




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (11.49 am): I wish to convey my sincere and deepest sympathy to Her Majesty the Queen and her family following the passing of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. I also take this opportunity to wish Her Majesty a happy birthday for today. On behalf of the people of the Warrego electorate, I wish to thank His Royal Highness for his years of service to Queensland and for his visits to the regions, especially to my home town of Roma and the other western communities. His Royal Highness visited Australia 32 times during his royal career, including 16 solo trips without the Queen. In 2002 His Royal Highness travelled to CHOGM in Brisbane and Coolumb with a visit to Cairns, and he travelled alone to Roma to open the tourist attraction The Big Rig. The Big Rig is one of Roma's biggest and most successful tourist attractions, showcasing the oil and gas industry in the region.

This visit was pre council amalgamation and we had a town council and a shire council, which were commonly referred to as a donut council, with one large rural council surrounding the other. There was considerable robust debate between both mayors of these two councils on various issues. This robust debate was put aside for the forthcoming royal visit by the locals, as the royal visit was warmly welcomed by the community. Preparations had been underway for months before the visit.

His Royal Highness stepped off the plane at the Roma airport and he was greeted on the tarmac by the Mayor of the Roma Town Council, Bruce Garvie, and the Mayor of the Bungil Shire Council, Rob Loughnan. His Royal Highness's first words after being introduced to the two mayors was a question: 'So are you two still talking to each other?' This brought great amusement to the other members of the welcoming party, who all looked in various directions not knowing what to say for quite a few moments. His Royal Highness was certainly well briefed on local politics and he had a very quick wit. He proceeded to open The Big Rig by unveiling a plaque to great applause. In his opening speech, he said he must be the world's greatest 'plack' opener—because that was how it was pronounced—as he had unveiled so many 'placks' around the world. At that visit I was privileged to be one of the drivers in His Royal Highness's motorcade.

Another story was told to me by the late Peter McRae, founder of the Save the Bilby Fund, about His Royal Highness's visit to Idalia National Park west of Blackall in 1990. By way of background, Idalia National Park was previously Idalia Station and for some considerable time it was owned by the Hobbs family in partnership. This story was recently recounted by Martin O'Malley, a former resident of Charleville, who was actually at the park at that time. His Royal Highness camped out overnight at Idalia park. During the visit, Peter McRae was driving the Prince around looking for yellow-footed rock-wallabies, only to find rabbits. It was a great relief to Peter when they finally found some wallabies. Martin had the daunting task of cooking steaks on a hot plate over mulga coals for the Prince and other dignitaries. Whilst Martin was cooking, His Royal Highness wandered over with a can of beer in his hand for a brief chat that was very friendly and down to earth.

His Royal Highness had a rich and varied career in the Royal Navy, with a deep passion for naval history and for seafaring ever since he left Gordonstoun and joined the Royal Navy as a cadet. He was first appointed as First Lieutenant of the fleet destroyer HMS *Whelp*, which was being built on the River Tyne, a famous shipbuilding centre where 1,600 vessels had been built since 1839. After she was commissioned, the *Whelp* first joined the 27th Destroyer Flotilla and sailed for the Indian Ocean to join the British Pacific Fleet. The *Whelp* was present in Tokyo Bay when the Japanese signed the surrender on 2 September 1945 with General Douglas MacArthur on the USS *Missouri*. Every sailor who was there at that time would have known the significance of that day to our country, the Pacific Ocean nations and Asia.

A family has lost a father. Her Majesty the Queen has lost a confidant and her husband. Western Queensland has lost a down-to-earth friend who took great interest in our communities and its people. May His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh rest in peace.