Tough man such an inspiration

IAN SMITH

FEW people in life leave an impression like former state opposition leader and senior Liberal minister Dale Baker, who died on Tuesday aged 73.

He was funny, naughty, charming, commercial, insightful and tough.

That toughness was most evident as he battled motor neurone disease. To those who saw him deteriorate since he was diagnosed with the shocking disease in 2009, he was an inspiration.

However, his attitude was no surprise to those who knew him. Putting a successful business career on hold, which saw him recognised across the winery, cattle and horticultural industries, he gave the Liberal Party a spine.

His forensic dissection of the State Bank collapse showed the benefits of a business brain correctly applied to a political matter.

He did not suffer fools. He became more focused when senior executives and board members of the State Bank told him there was nothing to be worried about, saying “back off” or else the Liberals would face the wrath of the business community. He championed the free market and urged the party to adopt a privatisation platform to put the state back in the black.

In a recent letter applauding Dale’s contribution to the Liberal Party, John Howard noted this was perhaps his greatest contribution.

While proudly a “Conservative” he was also progressive.

He was an advocate of medical research, particularly on stem cells. He had the respect of Labor politicians and maintained good relations with many despite his condemnation of many ALP policies. Shaped by a lean to the political Right, Dale became at odds with a handful of Liberals. It would have been a different South Australia had Dale led the Liberals in the 1993 election.

This tough man should be missed by South Australia.

Sure, he never became premier - but what he did contribute to a state he loved was significant.

Dale leaves a wonderful family, including four grandchildren. His resilient wife Margaret, daughter Marina and son Tom were with him when he died.

Ian Smith was press secretary to Dale Baker as Opposition Leader and a close friend

FARMER AND POLITICIAN: Dale Baker walking among his beloved banksias and, inset, Baker the state Liberal MP. Main picture: CHRIS MANGAN

Sorry for adoptions

THE State Government will apologise to thousands of South Australians who were forcibly adopted from the 1950s to mid-1980s.

Premier Jay Weatherill said yesterday about 17,000 children had been affected by forced adoption practices in SA.

He pledged to deliver an apology on behalf of the Government on June 13 this year.

"The task ahead of us now is understanding what form that apology should take to ensure it is sincere," he said.

Ferry stops again

THE new Spencer Gulf ferry was out of service again yesterday.

This is the second time in two weeks ferrying problems have forced the operation to stop.

SeaSA managing director Stephanie Dawson said there was a problem with the autopilot. Crew reverted to manual steering.

Engineers travelled from Adelaide last yesterday to check, and, if necessary, repair the steering. The ferry should be in service today.

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