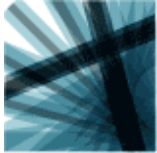


## Peter Kentley

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**From:** editor@marketplaceconnections.com  
**Sent:** Monday, 4 August 2008 17:46  
**To:** pkentley@bigpond.net.au  
**Subject:** Lindsay Thompson - Servant of Christ in Public Life



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#### **A compassionate leader with courage**

#### **LINDSAY THOMPSON, AO**

15-10-1923 - 16-7-2008

**He was described as a servant of the people and a man of true political integrity with a reputation of achieving reform through consensus.**

LINDSAY Thompson, who died of pneumonia at Cabrini Hospital last week, will be farewelled today with a state funeral that is a salute to a modest man who gave unstintingly to Victoria in a 27-year parliamentary career.

He was premier of Victoria for 10 months in 1981-82.

Lindsay was born in Warburton to Ethel and Arthur, both teachers. Arthur, who died shortly after Lindsay was born, had started to train for the Anglican priesthood, but later worked as a teacher and journalist. He had been a candidate in the 1919 federal election. Arthur's father had trained as a dentist at Guy's Hospital in London and the military hospital at Portsmouth. In Australia, he practised in Balranald, Wentworth and Hay, where he served as mayor.

One of the strongest early influences on Lindsay's life was that of his maternal grandmother, Sarah Lester Mills, a teacher, who migrated to Australia from Ireland in 1864. She was one of the first female teachers employed by the education department, with which she taught for almost 30 years. Later, with her four daughters, she established Mentone Girls' Grammar School.

Lindsay maintained a lifelong association with this school, together with Caulfield Grammar, where he was school captain, dux, and captain of the cricket team. He also played football for the school and later, in the amateurs.

The values of self-discipline, of giving one's best in any endeavour and of never shirking responsibility were principles learned at school.

During World War II, he served with a signals unit in the Australian Army in New Guinea. Strong army friendships and his experience of dealing with bureaucracy helped further shape his focus on the common good and the importance of sensible, decentralised decision making.

After the war, he enrolled at Melbourne University under a returned soldier study scheme, something that he was unable to afford earlier. He was elected to the Students Representative Council and was sports editor of *Farrago*, the student newspaper; the last two pages of politics were changed into a sports section.

Lindsay completed an honours arts degree, majoring in history and politics, and then began a teaching career at Spring Road Central school in Malvern; he was later transferred to Melbourne High School.

He greatly valued the enduring friendships developed with staff as well as students, many of whom went on to

leadership roles across the Australian community.

In 1955, he was elected to the Victorian Parliament as the then youngest-ever member of the Victorian Legislative Council. He later served in cabinet for a record 24 years, which included six years as minister for housing and forests and minister for Aboriginal welfare; a record 12 years as minister for education; nine years as deputy premier, minister for police and emergency services; three years as treasurer; and premier 1981-82.

He wrote three publications, *Looking Ahead in Education, Victorian Housing, Today and Tomorrow* and his autobiography, *I Remember*. He was also the author of a paper, *A Fair Deal for Victoria*, that addressed Commonwealth-State financial arrangements.

The Faraday School kidnapping of a young teacher and six students in October 1972 is well recorded. A demand was made by the kidnapper for Lindsay to personally handed over \$1 million in exchange for the hostages. A photo of Lindsay standing outside the Woodend Post Office at 5am that was printed in *The Age* was a poignant reflection of his steely resolve. The Royal Humane Society awarded him its Bronze medallion for his bravery.

The values often spoken about regarding his courage at Faraday were simply the outward manifestation of the values he brought to bear on a daily basis in his public decision-making during the more than 10,000 days he spent as a member of the Parliament of Victoria, as well as in every other area of his life.

A key aspect of his public speaking was his extraordinary ability to recall facts and figures. Remarkably, throughout his career, even in Parliament, he spoke without notes - a rare feat. Most speeches incorporated his humour, often a self-deprecating remark.

On one occasion he passed a shop with a poster out the front for an unreliable Sydney paper: Victorian Premier ill, it read. Lindsay couldn't resist going inside to establish the nature of his illness. The incident added to his repertoire of stories.

He delighted in talking with Victorians from every walk of life across the state, often over a cup of tea and a lamington. Family holidays invariably included tours of country schools, public buildings or impromptu conversations with somewhat surprised locals.

Along the way, Lindsay overcame setbacks: the early death of his father; the loss of family savings through misappropriation of a solicitor's trust account; post-war malaria; abdominal surgery; five pre-selection defeats; a car accident in retirement that resulted in 17 fractures to his face and three to his skull; heart surgery and other health complications. Throughout his 58 years of married life, he was supported by his wife Joan.

Lindsay served on the Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust for 33 years, including 12 years as chairman. He was also chairman of the National Tennis Centre from 1994 to '96, life member of the Richmond Football Club and the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia, Victoria Branch, which he served as president for 26 years. He was also an elder of his local church, Ewing Memorial, for 57 years.

Following his death, the family received many notes paying tribute to Lindsay's humility, dedication, compassion, courage and commitment. He was described as a servant of the people and a man of true political integrity with a reputation of achieving reform through consensus.

He was also our father and, together with our mother Joan, we mourn his death.

This tribute was prepared by Lindsay Thompson's children, Heather, Murray and David.

### **Lindsay Thompson:**

Premier of Victoria 1981-1982

Treasurer 1979-1982

Minister for Police and Emergency Services 1979-1981

Deputy Premier 1972-1981

Minister for Education 1967-1979

Minister for Aboriginal Welfare 1965-1967

Minister for Housing and Forests 1961-1967

Assistant Chief Secretary and Assistant Attorney General 1958-1961

Member for Malvern 1970-1982  
Member of the Legislative Council Monash Province 1967-1970  
Member of the Legislative Council Higinbotham 1955-1967

**The Age**  
**Thursday 24 July 2008.**

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