



Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2023

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Johnson, Mr VG, OAM

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (10.04 am): I also rise to offer my condolences to Vaughan Gregory Johnson and acknowledge his family in the public gallery today. It was such a pleasure to converse with them at his funeral in Buderim earlier this year.

The first meeting I had with Vaughan was at the Brisbane Airport. We were going our different ways—I think I was going to Canberra and he was travelling down to Sydney—but we got chatting and we were the only two in the lounge at that time. The moment you met Vaughan you could tell instantly that he was a man who was genuine—a straight shooter, a man who was an absolute gentleman, salt of the earth. He really cared for his community. He loved his family but also loved agriculture and our First Nations people. By the end of that conversation at the airport we exchanged our mobile numbers—something rare that you do when you first meet a person. That reminded me of how genuine he was and the trust we had in one another to have that ability to make that contact.

We kept in touch with each other over the years after that meeting, but it did not take long for our paths to meet again. As a wild dog commissioner he loved seeing the return of sheep in the west. He was infectious about it, actually. I remember the occasion that the Premier and I and Vaughan went out to inspect a newly constructed fence not far from Longreach. From that position he was accepted by the Premier as the drought commissioner. He championed those impacts as well. I remember him telling me to be brave and be bold when we introduced our drought reforms, and we see the beneficiaries now where many primary producers are producing drought preparedness initiatives to make sure their properties are drought proofed as much as possible.

He was quick with an opinion. He was very supportive of his role as a wild dog commissioner and at the time he said that he was very pleased to be part of this. He said, 'Rural Queensland is sick of being second-class citizens.' On drought he continued his travels and engaged with producers, industry and government but also knew that he made a difference. He made a difference to everyone and made a difference as part of the solution as he urged anybody wanting to help to donate cash or visit affected towns.

His involvement with the Woorabinda Pastoral Co. was also another area where our paths met when I was the ministerial champion at the time. Along with his strong interests in seeing people's lives improved, he worked well with the Director-General of TMR, Neil Scales, a government champion of Woorabinda who continues to deliver for that community. It did not matter what side of the fence you were on; Vaughan stopped for a chat. He had a genuine love for his region of Queensland and all those who lived there. Throughout our years of friendship and conversations he always inquired how our Premier was—a true sign of a man who genuinely respected our Premier.

Queensland has lost a rural champion and Queenslanders everywhere will miss Vaughan, particularly his handshake, which has been remembered today by many. It is something that impresses upon me from the many occasions when I met him and something I will miss. Vale, Vaughan Johnson.