

systemic change and to advocate for an integrated healthcare model that supports our communities' needs. I will continue later.

Cybersecurity

Mr WATTS (Gellibrand) (13:57): Last week, the Morrison government's baddest MP and worst minister announced that Australia will be getting a new cybersecurity policy. The only problem is the Minister for Home Affairs. The major failing of Australia's cybersecurity policy over the life of the current Cyber Security Strategy has been the absence of political leadership and accountability from this tired third-term government.

When those opposite deposed Malcolm Turnbull, they orphaned Australia's cybersecurity policy. In the wash-up from the putsch they abolished the dedicated Assistant Minister for Cyber Security position. Cybersecurity was reduced to a conquest in the minister's campaign for bureaucratic empire building—just another trophy to put on the wall rather than a day-to-day policy focus for the minister. Australia's cybersecurity policy has suffered as a result. The lack of leadership and accountability have seen a series of initiatives announced and simply forgotten. Cybersecurity policy has been adrift in a bureaucratic miasma.

Late last year, a United Kingdom joint committee released a report into cybersecurity governance in the UK and concluded that without a dedicated minister:

...the Government's efforts will likely remain long on aspiration and short on delivery.

So, without a dedicated minister, cybersecurity policy is about as effective as a leadership challenge from the member for Dickson—long on aspiration and short on delivery. Australia deserves better. The next Cyber Security Strategy needs to reinstate a dedicated minister for cybersecurity in order to be effective. Labor has already done so. Those opposite should follow.

Central Coast Medical School and Medical Research Institute

Mrs WICKS (Robertson) (13:59): I've spoken many times in this place about a commitment I'm extremely proud of—the Central Coast Medical School and Medical Research Institute. This is something that started in 2013 with a conversation about what it might look like to have a medical education and research institute in Gosford. From the very first conversation, and in the many others that followed, we developed a dream for our region—to have a world-class university in Gosford that reflected the needs, the hopes and the aspirations of our area. I was proud to secure an initial \$45 million investment from this government and then to continue that with an additional \$18 million commitment for stage 2 earlier this year.

Last week, the dream became a concrete reality with the official start of construction on the site—a really important moment for our region. This has not been an easy road, and every stakeholder in this project has had to give up something in order to contribute to where we are now. I pay special tribute to the University of Newcastle, and particularly Professor John Aitken; and the Central Coast Local Health District. Their collaboration has helped to make this unique project tailored to our region's needs.

I'd also like to officially welcome Professor Nick Goodwin to the Central Coast as the newly appointed Director of the Central Coast Research Institute. We set a goal for the project to be a locally focused but globally connected medical school and research institute, and with Professor Goodwin, a world-class specialist who has moved from Oxford in order to continue his career in Gosford, we are seeing something that not many believed could happen just a few short years ago. But it has happened, and this is another foundation stone laid down for a future of world-class excellence and opportunity for our region.

The SPEAKER: In accordance with standing order 43, the time for members' statements has concluded.

CONDOLENCES

Fischer, Mr Timothy Andrew (Tim), AC

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Prime Minister and Minister for the Public Service) (14:01): I move:

That the House record its deep regret at the death, on 22 August 2019, of the Honourable Timothy Andrew Fischer AC, a Member of this House for the Division of Farrer from 1984 to 2001, place on record its appreciation of his long and meritorious public service, and tender its profound sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Timothy Andrew Fischer was Australia all over. He was an Australian original—the boy from Boree Creek. He was loved, he was admired, he was respected, he was revered. He came from humble beginnings in Boree Creek, and at the recent memorial service, which the Leader of the Opposition, I and many in this place had the opportunity to attend, we learnt of his humble family beginnings in a very loving and hardworking family. Coming from such a modest start to become a titan for regional Australia was his greatest achievement. Like Bob Hawke, who we remembered in this chamber just a few short months ago, Tim transcended the political divide

probably more than any I could nominate in this place, and that's why I think so many of us in this chamber and those who have been in this chamber have a story. We all have a Tim Fischer story, I suspect.

If you ever wanted to know what it's like to tour with Elvis, go on the *Indian Pacific* with Tim Fischer for three days! I did, and as you walked up and down the carriages amid so many other railway enthusiasts, there was none greater than Tim Fischer. He would stop, he would sit and he would listen to their stories. Those big hands would shake the hands of his fellow Australians, and people would just line up as they engaged with him because Tim had this amazing ability just to focus all of himself on whoever was opposite him. He made them the centre of the universe. There was no trick to it. There was no performance in it. It was 100 per cent pure Tim, and they got 100 per cent of him when he was in that moment. This is why, Judy, he was so loved—so, so, so loved.

