

Causley, Ian Raymond: Deputy Speaker 2002–2007

Clare Parker

Ian Raymond Causley (1940–2020), farmer and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, was born on 19 October 1940 at Maclean, northern New South Wales, son of Samuel Arthur Causley, farmer, and his wife, Hilda Jean, née Lewis. The family had cultivated sugarcane in this region for four generations. Ian attended Chatsworth Island Public School and Maclean High School. Much later, he recalled that ‘growing up on the Clarence River, I never envisaged that I would be involved in politics’, and he ‘certainly did not come from a family that was actively involved’ (H.R. Deb. 13.9.2007, 55). He won a scholarship to study at the University of New England, but, to the initial dismay of his father, he gave it up in favour of cutting sugarcane to save for the purchase of his own farm. A capable sportsman, he rowed on the Clarence River as well as captaining and opening the batting for the local cricket team. He married Gloria June Patch at Lismore, New South Wales, on 3 February 1962. They were to have four children.

In 1965 he joined the Country Party and, over the following two decades, became a leader in the sugar industry, serving as president of the Clarence River Cane Growers’ Association, a director of the New South Wales Sugar Milling Co-operative, and a member of the New South Wales Cane Growers’ Council. With June, he also owned and managed a hotel at Lismore. At the March 1984 New South Wales election, he stood as the National Party candidate for the state electorate of Clarence. He had withstood pressure to run for parliament for a number of years but decided to stand in order to participate in debates about important regional concerns, such as the effect of environmentalism on the timber industry. The two-party preferred swing of nearly 11 per cent that he secured overcame a sizeable Labor majority and won back a traditionally safe seat for the National Party. After the coalition won government in March 1988, he served as minister for natural resources until 1990. As minister, he was critical of anti-logging conservationists as ‘single issue people’ (Grealley 1989) who failed to balance environmental concerns with the importance of farming and forestry products. The Forest Products Association found him ‘likeable, refreshing and incisive’ (Grealley 1989).

'ORDER, ORDER!'



Figure 17: Ian Causley.

Source: Australian Government Photographic Service (Auspic).

Causley's time in the state ministry was marred by an investigation by the newly established Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). This concerned an allegation that he and Deputy Premier Wal Murray had decided to sell a Crown land site near Tweed Heads to a developer who had donated \$25,000 to the National Party, despite an apparent higher offer. The ICAC report, released in July 1990, cleared both of corruption but criticised them for actions that had 'created a climate conducive to corrupt conduct' (Davey 2006, 332). Causley won an undisclosed sum in damages from the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He looked back on this whole episode as 'soul-destroying' (Farr 1998).

After the release of the ICAC report, Causley became chief secretary and minister for water resources as part of a wider ministerial reshuffle, but he returned to the natural resources portfolio in June 1991. His second tenure in the role was interrupted by extended sick leave to recover from surgery for a benign brain tumour, followed by a serious viral infection. From May 1993, he was minister for agriculture and fisheries, and minister for mines, until the coalition government was defeated at the March 1995 election.

Three months after the election, Causley won preselection for the federal seat of Page, which covered his home region. He resigned from the New South Wales parliament early in 1996 and, at the March federal election, successfully regained Page for the Nationals by defeating the incumbent Labor member, Harry Woods, who had held the seat by a razor-thin margin. Causley's early months in Canberra were dominated by debate about gun ownership in the wake of the Port Arthur massacre. He was one of several National Party members who was the target of threatening letters and parcels for their support of Prime Minister John Howard's proposed gun law reforms.

Causley served on a number of committees that matched his areas of interest, including the Joint Statutory Committee on Native Title and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund (1996–2002), and the Joint Select Committee on the Republic Referendum (1999). He chaired the House Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation, and the Arts (1997–98), and that on the Environment and Heritage (1998–2001). In November 1998, he joined the Speaker's panel. On 12 February 2002, he was elected Deputy Speaker, serving under Neil Andrew. His election came as a relief for his National Party colleagues, who, in the wake of the 2001 election, were permitted by the Liberal Party to nominate for this position, contrary to long-established convention.

In his first few months as Deputy Speaker, Causley was the subject of some unwelcome headlines. The Labor frontbencher Nicola Roxon accused him of an offensive remark; Causley recalled the comment rather differently but apologised for any offence caused. He also rejected a suggestion that he was intoxicated while presiding, after confusing the name of a member's electorate during a marathon late-night sitting. These early controversies eased, and he was re-elected following the 2004

'ORDER, ORDER!'

election, now serving under David Hawker. From his own side of politics, Causley was described as 'affable, approachable, fair and firm' (H.R. Deb. 16.11.2004, 22), but the opposition soon became frustrated by his rulings, echoing its demonstrated dissatisfaction with Hawker. When Causley ruled that a Labor member's attack on the Nationals minister De-Anne Kelly during a discussion on another topic was contrary to standing orders, Mark Latham moved a motion of dissent, claiming that 'we now have the ridiculous situation of a Nationals Deputy Speaker trying to censor debate' (H.R. Deb. 8.12.2004, 88). The motion was easily defeated by the coalition majority.

