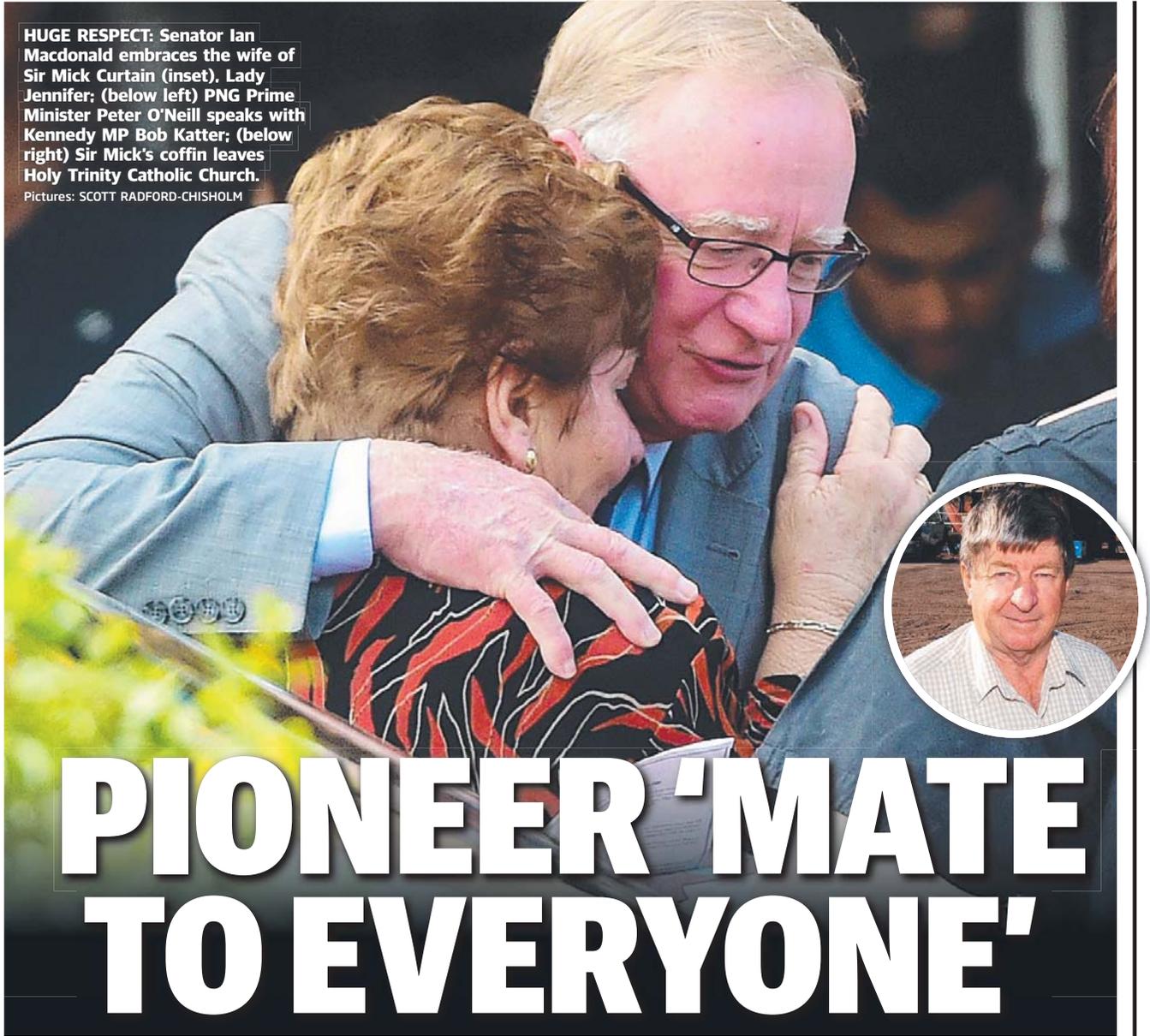




HUGE RESPECT: Senator Ian Macdonald embraces the wife of Sir Mick Curtain (inset). Lady Jennifer; (below left) PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill speaks with Kennedy MP Bob Katter; (below right) Sir Mick's coffin leaves Holy Trinity Catholic Church.

Pictures: SCOTT RADFORD-CHISHOLM



PIONEER 'MATE TO EVERYONE'

Dignitaries turn out to farewell iconic business leader

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MORE than 400 people farewelled a "true gentleman, family man and mate" at a service to celebrate the life of Sir Michael Curtain

in Townsville yesterday. Dignitaries from across Australia and Papua New Guinea paid respects to "Sir Mick", the businessman

and one-time principal of construction, shipping, mining and industrial group Curtain Bros.

The service at the Holy

Trinity Catholic Church in Mundingburra was overflowing and was attended by many people from PNG, including Prime Minister



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Peter O'Neill and two ministers, Justin Tkatchenko and Francis Awesa.

Other dignitaries included current and former Australian federal and state

MPs, Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill, extended family and friends and many of his former employees.

After the service, Mr O'Neill described Sir Mick as "a giant among the pioneers" of PNG. He said "thousands of people" would pay tribute to him at a service in Port Moresby tomorrow and that his passing had caused virtually an entire nation to grieve.

"There is a great sense of sadness," Mr O'Neill said.

"Many of our people love Sir Mick and look up to him as one of our greatest business leaders."

Mr O'Neill said Sir Mick had contributed immensely to the development of PNG through infrastructure projects including highways, ports and buildings developed by Curtain Bros.

"He is one of the pioneers of our nation – a giant among the pioneers of our country when the country was going through independence and trying to establish itself," Mr O'Neill said.

Cr Hill said the city had lost a "great entrepreneur"

whose contribution to North Queensland and PNG had been incredible.

"He was very well respected not just in the local community but internationally, especially in PNG. He will be deeply missed," Cr Hill said.

Giving his eulogy, son Peter Curtain said his father was a straight-talker who was just as happy to converse with a labourer or "some old random bloke" as he was to prime ministers.

"He had no airs or gra-

ces, acting himself wherever

he was, whoever he was with," Peter Curtain said.

On one occasion with Queen Elizabeth, she apparently told Sir Mick: "I have been to Papua New Guinea, you know", to which he is said to have jokingly replied: "Yeah, I met you there, don't you remember".

Peter Curtain said his father got "great amusement from such events".

Sir Mick was also demanding of his employees and those around him.

"Dad had a vital enthusiasm for getting things done and was an inspiration to those around him to do the same," Peter Curtain said.

"The problem for the rest of us in the company was that he always wanted to do everything at the same time."

Sir Mick was knighted for his contribution to PNG in 2004. He died on September 11, aged 75 and is survived by five sons, 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

