




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2023

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Johnson, Mr VG, OAM

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.14 am): I rise to support today's condolence motion for Vaughan Johnson. Like many in the House, I did not know Vaughan in this House. I came in 2015 when the changeover in the seat of Gregory occurred. I got to know Vaughan in my role as a government MP, whether it was on a committee or as minister.

I am pretty sure my colleagues would attest to this: every time a minister went to Western Queensland, it did not matter what you were doing, Vaughan Johnson found you. Whether it was opening a fire station or something else, Vaughan would travel hundreds of kilometres because it was a great opportunity to have a chat to a government minister and there was always something that was on his mind. The main time I remember was as disability minister when Vaughan led the charge for the town of Longreach. There were, and still are to this day, around 60 to 80 people of the Longreach community who have NDIS plans but not one single NDIS provider. Vaughan brought Longreach representatives and leaders down to Brisbane to meet with myself and others to stir this up and to resolve this.

As many members have said before us here today, he was an absolute passionate champion for Western Queensland. He also reminded me that, if I chose to use it, Bill Shorten's mother-in-law actually comes from Ilfracombe. 'Feel free, Minister, to use that as you wish,' he said, which I did. I can assure the House that, through the advocacy of Vaughan, Longreach has received focus from the federal government, the state government and the NDIS and those services are starting to flow.

In the last couple of months before Vaughan passed we had a number of conversations about treaty and about what that meant for Western Queensland, what it meant for towns, communities, farmers and also the Aboriginal people of Western Queensland. He was quite a strong supporter of many of the First Nations leaders in his area. In the last meeting that we had—he actually travelled all the way down to Brisbane to meet me—we spent a couple of hours talking about this and at the end of that meeting he stood up and with that big handshake he said, 'Minister, you tell me what you want me to do and I will support you on this 100 per cent.' Unfortunately, I will never get to make that call to ask for his assistance.

I grew up on a farm in Victoria. I grew up with people like Vaughan. The big handshake was nothing new to me. I grew up with many people of Vaughan's stature in the community. The handshake was more than a greeting or a goodbye; it was a contract. When you looked Vaughan in the eye, shook his hand and agreed on something, you absolutely agreed on something; it did not need to be written down. With that, condolences to his family and to his friends. We have lost a great champion for Western Queensland.