

HON SAM PIANTADOSI

Condolence Motion

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral — Leader of the House) [3.36 pm]: — without notice: I move —

That this house expresses its deep regret at the death of Hon Sam Piantadosi, a former member of the Legislative Council for the North Central Metropolitan province and for the North Metropolitan Region; places on record its appreciation for his long public service; and tenders its profound sympathy to his wife and members of his family in their bereavement.

Sam Piantadosi has the distinction of being the first Italian-born, postwar migrant elected to the Parliament of Western Australia, but he will be equally remembered as a dedicated supporter of a range of community organisations that together strengthen our social capital. His community service continued undiminished after he left Parliament, and in recent years he returned to elected office as a councillor and Deputy Mayor of the Town of Bassendean.

Sam Piantadosi was born in April 1946 in the rural town of Roccabescerano in the Italian province of Avellino, part of the Campania region south of Rome. In 1952 his family migrated to Western Australia, and he grew up in Northbridge. He was educated at St Brigid's Primary School, West Perth; Christian Brothers College, Highgate; and Leederville Technical College. He worked as an accounts clerk and office manager for 12 years. His career was interrupted by two years' national service from 1966 to 1968.

After 1976 Sam's career path diverted into full-time involvement with the trade union movement, commencing as ethnic coordinator of the Water Supply Union. In 1979 he became secretary of that union. From 1981 to 1983, he was president of the Hospital Services and Miscellaneous Workers Union—an amalgamation of several smaller unions. He was the founding convenor of the Trades and Labor Council's Migrant Workers Committee and a director of the United Credit Union from 1977 to 1985. Having joined the Australian Labor Party in 1968, he was an active office holder in its inner city branches and was a member of its state executive after 1976.

Sam had a deep commitment to the welfare of the Italian community and to migrants generally, and leaves a fine record of service. In 1979 he was the founding secretary of the North Perth Migrant Resource Centre, and he was a member of its management committee from 1980 to 1986. He was a member of the State Advisory Panel for Interpreters and Translators between 1979 and 1981, and a member of the Consultative Committee for Italian Affairs and Welfare in 1980. In 1982 and 1983 Sam was the founding chairman of the Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia.

He had a strong involvement in sport over 24 years from the age of 12, beginning with the Azzuri Rugby Club and continuing with four successive soccer clubs: Azzuri, Victoria Park, Rosemount Juventus and Bayswater.

In 1983 Sam Piantadosi was chosen by the Australian Labor Party to contest the newly created North Central Metropolitan Province of the Legislative Council, consisting of the Assembly seats of Balga, Balcatta, Nollamara and Mt Lawley. He had a convincing win, gaining a majority of 11 500 votes in a poll of 57 400 votes. In the Mt Lawley seat, which included North Perth, he polled well ahead of his party's Legislative Assembly vote.

None of the 250 MLCs who had preceded Sam in the Legislative Council possessed a surname of Italian or ethnic origin. Sam was not permitted to give his inaugural speech in Italian, but he had achieved a notable step for his community. Subsequently with the introduction of proportional representation for the Legislative Council in 1989, Sam was elected as the third member of the ALP team for the North Metropolitan Region. In 1983 he was re-elected from the second position on his party's ticket. As a member of the Legislative Council for over 13 years, he served successively on the Joint Printing Committee, the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, the Joint House Committee and the standing orders committee.

Sam's community work continued with the North Perth Multicultural Service Centre, his chairmanship of the Stirling Ethnic Aged Homes Project, and general support for migrant communities. Appropriately, Sam was honoured with the Friends of Overseas Chinese medal in 1991, the gold medal for services to the Italian community overseas and the order of merit knighthood from the Italian government.

In April 1996 Sam left the Australian Labor Party to become an Independent and in November he resigned as an MLC six months before the expiry of his term in order to contest the Yokine seat in the Legislative Assembly. These would not have been easy decisions, but Sam Piantadosi was a man of strong convictions. He polled over 1 100 votes in this strongly contested seat.

After leaving Parliament, Sam founded his own business, Eurasia Trade and Management Services, in 1999 and continued assisting people as a justice of the peace and a member of such community organisations as the Italian

Club and the Macedonian United Society of WA. From 1999 to 2002 he was secretary of the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and he was subsequently a committee member of the International Business Council of WA.