Tim knew this country like few others, and he loved it as much as anyone possibly could. He was the best of us, and he made all those he encountered better, too, by knowing him. Tim lived a life bigger than I suspect he could have imagined as a young boy on the family property. At just 11, Tim left the farm to board at Burke Hall and, then, Xavier College in Melbourne. It was a lonely time, as his brother reminded us, but Tim was always willing to have a go, and by his final year he was made a prefect thanks to his dependability and trustworthiness in reports—characteristics that many in politics would later come to appreciate. He also joined the school paper. It was where I'm sure he got all his insights into and his knowledge of the media and its wiles—a precursor to his habit later in life of writing columns for the local paper and calling into newsrooms around the country to make sure that they had his view of whatever the issue of the day might be.

Educated by the Jesuits, Tim embodied their call to be a man for others. For Tim, it was always for others. When the call came to serve his country in Vietnam, Tim served proudly and courageously. Given the option of going to university or serving instead in a special rural youth service at Holsworthy Barracks, he said, 'No. You either do something properly or nothing at all.' Recognising the opportunity to gain something from his military experience, Tim applied and was one of the few accepted for officer training. After his training, in 1967, Second Lieutenant Tim Fischer was told that if he wanted to go to Vietnam he would have to extend his service by nine months, and, typical of the man we know, he did—not just once but twice.

He returned to the farm humbly and modestly and worked quietly through so much of what he saw in Vietnam. Not long back, Tim again heard the call to serve his country and, at the age of just 24, he entered the New South Wales parliament as both the youngest-ever Country Party MP and the first Vietnam veteran to serve in any Australian parliament. Thirteen and a half years later, he came here to Canberra.

It's easy now, when we remember Tim, to think first of his many quirks and endearing traits: the stoop, the hat, the big hands I've mentioned, his unique cadence and its faint echo of a childhood speech impediment that was never totally mastered. And then there was that singularity, that individuality that set him slightly apart from the rest of the world. Whether it was his famous and insatiable passion for trains, his love of Bhutan—and he remained a passionate adherent to the indicator of national happiness all the way through his life—his trademark Akubra or his command of chess, there was none like him. But to only remember these things about Tim would be to do him a great injustice. He was a deep thinker; a true representative of the bush; a man respected throughout our region; a man of immense political skill, content with his own company but also one of the people. He was a great coalitionist—one of the greatest, I would say—and a formidable leader.

In 1993, when my side of politics lost what was called 'the unlosable election', under Tim's leadership the Nationals actually picked up two seats. And in 1996, together with John Howard, he delivered the coalition one of our greatest-ever victories, increasing Nationals representation yet again. He threw himself into the role of trade minister. He was tireless—a respected negotiator who championed an end to protectionism and who championed a greater engagement with Asia. As trade minister, he built on 20 years of engagement in the region, and during that time he visited every country in the region but Sri Lanka and the Maldives. He did most of it at his own expense prior to coming into the job. What did every visit and interaction teach him? Respect—mutual respect. That was his currency for engagement.

It seemed appropriate that, when I learnt of Tim's death, Jenny and I were on our way to Vietnam for our recent visit. One of the first countries he visited as trade minister and Deputy Prime Minister was Vietnam. During that visit, he didn't just hold bilateral meetings; he tended to his soul as well. He visited an orphanage built by Vietnam Veterans Reconstruction Group, and he made a private visit to Long Tan. He made many trips to Vietnam. He said he wanted to 'help speed the healing of the scars of conflict', because he said he could 'foresee a future of peace, co-operation and prosperity for both Australia and Vietnam', and he was right. That is now being realised.

Tim was a man of formidable character. Former deputy John Anderson wrote of how 'magnificently freeing it is to work closely with someone who is essentially honest and transparent', and it was that character that defined his finest hour. After Port Arthur, he put the wellbeing of Australians and what he knew to be right ahead of

populist politics. Gun laws were not popular in regional Australia, but he stood shoulder to shoulder with John Howard, and, as John Howard said, 'showed tremendous guts and leadership'. Together, they introduced and passed through this place gun laws for which Australians will be forever grateful to Tim Fischer and to John Howard—and we owe a special debt to Tim Fischer in his finest hour.

