



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER
PROTECTION
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**CONDOLENCE SPEECH FOR AUSTRALIAN CRICKETER
PHILLIP HUGHES**

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It is the idea that, just two weeks ago, Phillip Hughes walked on this earth and was breathing and living in precisely the kind of normal, day-to-day way that each of us here is. And now we are speaking in this debate in this parliament today. It is unimaginable. With that moment of shock, so many lives around Phillip Hughes's life are changed in a way which will be permanent. There is something appalling about the fragility of life that that moment demonstrates. Of course, that moment in different ways is played out, sadly, almost every day within our community, but this was a very visible moment that we all got to see.

Part of it, then, is that this has happened not to just anybody but to a really famous, highly skilled person—one of the 20 or 30 best cricketers on the planet, a person whose fortunes we have followed over the last few years. Sometimes I think we have a sense that those in the public eye are immune from the fragilities of daily life, but this tragedy is a reminder that they are not and that a person of his skill, of his standing, of his extraordinary flair and of his individuality and the way that he was able to bring that to his sport can be the subject of such a random, sad and devastating event.

Part of it also, I think, is this idea of distilled talent unrealised. Phillip Hughes really was at the beginning of his career; the best of it was yet to come. He was 25 and, as the member for Hughes said, in cricketing terms his best years were ahead of him. Indeed, many players do not make a debut in test cricket until after that age. It has surprised all of us who are cricket fans, in a way, that Phillip Hughes was still so young, because he burst onto the scene playing his first test for Australia as a 19-year-old and he was genuinely a prodigy. He had talent in bundles in a way which is hard to imagine. The idea that we will not get to see that played out in all its glory seems profoundly sad. We have been deprived of so much joy that we were all awaiting. As a sports fan across a

number of sports but particularly with a love of cricket, there is an excitement about watching a career begin and explode, and there is a certain anticipation of what is going to occur. Of course, all of that has been denied.

There are parallels to Archie Jackson, who played eight tests for Australia in the twenties and thirties. He was a contemporary of Bradman's. He was also from New South Wales and, at the age of 19, he debuted for Australia, making 164 in his first test match. At the time, he was the youngest person ever to score a test century. When he and Bradman went to England on the 1930 tour, it was regarded, actually, that Archie Jackson might have been the better of the two players, though that may not have played out, given the extraordinary nature of Bradman. Archie Jackson contracted tuberculosis and died at the age of 23, having only played eight test matches. When you read the histories of that Bradman era and the histories of cricket through the thirties—it was an important game, almost more important than in our nation's psyche than it is now—you really get the sense that something was tragically lost in the inability for us to see the full glory of Archie Jackson's career. So it is with Phillip Hughes. The circumstances of his death were obviously different, but the idea that we will not get to see his full development is absolutely the same.

Part of it is Australia's love of cricket. This is a fantastic game, a game that is full of stats and full of different stories. It is a game that is absolutely about exquisite skill and ability but has an enormous mental element to it. We see people without ability who make it and people with ability who do not. Grittiness plays a part in it as well. It has been utterly central to our nation's history. When Bradman was carving the English to bits during the 1930s, there was a sense in which that, as much as anything, was Australia striking out with its independence from another country. It was a time when Australia's status as an independent nation was ambiguous.

Some have described it as almost akin, in a way, to our war of independence, as Bradman took apart the English. When the Prime Minister of India was here recently, there was a quote about the first Prime Minister of India, Nehru, and about the way in which Bradman dealt with the English at that time. It was more than cricket. It was absolutely about the beginning of the identity of our country and, to this day, Bradman is probably the single most unifying person in our nation's history—and he is a cricketer.

This is a sport which is deeply imbued in our psyche, as it is in the psyche of so many around the world, but this is, deeply, an Australian game. I was looking at quotes about cricket and, back in the 70s, John Arlott and Freddie Trueman made this remark: that most games are skin-deep, but cricket goes to the bone. I think that is absolutely the way we as Australians regard this game. That this game can have thrown up such a tragedy as the one we witnessed last week with Phillip Hughes is also, I think, part of why there is this outpouring of emotion—part of why so many of us who love cricket feel compelled at the moment to have a bat outside our door.

But ultimately, this is actually more than cricket. Michael Clarke's testimony about Phillip Hughes made the point that Phillip Hughes's cricketing ability was secondary to who he was as person. When you read what those who knew him have written about Phillip Hughes, you get the sense that he was first and foremost a person of enormous humility. When somebody has been given a great gift—an enormous gift—and can deal with it in a humble way, there is something really special about that. There is something that attracts all of us to it. So often, we see that with great gifts comes a difficulty in handling them, and sometimes a conceit—but none of that appears to have been a feature at all of Phillip Hughes; indeed, the defining characteristic that you hear spoken about him was his humility—this humble kid from country New South Wales, bequeathed with an extraordinary gift. I think that that is actually why there is such an outpouring of grief: because it feels profoundly unfair that this person—of all people—who dealt with his gift in such a graceful and humble way, should have been deprived of it, along with his life, in this way.

I too would like to finish with a thought for Sean Abbott. I cannot imagine what Sean Abbott is thinking about. This is deeply unfair to him. He did not do anything wrong. There was not even a sense of negligence. It was just a random event. And I really hope that he is able to return to the game that he loves, and that he is able to continue it in the future.

Vale, Phillip Hughes.

ENDS