




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 18 August 2022

ADJOURNMENT

Gayler, Mr J

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (6.16 pm): It is with a heavy heart that I rise today to pay tribute to my good friend John Gayler, the former federal ALP member for Leichhardt—

Honourable members interjected.

Ms PEASE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. There is a speaker on his feet and the member for Mudgeeraba is quarrelling with someone, although I am not really sure with whom. Could we call it to order?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Thank you, member for Lytton. That is not a point of order. Before we continue, I ask all members to keep it down so we can listen to the member for Cairns.

Mr HEALY: John Gayler was the former federal ALP member for Leichhardt. He passed away on Wednesday, 27 July this year. John was first elected as the member for Leichhardt in 1983, in the election that saw Bob Hawke become prime minister. He retired in 1993, having successfully served for 10 years and having won four elections. John was certainly a colourful addition to the federal parliament. He not only served the large electorate of Leichhardt but was also appointed a member of the council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies from 1985 to 1990. He served on the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence from 1983 to 1987, and in 1985 he served on the House Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, which he was passionate about.

John took a keen interest in the protection of the Daintree Rainforest within his electorate. He supported the listing of the Wet Tropics of Queensland as a World Heritage site and drew attention to illegal logging. He was also instrumental in fostering strong and enduring relations with Japan, which helped build the city of Cairns and contributed significantly to our region's strong and growing tourism industry. John served our party, representing the people of Leichhardt extremely well. He loved the electorate and knew it like the back of his hand. He had a great relationship with the then state member for Cook, Bob Scott. The two of them often travelled around the cape and the Torres Strait, with John making promises that Bob would have to follow up on.

John grew up in Babinda. He was a true North Queenslander. I have been told that he was a pretty good footballer in his day. Babinda always held a special place in John's heart. He was a solicitor prior to entering into politics—and was well liked, regardless—forming a dynamic partnership with the late Mal Cleland. John was also on the side of the little guy and was widely known in legal circles as 'Not Guilty Gayler'. He represented the infamous Cedar Bay 12, who were arrested on drug charges after the expensive military style raid orchestrated by the Joh Bjelke-Petersen government on the isolated hippie commune in the thick scrub between Cairns and Cooktown.

John was a larger-than-life character and he was an absolutely solid man. He loved to talk politics, horseracing and footy. He was extremely knowledgeable, was very keen to give expertise and knowledge and was prepared to discuss any topic. He was especially keen on politics. John could enter

any room and talk to anybody at any level, whether a prime minister or a ringer who has just come off the paddock. I am sure all members will join me in extending my sincere sympathies to Mary, Sean, Fiona and their families on John's passing. Vale John Gayler. Elections will certainly not be the same without you.