That was the campaign, I'm told, that Tim was most proud of. Later, in 1998, he had to face the backlash of the gun laws and the first incarnation of One Nation, and he took it on. He didn't demonise those with a different view. Instead, he just sought to persuade them, and in most cases he did. He was pretty persuasive—relentlessly persuasive. The Nationals lost only two seats at that election, which was a remarkable outcome in the course of the argument he was taking to his home territories.

When Tim left this place to genuinely spend more time with Judy and their two then-young sons, we lost him from the parliament but we did not lose him from national service. He served at Tourism Australia. He served and championed the Royal Flying Doctor Service, as its chairman. He served, with distinction, as our first resident ambassador to the Holy See, appointed by the Rudd government, working closely with the Vatican on the canonisation of Saint Mary McKillop.

I'm pleased to inform the House that, as some may know, Tim was held in such high regard that His Holiness Pope Francis awarded Tim, in his final days, the Order of Saint Gregory the Great, in recognition of his personal services to the Holy See and for the example he set in his community and country. Tim will also be remembered for his tireless advocacy for one of our greatest soldiers, General Sir John Monash. It is fitting that Tim Fischer's name will now join with that of Monash in a perpetual scholarship to be supported by the government. The Tim Fischer John Monash scholarship will be awarded each year by the General Sir John Monash Foundation to a worthy scholar from a rural or regional background, to follow in his very big footsteps. It is a lasting legacy that pays tribute to Tim's belief in education, service and leadership, but most of all his passion for the future of regional Australia.

In mourning Tim Fischer, we remember a statesman, a mentor, a fierce advocate for the region, for our country and for its people. But we mostly remember a very dear friend. Judy and Harrison and Dominic have lost far more than the rest of us: an adored husband and father. We thank you for sharing Tim with the rest of us, Judy, Harrison and Dominic. Dominic is here today, as is Judy. We thank all of his family. His brother, who is also here today, spoke so beautifully at the memorial service. Thank you for sharing those stories with us. We also thank you for caring for him so wonderfully in those final years.

Tim Fischer made this country a better place. He made many of us better people. Now, may he rest in the arms of a loving God. God bless Tim Fischer.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): I join with the Prime Minister in paying tribute to a great Australian, Tim Fischer. His farewell in Albury last month was indeed a superb send-off. He organised it himself—of course he did! He arrived at his funeral by train. How could it be otherwise! Not the high-speed TGV-style train that he was calling for in his very first speech in this parliament, but one that carried him at a very gentle pace, so as the many hundreds of people along the route could cheer him and farewell him, paying their final respects in an entirely appropriate manner. It's the sort of response that you could have expected—that most of us could only hope for.

With the death of Tim Fischer, Australia has lost one of our true gentlemen. We have also lost one of our greatest enthusiasts, one of our gentlest souls and one of our most doggedly persistent advocates. And we have lost one of the most distinctive figures to have ever graced the Australian political stage.

There was never any danger of Tim being mistaken for just another politician. Tim rose beautifully above some people's early expectations. What many couldn't see was that behind that idiosyncratic air of quizzical geniality was a man with a rock-solid constitution. He had faced guns in Vietnam, when the bleak lottery of conscription sent him off to the war that gave him the toughest, most thorough education going.

He faced guns when he handled an armed siege in the most Tim Fischer way possible. The armed man was a refugee. He was so aggrieved about relatives stuck in a Thai refugee camp that he stormed the immigration department's Albury office, just above Tim's electorate office. As Tony Wright wrote the other week, Tim ignored the warnings and walked in on his own, armed with nothing but empathy and words. Hours later he walked back out again with the gun in one hand and his arm around the man. Tim promised to help. He kept that promise as best he could, travelling on his own coin to that distant refugee camp. There was no fairytale ending, but Tim made it as good as he could and, as always, his word was all that you needed.

He faced guns in a different sort of way when he fronted his constituents over his government's new gun laws in response to the Port Arthur massacre. Those constituents were, as we know, not happy, but Tim showed them and all of us what leadership looked like. The Nationals didn't have to sign up to that firearms legislation. Quite

frankly, it was more difficult for them than for either the Liberal Party or the Labor Party. Labor's support was assured; therefore, the two big parties could have had the numbers to get it through. But, as Kim Beazley would later say to Tim as he stepped down from the front bench, 'But you chose not that easy way out; you chose to lay your leadership on the line and persist with a course of action which was right for your country.'

