




Speech By
Hon. Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2025

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Chapman, Mrs YA

 **Hon. A LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers) (9.55 am): I rise to extend my condolences and contribute to the parliamentary condolence motion for Yvonne Ann Chapman, Queensland's first female cabinet minister. Yvonne was born in Brisbane in January 1940. She grew up on a dairy farm at Youngs Crossing, the eldest of five children. She worked as a secretary at the Petrie Paper Mill, where she met her husband Graeme. They later raised two children—Wendy and Greg. She rode her horse to school at the Petrie State School. She enrolled at the Banyo State High School; however, there was no chance of going to university as the family needed her. Sadly, her father passed away at the age of 38 and her mother passed away at the age of 56. Her family were humble and the children had learned to live without. At her funeral, Councillor Yvonne Barlow, who served on the Pine Rivers Shire Council with Yvonne Chapman, said that Yvonne was the glue that kept her family together.

Yvonne took the unusual approach of joining both the Liberal Party and the National Party. After receiving advice regarding this dual party membership she chose the Liberal Party. Her distinguished political career began in 1976 as a councillor for the Pine Rivers Shire Council. She also served as the shire's deputy chair from 1982 to 1983. Her humble beginnings stayed with her in council. She never had properties sold for unpaid rates because she knew about the many hardships that people endured.

Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen asked her to join the National Party and run for the state seat of Pine Rivers. Yvonne entered state politics as the member for Pine Rivers in 1983, winning the seat for the National Party. She went on to become Queensland's first female cabinet minister as the Minister for Welfare Services, Youth and Ethnic Affairs in the Bjelke-Petersen government and then later served in the Cooper government as the Minister for Transport and Ethnic Affairs.

Yvonne was at times outspoken and stood up for what she thought was right. She promoted quite controversially the development of a policy that single mothers could receive welfare payments for their first child but not for subsequent offspring. Those who served in the parliament at the time can recall Yvonne saying, 'Single mothers can have the first one; however, I will have the next.' She also had great compassion for these people. In cabinet she once requested a washing machine for some single mums who she had observed were doing it very tough.

In December 1989 she lost her seat and she returned to the family business. After losing a court case with the local council over land use, she was urged to return to local politics. In 1995 she was elected the mayor of the Pine Rivers Shire. This was the first time a preferential ballot was used and Yvonne won that position after the distribution of preferences.

In the 2004 election the position of mayor was uncontested and she remained as mayor until her retirement in 2008, making her at the time one of the longest serving female heads of local government in the nation. Yvonne was the first, last and only mayor of the Pine Rivers Shire. She did not recontest the 2008 election following the amalgamation.

Yvonne passed away on Sunday, 27 October 2024. One thing she missed out on was to hear that the LNP had won the state election. Yvonne had an incredibly warm character. She had a great love for the Pine Rivers and Moreton Bay region. She will never be forgotten by those of us who were very privileged to know her. Rest in peace.