



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2023

**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Ahern, Hon. MJ, AO**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (10.11 am): It is an honour to rise today to support this condolence motion with regard to the former Queensland premier the Hon. Mike Ahern AO. Often what occupies our minds in this place is what happens after politics, what life is like after politics. For some it comes sooner rather than later, but eventually it comes to us all. I know that it must have occupied Mike's mind because, in identifying a need for a model for philanthropy that would last for all of time, the Hon. Mike Ahern established, as the member for Lytton acknowledged, the Queensland Community Foundation in 1997 as a perpetual charitable trust. It was truly bold, but Mike Ahern hatched a cunning plan. I do not know whether the member for Caloundra softened him up or not, but he approached me, as the then assistant secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions, because he wanted to make sure that he had full representation on the board of governors. It was with great honour that I accepted that representation very early in the piece, and that is where I got to know him very well.

The foundation was launched, as the member for Lytton said, with 12 subfunds and only \$300,000. Mike had a vision, but his cunning plan was to put it under the trusteeship of the Public Trustee—the biggest will writers in Queensland. He wanted to not only spread philanthropy to those entrepreneurs who were able to give because they had much but also enable the average person, in making a will, to bequeath funds to a dedicated fund. As we know, the subfunds in the Queensland Community Foundation have grown exponentially. For example, there is a Queensland Teachers' Union Trust subfund. If a teacher wishes to give money to the advancement of education, they can do so in that particular named fund. It was a fantastic plan that I think demonstrated his intellect and his brilliance. He thought up a model enabling philanthropy to be extended to anybody in Queensland. The board of governors, currently chaired by the Hon. Margaret McMurdo, worked very diligently to make sure his vision came to pass. I believe that before his passing Mike was patron of the QCF. He was greatly missed at the 2024 QCF grant round launched at Government House by the Governor on 21 September this year. He was spoken of very fondly.

The fund being under the auspice and trusteeship of the Public Trustee meant there were no administration or government fees. Mike was absolutely determined that that be the case. He wanted to ensure that when an average person, entrepreneur or whoever donated or bequeathed money to the QCF every single dollar went to the charities and organisations that were the beneficiary. That is a truly honourable position to take. He achieved many things in this state, including that. It is wonderful to see.

It was an honour to serve on the very early board of governors as assistant secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions and as secretary. Mike had an amazing way of bringing everybody together to focus on the outcome and to ensure that whatever we did day to day was for the betterment of the average Queenslanders to whom these funds were supposed to go. It was an honour to serve. He set up the fund as a trust deed for income to be applied for the relief of poverty. I think about

\$35 million has been raised for that purpose, for the advancement of education—we have heard that Mike had a particular interest in and passion for education; I know that many of us in this House do—and for any purpose that is beneficial to the community. I recall that he was very proud that about 30 per cent of the funds were going to medical research, for the betterment of the health and wellbeing of ordinary Queenslanders. He led and inspired philanthropy across generations in Queensland. It was an absolute honour to get to know him.

We have heard remarks that Mike Ahern was a truly honourable and gentle man, and indeed he was. He was so respectful on every occasion and he had great social justice values. Anyone who walks around with those kinds of values is a very decent human being, and that is exactly what Mike Ahern was. His intellect and brilliance for the betterment of humankind were used to great advantage with the establishment of the Queensland Community Fund. It was an honour to serve with him. I know that he will be missed by all of his family and friends and by many of us in the House. I offer my sincere condolences to all of his family and friends. It was an honour to know you, Mike Ahern. Vale, Mike Ahern.