John Howard, the Prime Minister that Tim served as deputy, called him the epitome of loyalty and decency, and he was all of that. He was also the epitome of enthusiasm. The way that he would latch onto a subject that even slightly aroused his interest was truly one of the natural wonders of this great continent. I thought I knew a little bit about trains. Tim could sense a fellow devotee, even from a distance, the same way some people can hear a lolly being unwrapped from the other end of the House.

I appointed Tim to the independent advisory panel on high-speed rail. He recommended the establishment of a high-speed rail authority and continued to be enthusiastic about it. For Tim, a train was more than just a form of transport; it was poetry in locomotion. What he didn't know about trains simply wasn't worth knowing.

But it wasn't just that. Did John Monash have a more tireless advocate? Did the Holy See—and I met with him in Rome on a couple of occasions—ever receive a more enthusiastic ambassador? When the Rats of Tobruk Memorial Pipes and Drums band from Melbourne visited Tobruk for the first time Tim was their self-appointed ambassador, calling from Libya to let the media know that their performance had been terrific. These phone calls were plentiful, and journalists came to look forward to them. I'm told that, when Tim rang members of the fourth estate to furnish them with facts and personal reflections, he never left anything to chance. Not only would he dictate the quote but he would supply all the punctuation as well, offering guidance on the placement of quote marks, commas, full stops and the all-important capital letter at the beginning of any sentence.

Tim's knowledge and energy extended to the small and the personal. Stories abound of him sending cards to children who'd had a tough time, then keeping up the card as an annual tradition. Or, if he heard someone had had a bereavement, Tim would be on the phone to comfort them in their grief. There were times when Labor disagreed powerfully with Tim—not in the least over his stance on native title, which was at odds with his powerful sense of fairness. But, even when the differences between us grew into chasms, our affection for the man did not dim.

When Tim decided it was time to step down, Kim Beazley called him one of the genuinely loved people in this building, and indeed he was. But, as tends to be the case, the starting point for this was Tim's own fathomless capacity to give love: his love for his country, which drove him to serve in the military as well as at the diplomatic level as well as in this parliament; his love for his fellow Australians, which drove him to do all he could to lift them higher; and, of course, most importantly, his love for his family, which proved to be the most powerful of all. Tim saw the need of his family slowly but surely outweigh any other consideration, and eventually they won him back.

As his health worsened, we were sure we'd see him bounce back from each bout, but this time it wasn't to be. I rang him earlier this year in perhaps an act of hubris to ask if he would be interested in serving on a high-speed rail authority were we to establish it were the election in May different. He said to me that he didn't think he'd be around. I didn't realise until after about 15 minutes of conversation that he was in hospital at the time—still answering his phone though, still working, still being interested in the nation's future.

I'm very proud to have known Tim Fischer, to see him as someone who had my total respect. And I think that we can all aspire to be anywhere near as respected as him across this parliament, because he was, indeed, very much a unique figure. So, to Judy, Harrison and Dominic: in the midst of your sadness, you have our love and you have our thanks. It was a privilege to be in Albury just a few weeks ago. It was a remarkable send-off for a remarkable Australian. We all will remember Tim with affection, with respect and with the nation's gratitude.

Mr McCORMACK (Riverina—Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development and Leader of The Nationals) (14:22): I too endorse the eloquent words of the Prime Minister and the opposition leader about Tim Fischer, and I do want to take up some of the words that the member for Grayndler has just stated about Tim reciting punctuation and grammar to journalists. I was one of those journalists—in fact, I was the editor at *The Daily Advertiser* when a member of the press gallery, no less, who shall remain nameless for reasons, when Tim had used the word 'fiefdom', unfortunately, had it come out in the paper I was editing as 'thiefdom'. You can imagine Tim the next day not quite demanding a correction but sort of scratching his head as to why that had happened and perhaps the calibre of the editor who had allowed it through!

But, indeed, Tim and I were great friends. We were great friends then. We were great friends until his sad end. Judy has lost a wonderful husband, and Dominic and Harrison have lost a magnificent father. And Tony has lost a beautiful brother, and we as a nation have lost one of our finest—one of our very best. We've witnessed a massive outpouring of tributes. We as politicians could only hope, as Anthony has just said, for such a send-off, such appreciation of our works and our deeds. Indeed, we live, I suppose, in a different era.

