




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Ahern, Hon. MJ, AO

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (10.17 am): I wish to pass my sincerest condolences to the family of the late Mike Ahern, former premier of Queensland and former member for Landsborough. Mike once represented the town of Maroochydore and all of my electorate south of the Maroochy River. In the days when there were only two state electorates on the Sunshine Coast, Landsborough and Cooroora—the latter represented by my late father, Gordon, from 1974.

Others have expounded upon Mike Ahern's profound legacy in this state, but I will add comments about his local legacy and speak to how he was also a very devoted father and family man. I was only a child and a teenager when he was leaving his imprint upon this part of the Sunshine Coast; however, when I was a university student and he was the minister for industry, small business and technology, he kindly gave me an interview for a journalism assignment which I so greatly appreciated—even though, as it was for a university assignment, it would never see the light of day. Despite the fact that he was a busy man, he was kind and helpful. That was also the nature of how he looked after our community.

The Sunshine Coast was an emerging tourism destination with investments being made in world-class accommodation, while our national parks were also being recognised and expanded. As we know today, the tension between population growth and preserving our natural assets is never easy, but the past had some significant milestones of conservation, and those involved in trying to maintain the environment came from the left and right of the political spectrum.

Our area has certainly grown much since Mike's time and his involvement laying the foundations for so much across our community. He played a part in the lead-up to the establishment of the Cooloola national park which was gazetted in 1975, an area my father represented from December 1974, and they were both involved in the move to remove sandmining and mining leases in some very sensitive areas. Mike was the local MP for the electorate of Landsborough when the waterways of the Pumicestone Passage were gazetted as a marine park in 1986. Kathleen McArthur, the renowned wildflower painter and conservationist and one of the founders of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland, lived in Caloundra and was a leader in the fight to preserve the wallum lands and particularly for the conservation of Cooloola. She was a passionate advocate and Mike engaged with Kathleen as her local member about this and other environmental issues, particularly during the times when pressures were being brought to bear on the local landscape.

Mike Ahern has a legacy of a loving family, a community he diligently served and a state he led with purpose. To Andrea, all the children and the extended family, I pass on my sincerest condolences. Vale, Mike Ahern.