To quote the death notice submitted by Mr Ramdas Sankaran of the Multicultural Services Centre of WA —

Sam unhesitatingly stood up for ... socially disadvantaged, regardless of their ethnicity, faith, gender etc and he was a trailblazer in the multicultural sector. Sam was just as keen to address systemic issues as he was in assisting individuals, and those efforts have made our society a more fair and equitable one. The strength and determination of his advocacy for ethnic minorities are unparalleled and he was a leader in every sense of the word.

To serve his local community of Eden Hill, in 2007 Sam Piantadosi was comfortably elected to the North Ward of the Town of Bassendean. While many members have entered Parliament with local government experience, comparatively few choose to stand in local elections after leaving Parliament. It is a measure of Sam's community involvement that his public service took place on smaller as well as larger stages.

On behalf of the government, we express our sympathy at Sam's premature passing to his wife, Angelika, to his son, Samuel Louis, to his son's partner, Colleen, and to his father, Salvatore.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [3.42 pm]: On behalf of the opposition, I rise to support the condolence motion moved by the Leader of the House. As we have heard, Sam Piantadosi moved from his native Italy to Western Australia in 1952. He attended Leederville Technical College and became an accounts clerk with the United Fruit and Vegetable Growers Cooperative. It was there that his interest was sparked in serving the collective. He served as a national serviceman in the Australian Army between 1966 and 1968. Soon after completing his time with the Army, he became involved in politics more formally, with a particular interest in representing the needs of ethnic communities, which was to stay with him for the rest of his life.

In politics and within the union movement Sam's career began as an ethnic coordinator for the Water Supply Union from 1976 to 1979. This was a group of workers whom I was also pleased to work with when I was an official of the miscellaneous workers' union. It was a group of predominantly men, mainly from Italian and Macedonian backgrounds, most of whom started their working life speaking and writing no English. During the 1960s and the 1970s migrants could relatively easily get work labouring in the drains and the water services around Western Australia. That workforce spoke and wrote little English. Therefore, they relied on whatever help they could get to do all those things that those of us who speak the language of the country in which we live and conduct our lives take for granted. Those people struggled with all the forms that have to be filled in and all the applications that have to be made to do the normal things one does to look after one's family. The union's decision to employ an ethnic coordinator meant that, in effect, Sam became a point of assistance in all manner of things for that group of workers—things that were not necessarily related to their everyday work. Once the Water Supply Union amalgamated and became part of the broader Hospitality Services and Miscellaneous Workers' Union, Sam moved on to become service president of that union, where he stayed from 1981 to 1983. As we have heard, Sam became the founding chair of the Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia, which, over time, has developed into what it is now, the state's peak ethnic umbrella organisation, which acts on behalf of all ethnic communities in Western Australia.

As a member of the Legislative Council, Sam's advocacy—personal and systemic—on behalf of people from a range of ethnic communities continued. That meant that at any time of the day or night Sam would make himself available to visit people's homes, whether they were constituents of his or not, to help them with all manner of issues. His work on behalf of ethnic communities, particularly the Italian community, saw him receive a number of awards. He was awarded a gold medal by the Campania region in Italy for services to the Italian community overseas. He was also awarded a knighthood by the Italian government for services to the Italian community. As we have heard already, he was the founding secretary of the North Perth Migrant Resource Centre in 1979.

As we have also heard, he was the first Italian-born postwar migrant elected to the Western Australian Parliament, a position he held with significant pride. He joined the Labor Party in 1968 and became a member of the Legislative Council in 1983 for the North Central Metropolitan Province, a position he held until 1989. He was one of only two members during the brief history of this constituency, which was created by a redistribution in 1982. In 1989, after a further redistribution, he became the member for the North Metropolitan Region, which he remained until his resignation in 1996. As we have heard from the Leader of the House, during Sam's time in office, he was appointed, among other positions, Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. That committee played a large role in reporting on the expenditures laid before the Council each year. It also played a significant role in reporting on any matter relating to the financial administration of the state. As we have heard, the end of his parliamentary career was not one that was pleasant or easy for Sam.

He fought the 1996 election as an Independent, having left the Labor Party when the Labor Party would not support his further preselection.

From 1985 to 1987 I spent time every day with Sam Piantadosi. I was working for a federal senator who shared a building on a corner on Wanneroo Road in Tuart Hill in which there were only two offices, our office and the electorate office of Sam Piantadosi. I therefore saw Sam pretty much every working day during that time. Sam and his electorate officer, Roz—this was a time when members of the Legislative Council had one staff member only—became very good friends of mine. We shared all the occasions one does when working closely with people who belong to the same political party. I had a little office inside a larger office, separated by glass panels. I positioned a filing cabinet strategically so that I had some semblance of privacy, I guess, from the traffic that would come in through the office door. It is fair to say that from time to time Sam would test Roz's patience, because when he thought Roz was searching for him, he would decide to hide behind the filing cabinet in my office. When Roz came through looking for him, I would have to look at her and say, "No; he's not here", with a look on my face that she knew meant he was hiding behind the filing cabinet! I have to say that we enjoyed lots of jokes and lots of good times, and I know that Roz in particular will have been devastated by Sam's passing.