Tim was around in politics before social media, but he made his own social media. Indeed, I remember taking a call from him. He was phoning through a story from the Collingullie phone box—there were phone boxes back in those days in some of these little communities! It was just a village just west of Wagga Wagga. And then all of a sudden, when he tried to get out of the telephone box, he was bailed up by a cattle dog. Undeterred, he called back, and that then became the story of the day—not just locally but indeed nationally. He knew how to milk a story for all it was worth! He was a giant of Australia. He was a giant of the National Party and of the Country Party—I wear the Country Party tie today, as we enter our second century as a party. In one way or another, his actions have had an impact for the better on us all—Labor; Liberal; independents; the National Party, certainly; and perhaps, Adam, even the Greens.

The outpouring of appreciation must come as some extra comfort to Judy, to the boys and to Tony. Tony gave what I thought was one of the most magnificent tributes at Tim's 29 August memorial service in Albury. It was Tony who spoke of Tim's life from childhood—Tony knew, because he was there, and he told us those log cabin stories of early childhood at Peppers at Boree Creek—through to Tim's final days. I also wish to acknowledge the Lockhart mayor, Rodger Schirmer, because Tim loved Lockhart and Lockhart loved Tim. The local shire is deeply mourning Tim's passing.

As I said on the day of Tim's death, he was a mentor, he was a friend, he was a guiding influence, he was an inspiration. I remember coming here in 2010, newly elected as the member for Riverina, and I was going to an inauguration dinner hosted by the then Speaker, Harry Jenkins. Tim rang me on the way: 'Greetings from Wome; Tim Fischer here'—as if I needed to be told! He then gave me a dissertation about Harry Jenkins and how great a Speaker he was, about the parliament, about what I needed to do, and about what the National Party needed to be focusing on. Of course, he was right—as always.

Tim loved country people. Country people loved him. They knew he cared. They knew, as the Prime Minister said, that he would listen. When you were talking to Tim, you were the only focus. He concentrated on you and you alone. He would always act on people's needs, wants and expectations. He promoted regional Australia like no-one else, wherever he went—and he went everywhere. From his work in the rural industry, his service in Vietnam, his contribution as a member of the New South Wales parliament for the seat of Sturt—which then became Murray—and his contribution as a member of the federal parliament for the seat of Farrer as a shadow minister, a minister and then Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer was always in there doing his level best. Behind the gentle man was an absolute determination to listen, to act, to deliver and, most importantly, to turn up.

Much has been said and written in recent weeks about Tim's role with then Prime Minister John Howard in tightening semiautomatic and automatic firearm controls after the horrific 1996 Port Arthur massacre. This was about restricting the misuse of weapons, especially across urban areas. But, to be effective, the actions had to stretch nationwide. We need to understand that Tim was the leader of a party representing regional Australians, not long in government after 13 long years in opposition. This was a time of intensive work to establish a new agenda, to establish the credentials of the new government and to bring the people with them. This was not a time to rock the boat, and it was particularly difficult for the National Party. But the point is this: Tim Fischer—and Mr Howard, too, of course, as well as John Anderson and others in the government's leadership—saw what needed to be done. They didn't flinch. They didn't shirk. They did it. A lesser leader might have baulked; not Tim Fischer. He was convinced that action was needed. What was right took precedence over what might have seemed less risky, less challenging. It was a move of conviction. It was a difficult time, yes, but we had the right man in Tim Fischer. There are Australians today who are alive thanks to those reforms. There are Australians today who owe their lives to those reforms and to Tim Fischer. As we look back two decades, we see that the gun control reforms have endured—rightly, appropriately and justly. They endure because they were right then and they're right now.

As with the courageous firearm reforms, much has been said and written in recent times about Tim's love of all things railway. His writings will endure, and he gave public forums on rail, including book launches, right up to recent months. When he might have been forgiven for saying, 'No, I'm tired; I need to rest,' he carried on. He wanted to sell his books, of course, and they're available at all good book stores! Amongst Tim's many contributions, he will forever have ownership of the fact that a steel wheel on a steel rail creates one seventh of the friction of a rubber tyre on a bitumen service. Tim said that—of course he did!

