

# Statesman's touch for government

**Sir Harold William Young, KCMG**

Senator

**Born:** June 30, 1923; Port Broughton

**Died:** November 21, 2006; Adelaide

**S**IR Harold Young was a South Australian Liberal senator and former president of the Senate. Regarded during his political career, from 1967 to 1983, as one of Parliament's 'Mr Nice Guy' figures, Sir Harold achieved an enviable reputation for international statesmanship, receiving his knighthood in 1983 for parliamentary service.

Born to farming parents at Port Broughton, he was educated at Prince Alfred College, Adelaide.

Before entering politics, Sir Harold owned a wheat, sheep and barley property near Kadina, and was actively involved in primary production as a member of the Australian Wool Industry Conference, the Federal Exporters' Overseas Transport Committee and the State Wheat Research Committee.

He gained preselection for the Liberal Party as a senator and was elected to the Senate in 1967.

Sir Harold was a member of nine parliamentary committees, was chairman of the Government Members' Committee on National Resources and Trade and deputy chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Industry and Trade. He was also a member of several parliamentary and trade delegations, including one to South-East Asia in 1970, the Commonwealth Parliamentary



Association Conference in the UK in 1974 and the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Mexico in 1975.

His diplomatic skills were recognised when he was appointed as the leader of Australia's delegations to the 1976 and 1977 Inter-Parliamentary Union Conferences held in Spain and Bulgaria.

Sir Harold was made government Whip in the Senate from August 16, 1971, continuing the role in opposition from December 2, 1972.

He was Opposition spokesman for the media from February 26, 1975, to November

11 that year, and was the Liberals' deputy chairman of committees.

Sir Harold's career was characterised by a generally low profile and was an object lesson in political discretion. He never exhibited the type of naked ambition expected of a shadow minister and was not included in subsequent Liberal ministries when the party regained office in 1975.

He made a point of distancing himself from factional infighting, which flared occasionally between the pro-Peacock and the pro-Fraser camps during the final years of the Fraser government, and set a standard of statesmanship which led to his being tagged as the Senate's 'Mr Nice Guy'.

Sir Harold's commitment to the institution of state government was exemplified on two occasions between 1972 and 1975, when he threatened to resign as party Whip in the Senate over states' rights issues.

In 1982, South Korea awarded Sir Harold with the Order of Diplomatic Service Merit, the Gwanghwa Medal, the country's highest award for a non-Korean, for his role as chairman of various federal government resources delegations from 1977 to 1982. Sir Harold described himself as "a small-n numbers man" and his prowess at the game was never better demonstrated than in 1981, when he lined up against three other Liberal Party nominees for the Senate presidency, including acknowledged number-cruncher Senator Reg Withers, and won comfortably.

He is survived by his wife, Lady Young, two sons and two daughters.