



Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 May 2018

**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Rowell, Mr MH**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.36 am): It is an honour and a privilege to stand here today to honour a gentleman and a true champion of North Queensland. Marcus Rowell, the Nationals member for Hinchinbrook from 1989 to 2006, was a tireless advocate for his community and North Queensland. I acknowledge the family members of the late Mr Rowell who are here today: his wife, Sandra; his daughter, Andrea, and her husband, Todd; his three grandchildren, Ben, Eliza and Kate, who are enjoying a day off school; and Marc's sister Jane.

Marc was born in Beecroft, New South Wales on 5 April 1938. He was the first of five children born to Ralph and Jean Rowell and went to primary school at nearby Pennant Hills. His love of the land was kindled in 1951, when he started his secondary education at Hurlstone Agricultural High School in South-West Sydney. Marc's family moved to North Queensland in 1952, but Marc stayed in Sydney to complete his education. The family farm at Toobanna, just south of Ingham, produced sugar cane. In the early years, it also produced tobacco. When Marc finished school, he saw the light and moved to North Queensland.

The contribution that Marc and the Rowell family have brought to Queensland is immense. Well before politics, Marc worked as a labourer on the family farm. The early days of cutting cane leaf by hand would eventually lead him to fight for his fellow farmers and North Queensland's fair share in this very room. Marc's interest in all things agricultural led him to become involved in a number of producer groups, including the Queensland Canegrowers organisation and the Australian Lychee Growers Association.

Just like the LNP members in this room today, Marc was a fierce advocate for transparency, sensible policy and science when it came to vegetation management legislation. On 20 April 2004 in this House, whilst debating Beattie's Vegetation Management and Other Legislation Bill, he said—

The position taken by the government appears to be that of ignorance. There has been no attempt at transparency, nor has there been an adherence to the science whereby questions might be raised as a result of this Labor government's stance, indicating that the unsubstantiated policy perceptions possess more weight with this government than sound policy formulation and science. This is a far cry from the position of the Nationals whereby there is a belief that the state government has a responsibility to work with stakeholders and the wider community in general to develop a natural resources base for future generations in both practice and sustainability.

As a farmer, Mr Rowell personally understood that farmers were the true environmentalists. He believed the state government had a responsibility to work with stakeholders. From the first day that Marc stepped into this House he was a fierce advocate. He fought to put Hinchinbrook on the map and make it a much sought after tourism destination. In his maiden speech Marc said—

If our region is to develop a tourist industry, it will be necessary to foster major developments. A need exists for environmentally sound, sustainable developments that will act as a catalyst for entrepreneurial operations. There is scope for that type of development in the hinterland amid rainforest waterfalls with a diversity of flora and fauna and on the coast where marina and resort-type complexes would facilitate access to the numerous islands, reefs, river estuaries ...

Like those sitting on this side of the House, Marc was a fierce advocate for building dams because Marc knew that dams were the lifeblood of rural communities and created jobs. The people of North Queensland began to know Mr Rowell as an approachable and reliable local MP. He was down to earth and practical. When North Queensland industries like fishing and timber came under threat he was there to fight on their behalf. Colleagues watched in awe as Marc and former Mirani MP Ted Malone kept the debate on the sugar industry bill going in this parliament for two days and two nights. Marc took his responsibilities very seriously and was always speaking at length about issues concerning the sugar industry right here in this House.

Mr Rowell held numerous positions during his 17 years of parliamentary service, including minister for primary industries in the Borbidge coalition government in 1988. As a minister in the Borbidge government, Marc oversaw the transfer of the ownership to the industry of the sugar terminals located at several ports up and down the Queensland coast. These are still major assets of great value to the sugar industry.

Marc Rowell was also a strong advocate for vocational education and training. He had much to do with the establishment of the TAFE centres in both Ingham and Innisfail. He took an active interest in the accessibility and affordability of apprenticeships. He was also one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the Development Bureau of the Hinchinbrook and Cardwell Shires.

Outside of politics, Marc was a keen sportsman and was involved in a number of local associations. He was even selected as a torch relay bearer for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. In 1963 Marc met Sandra Morris in New Zealand on a holiday and years later became a loving father to three children. Andrea says her father was a great man who tried his absolute best for his family.

It was a mark of the respect the community had for Marc that he left parliament at the time of his choosing after serving as the member for Hinchinbrook for 17 years. He devoted himself to his family and increasing the productivity of both the lychee and sugarcane production on his farm. His love of the land and what it could produce never wavered. Marc was a farmer first and a politician second. Those two ways of life formed a powerful force for North Queensland. The LNP will continue the legacy of Marc Rowell by continuing to fight for regional North Queensland. On behalf of the state LNP opposition I place on record our condolences to the family of Marc Rowell.