Tim was at the centre of a government that saw the opening of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway in 2004. After a century of talk, he got on and he delivered. He loved his railways. He loved the Inland Rail. He was a big fan of that. I recall I was going to see Jacinta Allan, the Victorian transport minister, and I happened to mention this to Tim a couple of days beforehand. Just as I was about to walk into the Victorian parliament to meet her, I got a text from Tim telling me everything I needed to tell her, advise her and warn her and to make sure that it actually happened and I'd better just do it, and Jacinta had better too!

Tim Fischer understood what nation-building was all about—less debate, more delivery. It was the true mark of the man. We don't just honour Tim Fischer the person today; we honour a massive, enduring contribution to our nation. In honouring Timothy Andrew Fischer AC, as we sense deep sadness, we also celebrate and commemorate. We celebrate a life so well lived. We celebrate a contribution so large to his nation, to his beloved National Party, to his beloved coalition. And each and every one of us celebrates his life alongside his family. We give thanks for his life and we especially thank Judy and the boys for giving so much of Tim's time to us.

Mr MARLES (Corio—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (14:31): Can I add my words to those of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party. Michael, you've done your friend and mentor proud.

All of us who come to this place do so with our own sense of purpose about what it is to be a parliamentarian—a good local member, a player in a party team, a patriot in the service of our nation. But to be a representative in the truest sense of the word, in this House of Representatives, is actually an ideal which is hard to realise. Do we really think the same way as those who put us here? Do we understand their needs? Do we look like them? Do we bring to bear in this place their sensibilities as they would want them expressed?

In this context, I don't think that there has ever been a better representative of the community from which he came than Tim Fischer—everything about him: the way he spoke, his iconic hat, his love of trains, his nonsense, practical way of viewing the world. But there was one part of Tim which to describe as typical rather undersells him, although it is an aspect of his being to which we would all aspire, because Tim's integrity—his sense of honour, his honesty, his deep sense of decency—was special and it was rare. In that sense, he was not just an example of the electorate of Farrer; he was the very best that that community—indeed, our nation—had to offer. As a result, his community loved him, as did his country, in a way which completely transcended partisan politics.

But Tim also understood that to be a representative is not just about reflecting the attitudes of your community at any moment in time, because he understood the role of leadership—leading your community, leading your country, to a better place, even if that is a place which, at the beginning, your community can't quite see. It was in that spirit that Tim's advocacy for gun law reform, in the aftermath of the Port Arthur massacre, was truly inspirational. It places him right at the centre of one of the most important legacies of the Howard government. In our own age, of a pre-eminent, loud, self-reinforcing social media, which sometimes seems to encourage populism, his making of that argument is an example to all of us here about how to do our job at the highest level and in the best possible way.

Tim was famously a Vietnam veteran and he was a tireless advocate for Vietnam vets, but his own story of service is a remarkable one. He was a conscript, but he would say of that moment that it was a moment of good fortune, because, to be frank, it opened up a whole new world to him. In his tour of Vietnam he fought in the battle of fire support bases Coral and Balmoral, and he was wounded there. This battle was one of the bloodiest, severest and fiercest—certainly one of the most iconic—engagements that Australian service personnel have engaged in, really, since the Second World War. The battalion of which Tim was a part, the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, 1RAR, received a citation of gallantry from the United States—a rare honour indeed. Perhaps it was having this experience early on in his life which gave him a sense of the preciousness of life, of the need to be purposeful and of the true meaning of service and of sacrifice.

In 2008, the Rudd Labor government appointed Tim to be Australia's ambassador to the Holy See, a position he took up the following year and one he held for the ensuing three years. It was in his role as a diplomat that I got to meet Tim just a little. I can tell you that Tim was a gifted diplomat. If Tim Fischer decided he was going to like you, you had absolutely no chance. I particularly remember Tim's work in Australia's campaign to become elected to the UN Security Council in 2012. His contribution was priceless. As just one example, the people of Bhutan absolutely love Tim Fischer. And even though it was the Gillard Labor government, no decision, no act, no word given by that government to the people of Bhutan meant anything unless it came via Tim Fischer. In Bhutan they don't measure development by wealth or prosperity. Instead, they have a happiness index. When I imagine the smiling, optimistic face of Tim Fischer, I am sure that this is an idea which would have resonated completely with him and which would have so beautifully captured his spirit.

Our thoughts today are with Judy and all the Fischer family. Vale, Tim Fischer.

