




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2023

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Ahern, Hon. MJ, AO

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (10.21 am): I want to start by offering my sincere condolences to the family of Mike Ahern on behalf of the Sunshine Coast communities that I represent. I wish the entire Ahern family courage and peace during this most difficult of times. When a 25-year-old Mike Ahern was elected to the parliament in 1968, he represented what is now the Buderim electorate as a part of the Landsborough electorate, as the deputy leader of the LNP, the member for Kawana, spoke about, until it was redistributed in 1985. As a number of members have already mentioned, he had a distinguished career as a minister and premier and I could speak at length about that, but in my contribution today I want to focus on Mr Ahern's time representing what is now the Buderim electorate.

Although I did not have the opportunity to meet Mike Ahern, in preparing for this motion I spoke to some longstanding Buderim residents who lived in our community when Mr Ahern was the state member and the universal feedback was that Mike Ahern was an active local member, a man of integrity and a man who did the utmost for our community. They spoke of his frequent visits to the Buderim Ginger Factory, which has since moved and is now a Woolworths but at the time was the centrepiece of the Buderim community. While I learnt more about Mike Ahern's life I realised I would have enjoyed getting to know Mike Ahern given our paths to this place and the fact that, like Mike Ahern, my family is from the Mary Valley and our family farm is just a stone's throw away from Conondale where Mike was raised. Like Mike, I, too, studied ag science at UQ, so despite our age differences and our life experiences we had similar paths to this place in many regards.

In 1970, just two years after his election, Mr Ahern spoke about the need for a stronger police presence on the Sunshine Coast, as the member for Glass House noted. At the time we only had four police officers working at the Maroochydore station, and that included the area of Buderim and Kawana as well. Interestingly, they were three extra officers staffed there over Christmas to help with the troubles that came from the influx of tourists. Mr Ahern noted at the time that he did not think 'the rate of growth on the Sunshine Coast area is understood by administrators and that the rate of growth was likely to accelerate in the future'. He certainly did not miss the mark there. When he made those comments, our Sunshine Coast community had a population of about 7,000 and now it is close to 400,000 and we are managing many of the same issues today.

As the member for Glass House noted, Mr Ahern fought for more police on the Sunshine Coast, and we did get that outcome and we thank him for that. His legacy of better roads and of government services to support the growing community of the Sunshine Coast has been essential in protecting the way of life that people on the Sunshine Coast cherish and that many people have moved to the Sunshine Coast to enjoy. Alongside the improvements to infrastructure and government services, the marks of Mike Ahern's commitment to our community are scattered across what is now the Buderim electorate. A couple of years ago after the birth of my youngest child, Lachy, at the Buderim Private

Hospital I escaped from the maternity ward for a break of changing dirty nappies and in exploring the hospital I found a stone at the front of the Buderim Private Hospital dedicated by Mr Ahern to mark the start of construction in 1979. That hospital is a pivotal part of our community. Many young families have had their children born at the Buderim Private Hospital—it is the hospital where three of my children were born—and it is an example of the way that Mike Ahern's work to support the growing Sunshine Coast community lives on.

Mike Ahern's life of service to the people of the Sunshine Coast and to all Queenslanders is one that his family should be very proud of—a life well lived. Vale, Mike Ahern.