



Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**


**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 September 2016

**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Mr JA Aiken**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (9.37 am): John Albert ‘Jack’ Aiken was elected, as we have heard, as the Labor member for Warrego on 17 May 1969. He held the seat for five years until 7 December 1974. His life in politics did not end there. From 1975 to 1978, he was the mayor of the Murweh Shire Council also in the Warrego electorate. The 1970s no doubt would have been an interesting time in local politics in the Charleville area with his successor Neil Turner as the state representative and Jack Aiken as the local mayor at the same time.

The electorate was somewhat different in area than it is today. Warrego was what is known as a zone 3, country zone seat, with some 7,692 constituents, stretching in an east-west direction from the Great Dividing Range around Mitchell to the west out to the state’s boundary. It stretched across the river systems of the Paroo, the Maranoa, the Barcoo and Mungallala Creek.

As Jack Aiken made his maiden speech in 1969 in this House, the region was trying to recover from one of the worst droughts on record—the 1965 drought. He spoke of ‘how people of the west were trying to cope with probably the most severe drought ever known in the back country’. History has since proven his observation to be very accurate—the 1965 drought was one of the most severe droughts across Queensland.

He was passionate about the impact of droughts on the electorate, drought assistance and the resultant population drift to the east. From his background as a wool classer, he recognised the value of the agricultural industries to the region. He spoke of the potential of the vast reserves of natural gas in the Roma area and also to the west of Charleville in the Gilmore field and spoke of how these reserves could provide a cheap form of power for the region.

Jack Aiken’s daughter Judey still lives in Charleville. I have known her for some 20 years. Judey is a founding member of the Charleville fishing club, which does a great job with volunteer work on competitions, restocking, carp busters and workshops for keen young juniors and anglers. I often drop in to see Judey in her shop, Judey’s Browse In, a camping and fishing store in Alfred Street, for a chat. We have some great yarns. My deepest sympathy is extended to Judey, her family and friends during this difficult time.