




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Burns, Mr JF

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.33 pm): I rise to pay tribute to an Ipswich true believer who sadly passed away in the final days of 2019. John Francis Burns was 85 years of age when he passed on Monday, 30 December 2019. He packed a lot into those 85 years. John became a member of the Electrical Trades Union during his time working at Swanbank Power Station. He protected workers' rights and fair working conditions because they were important to him. He was a proud fixture at Labour Day marches.

John had many different jobs throughout his life, including building and working as a milkman. In fact, during the 1974 floods John used his milk van to help stranded people by moving them and their belongings to safety. John was also a patriot. He was a proud serviceman and completed national service with the Army and Citizen Military Forces in 1953.

John joined the Australian Labor Party on 20 March 1964, spending almost 55 years as a party stalwart. He joined at a time when the Country Party had hit its stride. Guys such as John Burns joined the party during that time and helped to ensure the longevity and the strength of the Labor movement in the Ipswich region.

John spent his married life at Churchill, where he lived right to the end. He was a permanent fixture on the polling booth at Churchill State School and, along with Barry Wallace—another life member of the party, and friend and comrade—he had the best sign sites on Warwick Road. John was the kind of man who made places such as Ipswich what they are today.

John was born in Bundaberg and as a child moved to Ipswich with his family after his older brother, Tom, found work and love in Ipswich. Ninety-one-year-old Tom is a life member of the ALP and likewise lives in Churchill. Recently I learnt that, from a young age, John played Rugby League for Brothers, where he was honoured with life membership. He continued to coach the juniors as a volunteer when his sons were old enough to play. He was not one to sit quietly during the games. His son Michael told the story that, during one of his games, John was shouting instructions and encouraging the team from the sidelines when he was quite shocked to have a mother of an opposing player ram him with a pram.

John spent his youth drinking and fighting. He liked to reminisce that that was how he met the love of his life. A friend suggested that he take up boxing. It was through his boxing coach that he met his wife, Dell, who happened to be the coach's younger sister. John and Dell were married in 1962 and stayed together for over 50 years. He loved and supported Dell until she passed away from cancer about a year ago.

Together, John and Dell had seven children, 18 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. One of their great joys was holidaying at Brunswick Heads. He and his wife fell in love with the river. Their extended family continue to spend their holidays at Brunswick Heads. John asked his children, who

loved him so dearly, to scatter his and Dell's ashes on an incoming tide so that they could have one last trip up that river. On behalf of the Ipswich ALP members, I say thank you to John Burns. May you and Dell rest in peace together.