



Politics Cancer claims life of John Kaye

Greens MP was planning push to legalise cannabis

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Greens MP John Kaye was preparing to introduce a private member's bill to the New South Wales Parliament to legalise cannabis for medicinal use in the weeks before he died of cancer, having used it for pain relief.

But his plans were thwarted when his health began to rapidly decline 10 days ago, and he died on Monday night, aged 60.

"His belief in the need for the laws had been strengthened by his own personal experience and the benefit he received from cannabis as pain relief," fellow Greens MP David Shoebridge told Fairfax Media on Tuesday.

"That sums the man up. He was always thinking of the greater good," he said.

Another fellow Greens MP, Jeremy Buckingham, had given notice on Dr Kaye's behalf of his intention to introduce the bill.

"His intention was to advance the cause of decriminalising medicinal cannabis by drawing on his own experience," Mr Buckingham told Fairfax Media.

The NSW government has embarked upon a trial of medicinal

cannabis, but the Greens argue the law should be changed immediately. Both houses of the NSW Parliament held a minute's silence on Tuesday to mark Dr Kaye's death as he was remembered by MPs.

Premier Mike Baird said that despite their differences, he re-

garded Dr Kaye as a friend.

"The Greens have lost someone who was a great warrior," he told Parliament. "The state has lost someone who was an advocate for public policy, for things he was passionate about and for that we deeply mourn his passing."

NSW Labor leader Luke Foley said Dr Kaye had "been one of our state's most effective and formidable politicians over the past 10 years. He made his presence felt."

It was revealed in February that Dr Kaye, who was elected to the upper house in 2007, had been diagnosed with cancer.

"John was a tireless champion of public education, leading the national debate on education funding with an unflagging commitment to TAFE and public schools," Mr Shoebridge said in a statement.

"Our thoughts today are with John's partner Lynne, his sister and brothers Dina, Andrew and Stephen and their families".

The former academic was first elected to NSW Parliament in 2007 after completing his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley and a stint as a lecturer in electrical engineering at the University of New South Wales.

Dr Kaye used his position in Parliament to promote renewable energy and rail against the influence of the alcohol and gambling lobbies on political parties, particular via political donations.

He was a driving force behind the introduction un-

der the former Labor government of donations caps and a ban on donations from the alcohol, tobacco and gambling industries.

Dr John Kaye.