I saw Sam here late last year when we were sitting a bit late. He was here for a function that was being held in Parliament House; he was happy and looked well. We shared a joke about whether we were in fact torturing the government that night by sitting as late as we were.

Sam will be missed by his wife, Angie, and his son, Sam, and Sam's partner. Sam Jnr was Sam's pride and joy. He literally puffed up and took up more space when he talked about the success and other activities of Sam Jnr. I was kept abreast of Sam Jnr's academic progress, sporting prowess and other general achievements every time I saw Sam Piantadosi from that time in the mid-1980s.

Sam was a tireless advocate for the range of ethnic communities in Western Australia at a time when those communities were beginning to organise themselves really well. He was at the forefront of that movement and he will be missed.

HON MAX TRENORDEN (Agricultural) [3.50 pm]: On behalf of the National Party I will speak briefly to the condolence motion moved by the Leader of the House for Sam Piantadosi. I actually knew Sam, even though I was not a member of this chamber during the time he served as a member of the Legislative Council; I got to know him relatively well, as members of Parliament do. He had a genuine love of people, a very friendly disposition and a strong sense of public service, particularly in the areas about which he was very passionate. We have heard two speeches about his passions; it was clear that he was very passionate about his origins and his roots. The National Party passes on its condolences to his family.

HON GIZ WATSON (North Metropolitan) [3.51 pm]: I also wish to contribute to this condolence motion on behalf of the Greens (WA). Even though my time in the Legislative Council did not overlap with Sam Piantadosi's, I acknowledge that my former colleague Hon Jim Scott had a very good friendship with Sam, and I know that Jim appreciated the support and friendship that Sam extended to him when he first arrived in Parliament as the first member for the Greens (WA). My dealings with Sam were in relation to working with the Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia. Again, I acknowledge that Sam made an enormous effort on behalf of many ethnic groups in Western Australia, and he was well regarded in those circles. I want to express the Greens' sadness at his passing.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): I also wish to make a few comments on the motion. Hon Sam Piantadosi was a member of the Legislative Council from 22 May 1983 to 21 November 1996. I was privileged to share nine of those years with Sam, from 1987 until his retirement. Although I never got to know Sam Piantadosi very closely, not having served on committees with him, we nevertheless developed a good relationship based on mutual respect. I certainly respected Sam's life story. He came to Australia from Italy as a young boy and made his way through a successful life as a strong contributor to his family and his community, especially the ethnic community, which he championed at every opportunity. He served the nation in the armed forces and was a trailblazer in the Legislative Council as the first Italian-born postwar migrant elected to the Western Australian Parliament. He was a regular and solid contributor to debates of all sorts in this house, and became renowned for angling into many of his speeches references to his previous work with unions associated with the then Water Authority. These references would usually take the form of vivid descriptions of life in the large sewer pipes under the city of Perth, and would also include an open invitation to any and, indeed, all members of this place to join him for a guided tour. I do not think any members ever took up that invitation!

Hon Sam Piantadosi respected the institution of the Legislative Council, and his family can feel very proud of the contribution he made to Western Australia through his representation in this place. The relevance and importance he attached to the time he spent as a member of the Legislative Council was illustrated when

Mrs Piantadosi contacted the Clerk a couple of days before the funeral, seeking a Legislative Council tie. The old red ties with the parliamentary emblem have been discontinued, and there were not any available in the Parliament, but I am pleased that I was able to find one at home and provide it to Sam's family to be placed on his coffin to share his journey to the next life.

Members, today we acknowledge and commend the contribution Hon Sam Piantadosi made to the Legislative Council between 1983 and 1996, and record our sincere sympathies and condolences on his passing to Mrs Piantadosi, his son, Samuel, his extended family, Perth's ethnic community and his wide circle of friends. I ask members to stand in their places in silence for one minute to record the passing of Hon Sam Piantadosi.

Question passed; members standing.

The PRESIDENT: I also advise that a copy of the *Hansard* from today will be forwarded to the late Hon Sam Piantadosi's family.