



ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Bali Bombings

1 June 2006

Ms GRIERSON (Newcastle) (12.40 p.m.)—I wish to update the parliament on the progress being made by Newcastle families who were so tragically affected by the Bali bombings last October. We often assume that life returns to normal, but it is frequently the case that the human dimensions of the post-traumatic phase need to be acknowledged and understood. I also want to pay tribute to Adam Frost, who I know does a lot of that ongoing monitoring and certainly keeps me informed about the people affected.

Firstly, the young people—always our concern—who were there seem to be very close and continuing to support each other. Julia Lederwasch, who was injured at Jimbaran Bay, has since been promoted to deputy principal at her high school, where many of the young people are students. I am told she takes on an extra special duty in monitoring the group. Recently, I was delighted to watch her daughter, Aleta Lederwasch, who sustained a serious injury to her leg, walk across the stage at the University of Newcastle at the graduation ceremony for her first degree in a combined degree program.

Similarly, Ben Zwolinski, who lost his much-loved parents, Colin and Fiona, is now the school captain at his high school, which is recognition of his maturity, popularity and leadership. I know that many of the young people celebrated Mitchell Pilar's 18th birthday with him this week. Mitchell's parents, Eric and Jenny, both sustained serious injuries.

But these young people still have the memories of the fears and pain they experienced and, whilst they face the usual challenges of adolescence—the HSC, training, careers and relationships—I would like to think that they all have the opportunity for ongoing counselling and are encouraged to access this support. In many cases, these young people have taken on much more responsibility in their family lives. Their Centrelink family liaison officer wants them to know that she remains available to assist them.

Bruce Williamson, who lost his life partner, Jenny, has returned to work, overcoming severe injuries. His recovery is remarkable, as his loss was so great. Paul Anicich, who was the last victim to return to Australia from Singapore hospital with his wife, Penny, has also returned to work as Chairman of Sparke Helmore. He did so officially at a charity fundraising dinner hosted

by his firm a fortnight ago. His recovery has also been an inspiration—some say a miracle—although I am told that, like many of those injured, he has the continuing irritation of shrapnel moving around in his body. In fact, many of those injured continue to have operations and to battle with new disabilities and health disadvantages.

Hopefully, many of you saw yachtsman, pilot and adventurer Tony Purkiss on Andrew Denton's *Enough Rope* last Monday evening. If you were that fortunate, you would have marvelled at the courage, good humour, determination and can-do attitude of a remarkable man. Tony sustained significant injuries in Bali but has also had his life changed completely through the loss of his vision. His partner, Mary-Anne, also lost one eye, so they jokingly talk about having one good eye between them. Since the bombing, Tony taught himself to touch type in eight weeks and has worked hard with Vision Australia to ensure his previous professional skills and capabilities have not been lost. But perhaps the biggest blow for Tony was being made redundant at the Royal Motor Yacht Club Toronto, where he was the secretary-manager. I would like to read from the transcript of the Denton interview:

ANDREW DENTON: ... The plan was for you to go back to work, but it didn't work out. What happened?

TONY PURKISS: No, we - when I say "we", Vision Australia and I wrote to the club to let them know that we were at the stage where we had a back-to-work program mapped out and we were sticking to that schedule and we were on target and we wrote to them saying that, you know, we'd like to come back and do all this. The reply back was that the board had reviewed things at the club and had decided to make the position redundant ... and therefore my position was terminated. So I'm disappointed because I know I could do the job.

ANDREW DENTON: Could you still do the job as effectively?

TONY PURKISS: Absolutely, yep.

ANDREW DENTON: Do you feel that you may have been discriminated against?

TONY PURKISS: It's probably not for me to say at this point in time ... We're exchanging letters on that aspect of it.

ANDREW DENTON: Did this happen before or after the new industrial relations laws came into effect?

TONY PURKISS: The day after, actually. I think the timing was coincidental. I don't know whether it had anything to do with that, but, yeah, it was the day after.

ANDREW DENTON: You're determined and you're optimistic by nature.

Tony's reply, of course, was yes. He is diplomatic. I am his member of parliament, and it has to be said that there remains a niggling concern that Work Choices legislative changes to unfair dismissal laws may give comfort to some employers to exercise redundancy provisions of existing AWAs when previously they may have exercised a greater degree of caution or compassion. But I must note that ongoing discussions with the Royal Motor Yacht Club, ClubsNSW and the Club Managers Association that I and others are currently engaged in do have the possibility of attaining some best outcomes for Tony—and, indeed, for all the parties involved. That is my hope. I urge all parties to put in that extra effort. I would also like to say that in this short time I have not been able to share with parliament all the stories of the families affected, but Newcastle remains resolved in its community support for them. Similarly, I urge all of our colleagues here to resolve to do all in their power to avert any further terrorist acts. *(Time expired)*