

Grievance Debate_ Mr John Nicholls_070213

House of Assembly - Thursday, 7 February 2013, Page 4303

NICHOLLS, MR J.

Mr BROCK (Frome) (15:32): Today, I would like to talk about John Nicholls from Lochiel, who was an Australia Day award winner for 2013. John is often referred to as 'the mayor of Lochiel' and is well known throughout the district and well beyond as a community-spirited person with a fun and outgoing nature. His profession is farming; however, you could be mistaken for thinking that farming is just his hobby and that volunteering is his full-time job.

One of John's most notable achievements was the coordination of the Lochiel Hall centenary. The centenary celebrations were John's brainchild, and he coordinated the subcommittee involved in organising the successful works and celebrations that went on to win the South Australian Community Event of the Year at the 2012 Australia Day awards.

Further to the centenary celebrations, John initiated and was heavily involved in the construction of a new verandah area which was recently added to the northern side of the hall alongside the main highway, and he organised a local art show which showcased local artists' work to those travelling along the busy highway and to the extended community of Lochiel and the region. John is a true believer in maintaining facilities to ensure a sense of belonging for the people of Lochiel by maintaining the historic nature of the hall as, most of all, a community meeting place that can be utilised for people to come together, share and celebrate increasing social inclusion.

In a time when regional communities are declining in facilities and numbers, John is ensuring that the Lochiel community remains alive through its sport and recreational facilities. He is the main advocate for the sporting facilities in Lochiel and regularly can be seen at the oval and courts working on various projects. He is always available for mowing and general maintenance of the Lochiel sporting facilities. On Saturdays, he is often seen in the canteen helping out, goal umpiring and sitting at the gate or taking team and action photos on behalf of the club for official records.

He always arrives early to home netball and football games to begin setting up and is mostly always the last to leave after he and his wife, Kathy, clean the clubrooms and go through every bin around the oval to collect the cans

for additional money to go towards the club. At the end of the season, John, with the assistance of his daughter and other helpers, collates all his photographs and information into a booklet that is circulated to all sponsors and offered for a cover fee to all club members.

John and his wife Kathy are very proactive in sourcing grant funding for the community, and with recent NRM grant money received, John and Kathy initiated the Lakeside Project—a process of removing feral undergrowth on the eastern side of the highway that runs through Lochiel. Following the removal of the feral growth, John organised a couple of other people to assist in a general cleanup, which consisted of collecting and burning rubbish and fallen tree limbs.

John was the sole person burning rubbish at about 7pm, which outlined his commitment to the project. This cleanup showcases the lake to passers-by, and allows people to fully appreciate the natural beauty of Lake Bumbunga. John also has a keen interest in growing native plants, and has planted and revegetated thousands of trees in the community and on his farm.

John is also an active volunteer member of the Snowtown SA Ambulance Service, which he has been a part of for the 13 years. John is often on call, but will also respond to emergencies when he is on leave. He has also been a member of the Lochiel CFS for 25 years, and is part of a response to local fires and emergencies.

John is a much loved character in the community, and is well known for his long hair. It was this very feature that John was so willing to lose to raise money for cancer. John raised nearly \$7,000 for the Cancer Council and, as a result, he shaved and waxed his entire body in front of the public. This sums up the generosity of this man; he is willing to risk it all and lose it all in order to help others.

John is a very selfless person, and is always contributing to the capacity of the community through his time and efforts. John is also very trusted and respected by the children and youth of Lochiel, and they always look to him for advice. In another example of his generosity, John was volunteering at a school sports event as an adjudicator during the girls' relay. When the baton was only a few metres away, John realised that there was no runner to receive the baton from the girl who had it. Instead of allowing the girl to be embarrassed and ruin the race for all involved, John stepped in and ran the leg of the relay in place of whoever did not turn up.

Despite Lochiel only being a small community, it has a big heart and a big presence, and much of that can be attributed to John Nicholls and his family. John is a worthy Australia Day Award winner.