




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Johnson, Mr VG, OAM

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (10.25 am): I wish to add some personal comments to the tributes to my friend and former colleague the late Vaughan Johnson. He used to call me his little sister. In many ways, in this parliamentary world, he was like a big brother to me when I was elected in 1992 as the National Party member for Maroochydore. He was the National Party member for Gregory and had been elected only three years earlier at the election that saw the change of government from conservative to Labor.

There is a lot of sacrifice in public life, especially when caring for the people of the west in an electorate the size and scope of Gregory and many of our larger seats. Few of us really know just what that kind of sacrifice means. It means you cannot go home at night after a function in the electorate as home is hours away by road or a flight away. Vaughan's electorate, at 400,000 square kilometres, give or take 20,000 to 40,000 kilometres, was absolutely huge. Every community expects to see you and to be represented by you. Technology can only help so much. Technology is not personal and it is not the member.

Vaughan was one of those members who was always on the road or flying to do the job, to stay connected, to care and to help people. When there were floods, fires or droughts and when there were government decisions made many thousands of miles away that smashed people's lives and livelihoods and left them feeling disempowered and forgotten, the one who took up the mantle to speak, to advocate, to fight on their behalf, the one who carried the bigger challenge and burden was Vaughan Johnson. It was not a job; it was about a call to care. Vaughan was that person. He was always out there caring for people, regardless of their status in life. He cared deeply about his electorate and the people of Queensland, and he cared deeply about his family.

As we have heard, Vaughan was straight-talking, colourful, passionate and kind when he saw people in trouble. As the main roads and transport minister in the Borbidge-Sheldon government, he was outstanding. He understood the size of the state and the need to keep people connected with good roads and good rail. As someone who had built, owned and run a trucking company, he understood better than many what it meant to the economic lifelines of the state.

My colleagues have already outlined some of the key milestones in Vaughan's life. I thought I would add another anecdote. I recall he was speaking in the parliament, in full and passionate flight. In the midst of his speech he recounted that his mother would have washed his mouth out with soap if he ever swore. At that, he dropped his speaking notes and swore as he lent down to pick them up. It would have been a very game Speaker who pulled him up because it was quite funny. That was Vaughan. No-one could take offence at that.

Vaughan, you have served your electorate well. A big personality and a big man with a big heart, he was also a man of faith—a bushie's faith. Now he is in God's arms of love and care. Till we see you again, Vaughan. To your family go our love and our respect because you also walked alongside him and paid much of the price of sacrifice for Vaughan's life of service. I acknowledge Robin, Monique, Tanya, Michael, the grandchildren and the extended family. Vaughan, we will miss you until we meet again.