




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2023

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Johnson, Mr VG, OAM

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (10.18 am): It is a great privilege to contribute to the condolence motion for Vaughan Johnson OAM, former deputy mayor of the Quilpie shire, former member for Gregory and former minister for transport and main roads. I acknowledge Robin, Monique, Michael and Tanya, their partners and extended family who are here today. I extend my condolences to you all and those of the former member for Warrego who served many years in this House with Vaughan Johnson. Vaughan was a larger than life character and so many of us were privileged to know him. Two weeks ago I was on Palm Island with former mayor Alf Lacey. Alf was unable to make Vaughan's funeral and asked me to pass on his condolences to Vaughan's family, which I said I would do in this condolence motion.

Vaughan loved his family and the people of the bush. He loved his football, which was an integral part of his pre-parliamentary life. He was a boy from the bush who built roads in the city. As the minister for transport and main roads, he oversaw the addition of lanes to and the rebuilding of the M1. There are countless mayors and councillors who have recounted to me the roads that were maintained and sealed while he was in charge of the portfolio. Earlier I heard some recount his dislike of flying, but that was not the only reason that he drove endless kilometres around Queensland. He wanted to know about the state of Queensland's roads so he drove them and he knew them well. I would find him in a roadhouse at Miles, somewhere out at Thargomindah and in various other places around Queensland.

Vaughan also got up to some antics and some practical jokes. It was that sense of fun that made his character what it was. It started at an early age. There is a story about a local priest in Quilpie, a goat, Vaughan Johnson and his mates. Do not worry, Mr Speaker: it is parliamentary.

Years ago, when Vaughan was a young bloke in Quilpie, he and two mates tied a goat to the bell of the Anglican Church at about two o'clock in the morning. Then they let the goat go. Of course, the goat walked out to the end of the rope and the bell rang. Vaughan and his mates went up the road to watch the reaction of the local priest. The priest came out and tried to catch the goat, but he was not much of a stockman. Every time he tried to catch the goat, it ran to the end of the rope and rang the bell. This continued for some time with the church bell chiming away at two o'clock in the morning. The bell ringing woke the whole town of Quilpie. Vaughan and his mates were highly amused. Quilpie has never forgotten Vaughan Johnson.

In this very chamber Vaughan kept up the antics. Vaughan sat next to Ian Walker, the former member for Mansfield. Vaughan loved to play practical jokes on Ian whilst he was speaking. On one occasion, Vaughan poured a glass of water into Ian Walker's shoe whilst he was speaking in full flight.

Another story involved Vaughan Johnson, Howard Hobbs and Santo Santoro. Vaughan and Howard sat either side of Santo in the chamber. They both had a hold of Santo's coat-tails and held him down so that he could not make the jump to call Mr Speaker and, subsequently, missed his speaking spot. Afterwards, Santo gave both of them a lecture on their breeding.

Vaughan had some sayings that he used regularly like 'you're one pink feather short of being a real galah' or 'there's a few roos short in the top paddock'. He was certainly not vanilla.

Not long after I was elected, I was told that Vaughan wanted to give me some advice that I needed in relation to being a member of parliament. I thought, 'Well, this is going to be interesting.' I had to promise him that I would look after Lachie Millar, the member for Gregory. That is some task.

Honourable members interjected.

An honourable member: It's a work in progress.

Mrs Frecklington: How are you going?

Ms LEAHY: I take the interjection: it is a work in progress. One thing is for sure: Vaughan's legacy will continue for many years to come and his handshake will be remembered by all those who met him. May he rest in peace.