




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

Record of Proceedings, 5 September 2019

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Mayes, Ms J

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (3.15 pm): Today I want to pay tribute to one of the most remarkable people I have ever met—a true Townsville local whom we farewelled on Tuesday. I am talking about Janice Mayes—barrister, union leader, friend, colleague and mentor to many of us in Labor and also the law—taken from us by cancer.

Janice went to St Joseph's here on The Strand, St Patrick's College and Mount Carmel at Charters Towers. She became president of the students' union at Griffith University while studying for an arts degree. This is when I first saw her—speaking to a crowd at a technically illegal street rally in the last days of the National Party regime and standing, as is her wont, completely unafraid.

I first met Janice when she rose to become the leader of the clerks branch of the Australian Services Union—an amazing feat for a woman still in her 20s and 30s. She employed me as the first communications officer of that union. She was the most incredible, indefatigable and inspiring union leader for all of the young idealists in our ranks. She was truly indomitable. No-one could intimidate her. She pushed us to be our best and she gave us her undying loyalty in return. As Mike Reynolds said, she had a courageous intellect and her reputation as a fearless advocate is legendary and she was held in such high regard.

Janice moved to Townsville in 2000 to be with the love of her life—the former Speaker and mayor of Townsville, Mike Reynolds. Janice completed her law degree at James Cook University and went on to work as a family law solicitor. She moved to the bar to practise as a family law barrister. Janice was a leader in the legal community here in Townsville. She was an executive member of the North Queensland Bar Association and lectured law students at James Cook University. Mike said she was devoted to the law, her legal colleagues and her clients. On 8 August this year, Janice was awarded life membership of the Labor Party, and that meant so much to her.

All the women she mentored and befriended and led have kept the praise, and the tears, flowing for her. My fulsome condolences go to Mike, her mother Marie, Cathy, Meredith, Michael, Chris and their extended families. I will leave members with these words that were spoken by Terri Butler, who was also employed by Janice. She said—

Janice, herself, was a giant.

Fierce, formidable, sometimes terrifying, and yet when she pulled us together she was capable of being so inspiring. It was almost as if she had the power to spin willing, strong and binding solidarity out of thin air.

She was a tough woman and for most of us the toughest boss we would ever have.

Her toughness helped prepare us for the struggle we are always in.

Janice Mayes, you are always with us.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Thank you, member for Bancroft. Janice Mayes will be sorely missed in the Townsville community.