

## Tribute to George Khattar

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### TRIBUTE TO GEORGE KHATTAR

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**Mr THOMAS GEORGE** (Lismore) [5.32 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to a very good friend who sadly was taken from us two weeks ago today after suffering a heart attack at the age of 44. I refer to George Khattar, a young Lebanese gentleman who was born in Tripoli, Lebanon, and who died on Thursday 29 April. His death marks the loss of a husband, father, son, brother and a valued and greatly respected member of the Australian Lebanese community. He is survived by his lovely wife, Carol, their two small daughters, Alana and Georgia, and his extended family—his brothers Joe and Raymond, sisters Sonia and Maria, and his mum and dad. Of course, Joe Khattar is no stranger to the community in Sydney and the Lebanese community throughout Australia. He is the respected President of the Australian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce.

All the people who worked with George Khattar were at the funeral. I have never experienced a service like it, and I pay tribute to Bishop Abi Karom, the Monsignor, the Lebanese priests and nuns and clergy from other orders, including the Marist Brothers. Everyone was there. It was a tribute to a man who has been such a dynamic force not only for the Lebanese community but also behind the Dyldam Developments building company. He was an integral part of that business, which was started by his father. The brothers have worked together, truly in Lebanese style. They know only one way: they work together, stay together and pray together. I note that the Minister for Local Government is present and understands what I am saying.

George's wife, Carol, spoke at the funeral. I do not know how she did it, but she said that if George could see her he would say that if she had a microphone in her hand she would be happy. Something that touched everyone was that George went for a trip to France last year and left a little letter for each of his daughters. It was as if he knew he was going to die—although it did not happen until 12 months later. He told his daughters he would always be with them. They were to think of their dad having his hand on their shoulders. Ray Hadley, a very close friend of George and the family, paid tribute to him on Radio 2GB. Time does not allow me to do justice to Ray's tribute in the short time I have today. But I want to thank Ray publicly, because it meant so much not only to all of us in the Lebanese community but, more importantly, to the Khattar family. Ray said that George was going to make him an honorary member of the Lebanese community. Ray, I certainly hope that we can make that happen one day.

George's contribution to the church, his school, Marist Brothers at Parramatta, his family and the whole community was summed up when we came out of the church. There was a beautiful photo of George on the youth hall that is being built beside the church. It said, "George Khattar, you led the way and we promise to fulfil your dream." Dyldam is erecting that building in memory of George. I pay tribute to the whole Khattar family. It is impossible to name them all in the short time available to me. I extend our sincere sympathy, love, prayers and thoughts during this tragic time. I know the whole family and community have been affected by his death.

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn—Minister for Local Government, Minister Assisting the Minister for Planning, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health)) [5.37 p.m.]: I join the member for Lismore in paying tribute to a great Australian who, I am proud to say, is of Lebanese background, like the member for Lismore and me. George Khattar was a father and a businessman and a man of great faith. People like George Khattar are larger than life and they do not come around very often. He was a generous and compassionate man. His wife, Carol, in her inspirational eulogy, told us all how when George earned his first pay packet he went down to Hyde Park, I think it was, and gave it to the needy people he saw. What a remarkable man. That was an ongoing quality that one saw in George Khattar and in the entire Khattar family—their generosity and compassion for the most disadvantaged in our community.

It is no surprise to me that George Khattar wholeheartedly threw himself and his business into the building of the community centre at Our Lady of Lebanon Church at Harris Park. Today I can tell this House and the Khattar family that the member for Parramatta and I met with Monsignor Shora Maree about that building today. When we said to Monsignor Shora, "We don't know how you are going to build this, it is such a mammoth thing", he said, "George Khattar used to say to me, 'You worry too much, Monsignor; you worry too much'." We are going to miss this man. He has left a great legacy. He has left two beautiful young children who should be very proud of their father, and always will be. To the Khattar family, Carol and the two children, and the wider family, God bless you during this time of grieving.