




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 15 May 2018

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Rowell, Mr MH

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (9.52 am): I rise to speak on the condolence motion for Marc Hosking Rowell. I was very saddened to learn of his passing at age 80 years. I remember him well as a canefarmer and also a lychee fruit grower. I had a lot to do with him in his role as a member of parliament in the seat of Hinchinbrook for 17 years. Prior to his election, he held many National Party positions including those on the Hinchinbrook Electorate Council and the Herbert Divisional Council.

In the 1991 redistribution, it made the seat of Hinchinbrook notionally Labor and Marc was pitted against a popular Labor opponent, former minister Bill Eaton. However, Marc held the seat and he worked it up to a healthy 12 per cent margin in Hinchinbrook. I remember Marc and worked closely with him when he was appointed as the minister for primary industries and fisheries in 1998. When the coalition lost government following the election, he held many numerous shadow ministerial portfolios such as employment, training and industrial relations; emergency services; northern development; primary industries and forestry; mines and energy; economic and trade development; consumer affairs and communications; and family services, Aboriginal and Islander affairs and ethnic affairs, and he held many other committee positions.

He was a passionate farmer and he was a good farmer. He and his wife, Sandy, ran the farm and also the packing shed. When he was away on parliamentary duties, Sandy would run the packing shed and organise the staff because when the fruit was ready it had to be processed. He was always a passionate advocate and a champion for North Queensland. Even in opposition he was always fighting for the sugar industry, with a private member's bill aimed at halting the deregulation of the sugar industry. As the member for Maroochydore said, he did have a very dry sense of humour and he was well respected by all members of the House. He would sometimes bring lychees down to parliament to show the quality of the product he grew and how proud he was of the produce from North Queensland.

There must have been a few crocodiles up there because he had a resident freshwater crocodile living on the farm in a waterhole which he pumped water from. Everyone who went there hoped the foot valve did not fail and they did not have to go into the waterhole with the crocodile to fix it. I do recall one of his parliamentary colleagues asking Marc what he did when the foot valve fails. He said he would get someone to distract the croc and get in and get the job done quickly. It must have worked because there were no casualties that we heard about.

He was also passionate about North Queensland. While most of southern Queensland was often in drought, the big problem in the north—which he explained to every minister who visited and showed them—was drainage. I do recall a trip to North Queensland with Marc some 20 years ago when he explained to the then minister for natural resources about the water and drainage issues in North Queensland. He said, 'I know your people in southern Queensland feel they don't get enough rain,' but he explained that it was exactly the opposite in North Queensland. He said, 'We have so much rain we constantly have drainage issues,' and he proceeded to explain how the system of drainage channels and gates worked to drain the water away from the cane fields and out to the oceans.

I extend my deepest sympathies to Sandy and to Marc's family. He will always be remembered in southern Queensland as a great man, a great member of parliament and a great friend to many.