




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

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MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Johnson, Mr VG, OAM

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (10.29 am): I was deeply saddened when I heard of the passing of Vaughan Johnson. I acknowledge Robin and all the family members in the parliamentary gallery today and those who are at home watching. I offer my sincere condolences. I did have the privilege to serve with Vaughan from 2004 to 2015 and knew him well before I entered parliament. Vaughan was probably one of the greatest grassroots politicians, on par with Jim Pearce and Vince Lester, who were very close to Vaughan. Vaughan was one of those rare politicians who could work across party lines. He had a relationship with and could work with people from all different walks of life and backgrounds. I remember when I was first elected to the parliament in 2004. Vaughan was on his feet viciously attacking a government minister for nearly the entire speech. I said to myself, 'Gee, they must dislike each other. This is irreparable damage.' Two days later, Vaughan and the minister were in the Strangers Bar, shouting beers. They were there not just for one hour or two; they were there for quite some time! Vaughan always believed in playing hard but having a beer afterwards.

Vaughan was a very well liked and very well respected person. As the member for Charters Towers I shared an electorate boundary with Vaughan and I would travel with him on different occasions. It was not uncommon for him to walk up the railway track, shake hands with the fettlers, attend the bull sale and then go to the Emerald agriculture show and open the show. This was all in a day's work. At the time, his electorate was 1½ times the size of Victoria.

One thing that sticks out in my mind—as I said, I knew Vaughan way before politics; I was in the railway for 20 years—is when I told Vaughan that I would be competing at the Brisbane Ekka in the Queensland Rail silver spike rail race competition in which some of the teams from his electorate would be competing. Vaughan turned up, as minister for transport, with an entourage including the media. He started the race and also handed out prizes afterwards. To our amazement, with just a few words of invitation, Vaughan would make the effort to travel hundreds of kilometres to be at a student leaders induction service at a school way in the outback at eight o'clock in the morning. He would do this all the time.

I do want to mention one of Vaughan's worst moments in parliament from his entire parliamentary career. That was when the parliament reduced the speaking time on bills from 20 minutes to 10 minutes. He loved a good, long, boisterous speech, and this change very much upset him. He said to me, 'They're trying to silence me, mate.' I was in the chamber when these changes were first introduced and Vaughan was on his feet and in full flight. The Speaker pulled him up and said, 'Time has expired,' to which Vaughan replied, 'But, Mr Speaker, I have only just started.' Condolences to the family. Vaughan was of a rare breed and those who knew him certainly are better people because of his influence. Rest in peace, Vaughan. God bless.