Ms LEY (Farrer—Minister for the Environment) (14:37): On behalf of the people of Farrer, may I thank members, senators and, indeed, the wider Australian public for their wonderful tributes and thoughts expressed for my predecessor Timothy Andrew Fischer in the time since his untimely passing.

For someone who was truly one of a kind, and notably shy at a young age, there have been so many who have come forward to tell us their own unique anecdote of the man they knew. It is astonishing that—from Lockhart,

just west of Wagga, where Tim was born and raised; through to Xavier College in Melbourne, where he was educated; to Albury, my home town and where he based his main office; through to the Vatican in Rome—everyone seems to have their own Tim story. In fact, constituents would call into my office and say: 'I'm going to Italy. I'd like to pop into the Vatican so that Tim can show me around.' I would think, 'He can't stop everything for you,' but he did, and they would come back full of what they'd seen and what they'd heard and the magic of Tim on the world stage. Each of the stories of Tim have their own thread, but the words in the condolence book that is set up in my office reflect those themes: a true gentleman, a wonderful man, a genuine heart.

We recognise his political career quite appropriately in this place, but I remember the affable family man at the Wentworth show—he still went to country shows long after he'd retired from politics—standing there, snag in hand and boys by his side, talking to people. He remembered them all. When I was at the Wentworth show just a few weeks ago everyone came up to me to say how sorry they were. In fact, as I travelled my electorate over the last fortnight whatever people had to say to me in my capacity as local member was second to what they wanted to tell me about Tim and how much they would miss him, always speaking of someone as honest and decent as the day is long, at home or internationally. I remember boarding a commuter flight from Albury to Sydney and seeing Tim come on at the last minute—his things were in a Kmart bag, his hat was on his head and he was looking a little bit rough around the edges, just as we remembered him—and sit down to take his seat. I said, 'Where are you going?' He said, 'Geneva.' He was off to make the case for Australia on trade matters and matters of international significance but he was always there to talk about us, his people—where he'd come from and the roots that he held so dear. On behalf of the people who Tim represented and now I have the honour to represent, I want to thank the Prime Minister and his office for the wonderful state funeral in Albury. My thanks also to the staff from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for their efforts to make sure it went off without a hitch.

On that morning, I was one of hundreds who made their way to the historic Albury railway station to witness Tim's final journey. He had gone out on that train just a few weeks before for a fundraiser for our local cancer centre. It was packed with 200 people. He had gone up and down the carriage talking about trains and about everything everyone wanted to hear, and I think he was just too tired to make the train journey back, so he came back by car. But he was determined to make that last train journey on that morning.

One of Tim's Akubras has been placed on display in the gallery at Lockhart, where all of his memorabilia is there for all to see. As you might expect, there are lots of replica trains, plaques, cars, books he authored and even a 1967 tractor from his beloved farm up the road. He had even donated all of his old mobile phones for the museum to display, which they do diligently and proudly. When I asked the museum volunteers today what their memories of Tim are, they are of someone absolutely determined to experience everything life had to offer, no matter how long it lasted.

Australia has lost one of its great political characters and regional Australia one of its greatest champions. Tim was a mentor. His passion for the history, culture and politics of our region shone through in everything he said at home and abroad. He travelled among us, he spoke for us, and we loved him for that. Whenever I drive the back roads of my electorate near Boree Creek, I will be reminded of the Vietnam veteran, the farmer in the slouch hat who strode amongst us, and of his passion for finding a place for rural Australia on the world stage. He defined a time when the body politic was a lot kinder and gentler than it is today, and I think, in part, that will be his legacy. The thoughts, the prayers and the love of the people of Farrer are with Judy—who taught me economics at university—Dominic and Harrison as they face the difficult weeks and months ahead.

The SPEAKER (14:42): Can I associate myself with all of the wonderful remarks that have been made here today. To Judy, Dominic and Tony, who are with us, can I just say, like so many here in this chamber and across our nation, I will always cherish the friendship I was privileged to have with Tim. As a mark of respect, I ask all present to signify their approval by rising in their places.

Honourable members having stood in their places—

The SPEAKER: I thank the House.

Debate adjourned.

Reference to Federation Chamber

Mr PORTER (Pearce—Attorney-General, Minister for Industrial Relations and Leader of the House) (14:43): by leave—I move:

That the order of the day be referred to the Federation Chamber for debate.

Question agreed to.