



Speech By  
**Nikki Boyd**


**MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS**

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**MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Chapman, Mrs YA**

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (9.47 am): Yvonne Chapman dedicated 30 years of her life to local and state levels of government, but it is fair to say that she spent her whole life serving our community. She was a postwar kid who was used to doing without. Youngs Crossing was her first home and her father handcrafted the bricks that would be the strong foundations for their family home in Petrie. The AMP paper mill transformed many lives in our community, including Yvonne's. It was her father's employer. Following his sudden passing, the paper mill stood behind the young family as they worked through their loss and their new reality.

Yvonne described her mother as strong and loving. Like her mother, strength would be one of Yvonne's defining attributes. Yvonne was described as the glue that held the family together. Her childhood was stable but not easy. It was the hardships that Yvonne experienced that shaped the community representative she would become.

Like her father before her, the paper mill became Yvonne's employer when she worked there as a secretary. That was where she met her husband, Graeme. Once married, it was frowned upon for Yvonne to continue to work. In 1957, Yvonne partnered with Graeme in a steel fabricating business. It was a panel-beating business that they transformed into a niche business making dairy milk tankers. Through expanding that enterprise, Yvonne sought to stand as a community representative.

Yvonne is often described as a trailblazer. In 1970, she held both Liberal Party and National Party memberships. She resigned from the National Party to run on the Liberal ticket in local government and later would return to the National Party when invited by Premier Sir Joh to run for state parliament. She sought to be herself while being our community's advocate. She was a normal person who talked in normal terms. She was, she said, someone who still walked around barefoot, mowed the grass and went out to do the shopping.

Her first term in council was in 1976—one year after the first sex discrimination bill came into effect in our nation. This reform paved the way for women to continue to work despite their marital status and provided protections from gender discrimination in the workplace and education systems. In local government, her focus was on delivering ordinary things that mattered a lot to ordinary folk, particularly improving our local parks and sporting areas.

Yvonne recounts originally being unsuccessful as a candidate for Murrumba in the state election. Joe Kruger, she reported, skewered her chances with a campaign around a sewage plant and a slogan 'Yvonne Chapman says Kallangur stinks'. She later reluctantly ran for Pine Rivers when asked by Sir Joh. She appreciated that the National Party needed a candidate to run in that election. Although she did not feel right about running against Rob Akers, she also felt that he was not going to win. Not wanting Labor to gain the seat, she ran in that election and made history.

In 1983 Australia signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women—the first international treaty to address the fundamental rights of women in politics, health care, education, economics, employment, law, property, marriage and family relations. Once signed, Australia created legislation designed to give it effect—the Sex Discrimination Act.

Queensland politics in the 1980s was, indeed, a different world. In 1986 Yvonne Chapman made history when she became our state's first female minister. She tells the story of how she really let rip in the party room and was called up the next day to the executive building by Sir Joh. With trepidation, she entered the room and was told by Sir Joh that he had decided to make her a minister. When retelling the story of the encounter, she said at that point she looked around for another person standing in the room.

After a prompt press conference she was driven home, but the press had jumped into a helicopter to go and see her home. A real interest existed for Queensland's first lady minister. She phoned Graeme to let him know because, as she had rushed to the morning's meetings, the beds had not been made and the dishes had not been done. He straightened up the house, which included collecting the tablecloth and all of its contents and putting it in the front bedroom. When she later discovered the scene and asked him what on earth had happened, he said that it needed clearing away and he was thinking of either the front room or the loo, but because the guests may have needed to use the loo he decided on the front bedroom.

When she was asked in an interview what it was like to be the first female minister around a cabinet table with 18 men, Yvonne said, 'They used to forget I was there.' It is undeniable that she made a meaningful impact in her ministerial role. That extended to one instance when, as the family services minister, she put her name down to adopt two children who were stranded in Chile so they could be reunited with their family here in Queensland. Not much stood in the way of Yvonne's determination and desired outcomes.

She acknowledged that she lived a protected life in so many ways—the hard knocks had shaped her but it was a life steeped in strong traditional, conservative family values. It was these values that unashamedly shaped her contribution to public policy and community representation.

She had a number of sparring partners across the chamber, which is laid bare in the records of this place. Undoubtedly, as only the sixth woman to be elected to this chamber, the standard of behaviour she was subjected to by her male colleagues would never be accepted by today's parliament. She dealt with all of the misogyny that she was exposed to in her trademark robust style. A personal favourite story of mine was the time she took personal offence at being called a feminist.

Her seat in this place was won on the precipice of a changing world for women, and her journey had a meaningful impact on all women. Caught in the strong swings of the 1989 election Yvonne was unseated due to a 16 per cent swing, but a long history of strong female representation in this place for our community was set in train.

In 1994 she was back on the election trail and poor Rob Akers was, once again, in her political sights. She had a giant billboard on the back of a truck for the mayoral race with the slogan 'Do you want to elect a mayor or a gelding?' She defeated Rob and four others and became the first, and last, mayor of Pine Rivers Shire. One of her former councillors Mike Charlton recalls that Yvonne's genuine love and care for people made her a natural for public life. She was known as a person of strong convictions and commitment and was never afraid to take action to solve problems. Councillor Yvonne Barlow remembers Yvonne as a personable mayor who was strong in character. She was the voice for the people, and the residents loved her. She identified as an everyday person—neighbour helping neighbour. Her love for her fellow man was evident. She was outspoken, but she stood up for what she believed was right.

Her love for our community, her family and our country was present in all that she did. Yvonne was a trailblazer for women. She took the title of the 'First Lady of Pine Rivers' and turned it on its head, demonstrating steadfast leadership and resolve. I recognise her family, who join us in the chamber today. Thank you for sharing Yvonne with us. On behalf of the people of Pine Rivers, we say a heartfelt, 'Thank you, Yvonne, for your dedication and lifetime of service.' Vale, Yvonne Chapman.