




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 25 February 2021

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Sullivan, Mr JH

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (9.52 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the condolence motion and to pay tribute to the service and life of Jon Sullivan and to extend my sympathies to Carryn, Tai, Casey and the rest of the family and all of the people who knew Jon, because anyone who knew Jon was touched by his kindness and generosity of spirit. It takes a significant contribution to represent more than one level of government. Jon was recognised in the broader Caboolture community not only in this place as the Labor member for Caboolture and Glass House but also the Labor federal member for Longman. Very few people have that honour. The member for Redcliffe, the member for Ferny Grove and potentially the member for Callide, if he gets his way, have been able to represent their communities at two levels, but Jon's contribution in many ways at the state and federal level is acknowledged.

Jon comes from a family of service, and the Premier alluded to this. I thought I would reflect on some of the words that Jon used himself in relation to the commitment from his family to service of the Caboolture community. In one of his speeches to the federal parliament he said—

We do not think it is unusual that people with a shared interest in politics should marry. We do accept that it is unusual that we should be serving as elected representatives simultaneously, in our case for a second time.

I certainly remember during my first term here in this parliament I sat very near Carryn and we had a lot of talks about Jon's service as the federal member and how we might lobby him as neighbouring state MPs to deliver more for our Caboolture region.

The 2007 election was a great election to be a part of—that is, the Your Rights at Work election, the Kevin Rudd election—where we were able to elect a Labor member for Longman with Jon Sullivan. Earlier I was talking with the Attorney-General about those corflutes where people were saying, 'Jon, you should shave your beard off. It might help you get a few more votes.' Jon went to the other extreme of course. He not only kept his beard but he made the corflutes fluoro orange so that no-one could miss those corflutes and his magnificent beard.

Jon gave me some advice when I was first elected to the parliament, and it was in his normal, quirky, quick-witted way. He said, 'Mark, you've got to always remember the politicians' place in the world.' I said, 'Okay, Jon. I'll listen to your advice.' He said, 'If you walk down the road and there's four voters there, what would you think?' I said, 'Oh well. Four voters. Fifty per cent of the vote. Two of them must like me and two of them must not like me.' Jon said, 'No, no, no, that's wrong. None of them like you, but two of them might vote for you.' Always so down to earth.

Jon loved Caboolture. He loved the entire region. Again, I want to reflect on his words. He said this about the people of Caboolture—

The people there are wonderful; I believe there are none better anywhere, and I am so proud to represent each and every one of them.

The fact of the matter is that Jon was one of them and he knew, because he was down to earth, the power that comes from being in a place like this to make a difference in their lives.

I recall another story when Kevin Rudd came to Caboolture South. This was in 2010 when Jon was the federal MP and I was in the state parliament, and the mayor turned up as well. We were at the end of this very quiet street in Caboolture South and there were cars everywhere and people everywhere. Kevin Rudd had not turned up yet and the neighbours started coming out and asking, 'What's going on?' Jon and I went over and they said, 'What are all these cars doing here? Go away. This is a quiet street.' Jon and I were talking about a special guest coming and they said, 'We don't want any of these out-of-towners here. This is just a quiet street in Caboolture South.' We said, 'Well, it might be the Prime Minister.' There was a little pause and they said, 'What? Ruddy?' We said, 'Yeah, yeah.' They said, 'Wait a second,' and they went in and got a cup of tea ready and started making sandwiches. It was a great celebration after that and Kevin Rudd was well received in that quiet street in Caboolture South that day.

Jon was a strong advocate for services in the Caboolture region and I think he was most proud of the commitment that Labor governments made in the Caboolture Hospital—an extraordinary commitment and a commitment that came after years of neglect. It was a Labor government that built that hospital, it was a Labor government that upgraded it and it is a Labor government that continues to invest in that hospital for the whole region. Jon was particularly proud about that. When the Borbidge government was in power and Mike Horan as the then health minister was downgrading some of the upgrades at the Caboolture Hospital, Jon never let him off the hook—ever—and he held him to account. I know Carryn was also very involved in those campaigns.

We have heard a lot about Jon. He had particular qualities and qualities that I found very endearing. He was quirky and quick witted and very kind. He was generous. He was good hearted and he could certainly chat. If chatting was an Olympic sport, then Jon Sullivan would have won the gold medal. In reflecting just briefly on his quirkiness, there was a time during the Borbidge government when the then member for Gladstone, Liz Cunningham, was thinking about whether to continue to support the Borbidge government or not and Jon Sullivan actually started waltzing behind Liz Cunningham during one of her speeches when she was talking about whether she was going to support the Borbidge government in minority government. It was called the 'Cunningham shuffle'. It was written up in the *Sunday Mail* and I want to quote that article, which stated—

He's no Fred Astaire, but Labor member for Caboolture Jon Sullivan has earned the tag of Queensland's dancing politician.

Last Tuesday night in State Parliament, as the government hung in the balance on a confidence motion and Independent MP Liz Cunningham rose to deliver her verdict on its fate, he began waltzing behind her.

He was doing the dance craze that is gripping Queensland parliamentary circles, the Cunningham shuffle.

'A little bit of backsliding gets me moving every time,' an unrepentant Mr Sullivan told The Sunday Mail.

What is not well known is that the day after, on a Monday morning radio breakfast program—and I heard this story from Carryn—Jamie Dunn of B105 fame, rang Jon and wanted to interview him. Jamie Dunn said, 'Look, Jon, I'd never even ever heard of you until I read about you in the *Sunday Mail* yesterday.' Jon retorted, with his quick wit, 'Well, I'd never heard of you until you rang me this morning.'

Jon was a good man. He loved his community, but he had a greater love for his family. The last set of words I want to use in reflecting on Jon's service are again his—

Family is everything in any walk of life and in this profession it is especially so. Carryn and our daughters provided me with a great well of love, encouragement and support, for which I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Carryn, Tai, Casey, I will miss Jon. Know that he served his community and this parliament with humility and dedication. He was a good man. He will be missed.