Having on his sixty-sixth birthday announced his forthcoming retirement from politics, Causley left parliament and the Deputy Speakership at the election of November 2007. He admitted to being disappointed not to have served as a federal minister, having been 'lured down to Canberra because I had a lot of experience and could help the Government and take on ministerial positions' (Easton 2006), but he was proud of his time as Deputy Speaker. Remarks by members on his retirement reflected respect for his direct and honest approach. The Labor member Arch Bevis, for example, appreciated his 'wit and ... forthright approach to all issues' (H.R. Deb. 20.9.2007, 120), while Duncan Kerr declared him to be 'a person of great goodwill as well as one with a hide as tough as a rhinoceros' (H.R. Deb. 20.9.2007, 125). Causley himself reflected that:

This is the members' House; the government might have the numbers to control it but it is the members' House. The members have a right to speak. I believe that the most important standing order is the one that grants the right to speak in silence. I have tried to enforce that order. (H.R. Deb. 13.9.2007, 55)

Retiring to his farm at the mouth of the Clarence River, Causley resumed his role as a rural industry leader, serving as chair of the New South Wales Sugar Milling Co-operative (2009–17) and of the Sugar Research and Development Corporation board (2010–13). When his wife of more than fifty years died in 2013, he paid public tribute to her importance. She had managed the farm and cared for their family during his long absences in Sydney and Canberra. In addition to her volunteer work, she attended countless public events on his behalf, effectively making her 'a second Member for all those years' (*Lismore Echo* 2006). 'Broad, solid and strong' (Grealy 1989), Causley prided himself on his candid approach to politics. Despite some very public controversies, he was, for more than two decades, a stalwart defender of his home region. He died on 27 April 2020.

Select bibliography

Australia. House of Representatives. *Parliamentary Debates*, 12 February 2002, 23–27

Australia. House of Representatives. *Parliamentary Debates*, 16 November 2004, 21–26

- Australia. House of Representatives. *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 December 2004, 84–98
- Australia. House of Representatives. *Parliamentary Debates*, 13 September 2007, 51–56
- Australia. House of Representatives. *Parliamentary Debates*, 20 September 2007, 115–25
- Coorey, Phillip. ‘Causley Retires, and Anthony Eyes Return’. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 2006, 6
- Daily Examiner* (Grafton, NSW). ‘Ian Farewells the Love of His Life’. 22 July 2013. Accessed 9 December 2019. www.dailyexaminer.com.au/news/ian-farewells-the-love-of-his-life/1953083/. Copy held on file
- Davey, Paul. *The Nationals: The Progressive, Country and National Party in New South Wales 1919 to 2006*. Sydney: Federation Press, 2006
- Easton, Alex. ‘Causley to Retire: Anthony Circles His Seat’. *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW), 20 October 2006. Accessed 9 December 2019. www.northernstar.com.au/news/apn-causley-to-retire-anthony-circles-for/15156/. Copy held on file
- Farr, Malcolm. ‘Fame That Destroys the Soul’. *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 4 May 1998, 11
- Garcia, Luis M. ‘Causley Got the Chop Over Logging’. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 July 1990, 6
- Grealy, Michael. ‘“Bull” Causley’s Survival Mission’. *Sun Herald* (Sydney), 3 September 1989, 13
- Hudson, Phillip. ‘Nats Angry as PM Defies Convention’. *Age* (Melbourne), 5 February 2002, 6
- Lismore Echo*. ‘After 23 Years, Causley Calls it a Day’. 26 October 2006. Accessed 9 December 2019. www.echonews.com.au/news/9606-after-23-years-causley-calls-it-a-day/678713/ (site discontinued). Copy held on file
- Prior, Neale. ‘Damages Agreed in Causley Libel Case’. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 September 1991, 2
- Sydney Morning Herald*. ‘Correction: Apology to Mr Ian Causley MP’. 21 September 1991, 35

This text is taken from '*Order, Order!*: A Biographical Dictionary of Speakers, Deputy Speakers and Clerks of the Australian House of Representatives', edited by Stephen Wilks, published 2023 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/OO.2023.15