lives. He will be remembered fondly for the work he has done and the compassion he had for people. It is wonderful to see you here, and it is wonderful to see all of his friends, as well. I wanted to say how much I appreciated knowing the man in the small way that I did.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms ANDERSON (Macdonnell):** Madam Speaker, I talk about the life of the person that we knew not as Rev Jim Downing but *Tjilpi* Downing. I pass on my condolences on behalf of all Central Australians and the people of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara lands to Shirley and her family. This goes deeper and beyond the immediate family that he loved; he shared that love, passion and hope with all Territorians, with all Australians.

Jim's view was to bring people together. Rather than fighting about the differences that we all have, we look at the commonalities that we had; you could get a lot of wins on the board by striking out your commonalities rather than your differences.

I worked with Jim and Yami at the Institute for Aboriginal Development as the first interpreter training centre was established there, and was the first interpreter. You would see Jim and Yami walking along Todd Street before it became the mall in Alice Springs, arm in arm, talking to all the people who owned the shops and to the Indigenous people about their drinking habits - why they came into town, and if there were possibilities that they could get themselves together and go back home to their communities.

Jim leaves a huge gap in our lives as Australians, as Territorians - a huge gap. As we all pick up and move forward on behalf of *Tjilpi* Downing, his hope was really to make a difference for anyone living in poverty. He fought for social justice of Indigenous rights, but he also fought for social justice for non-Indigenous people. He fought, with his hope, love and inspiration, so that we would become Territorians and Australians, rather than categorising ourselves into different nationalities.

I commend the hope, inspiration and love that *Tjilpi* Downing brought to Australia and to the Territory. He always gave to others. When we spoke about the motion on the bushfires, it highlighted what a strange group of Australians, a strange group of human beings, we are. Every day, we will not help a lady with a child who is struggling because it is raining and she cannot get her umbrella up, and she is trying to put the baby inside the pram. We will not knock on our across-the-road neighbour's house to ask how the family is going, or our next door neighbour. It is as if we do not know each other.

I hope, through Jim's love, that we can do this, because Jim has brought love, inspiration and hope to his street, and made sure that he got to know his next-door neighbour and every person who lived in his street. That should be the aim of every single one of us as human beings in this country.

Today, I chose to read a verse from 1 Corinthians 13, in Jim's second language, Pitjantjatjara. Does everyone in the House have the English version of 1 Corinthians 13? The verse is about charity. I will read it in Pitjantjatjara ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** I have given the member for Macdonnell leave to speak in Pitjantjatjara.

**Ms ANDERSON:**

*Panya kuwari Kurunpa Milmiltu kutjupa tjutangka nintilpai Godaky tjukurpa anangu tjutangka wangkanytjaku, palu ngula paluru piruku tjananla alatji nintintja wiyaringkuku. Kuwari paluru kutjupa tjutangka nintilpai jwangka kutjupa wangkanytjaku, palu ngula paluru piruku tjanala alatji mintintja wiyaringkuku. Kuwari paluru kutjupa tjutangka nintilpai paluru jana ninti pulkaringkunyitjaku, palu ngula paluru tjananya alatji piruku nintintja wiyaringkuku. Palu nyangatja paluru tjananya rawagku nintilku- panya amukulya pulka titutjara nyinanytjaku. Panya kuwari Kurunpa Milmiltu tgananala tjukutjuku nguwanpa utini nganana kulintjaku. Munu tjukurpa tikutjuku nguwanpa ngananala utini kutjupa tjutangka tjakultjunktjaku. Pala ngula uwankara wiruringkunya nganana putu kulintja wiya-angkuku, munula uwankaraku ninti nyinaku Panya nganmanypala tjitji tnaralpi tjitji purunytju wangkapai munu kulilpai munulu tjiyji purunypamukuringkupai. Palu anangu pulkaringkulala tjitji purunypa nyinanytja wiyaringkupai. Panya kuwarila Godanya putu uti nyanganyi kalawatja ruwangka purunypa. Palu ngulala palunya ilangku uti nyakuku. Kuwarila Godanya nganampa ninti pulka nyinanyi, palu purunypa nganana ngula palumpa ninti mularariku munula ninti pulka nyinaku.*

*Uwa, tjukurpa pulka mankurpa ngaranyi nyanganpa – utila Godaku mulamularingama, munula uti palumpa pukultu kulil-kukuktu nyinara patanma, munula uti anangu tjutaku mukulya pulka nyinama. Palu tjukurpa nyanga malatja pulka mulapa kutjupa nyanga kutjarangka waintarinytja, panya anangu tjutaku mukulya nyinanytjaku.*

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

*And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

*Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

*Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

*Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

*For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.*

*But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

**Madam SPEAKER:** I thank honourable members for their contributions this morning. After I put the question, I ask members to stand for a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

Motion agreed to.

Members stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.