HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural — Leader of the House) [4.01 pm]: I move —

That this house expresses its deep regret at the death of Hon Fred McKenzie, a former member of the Legislative Council for the East 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.

When we look at the record of Fred McKenzie’s public life—that record that is now available to us all in the parliamentary biographical register—we see a record that is very much factual. The register contains brief references to what a member did in his or her time in public life, not only within the Parliament. However, when we go through these very brief references we actually get a great deal of understanding about the person that Fred McKenzie was, the events that shaped him and the passion that he had to serve his fellow human beings.

We learn that Fred was born during the Great Depression. He grew up in Perth and in the goldfields during the challenging years of the Second World War and the early post-war period when, within Australia, the most significant changes in history occurred to our demographic: the huge flow of immigration from war-torn Europe and changes which led to what is the make-up of modern Australia as we know it now. We can actually read in Fred’s role in all of that just from those brief references in the record to his public life. It was a period of internationalisation of Australia such that our nation had never experienced before or even since. It was a time when our days as a far-flung British enclave in the Indian Ocean ended forever. It was also a period of immense growth, both socially and economically.

The formal role of people within the labour movement in driving that growth was probably greater than at any time in our nation’s history, and that was when Fred McKenzie made his mark in the world. Fred, quite apart from his performance in this chamber, was one of the giants of the railway industry in Western Australia. Apart from his early employment in the building industry followed by his military service, I was interested to note that he had attained the rank of sergeant; a rank that he never really lost, although I think “sergeant major” would have been more effective! However, Fred attained the rank of sergeant through both national service and later with the Citizens Military Force. Apart from those early years up to and including 1954, Fred’s whole working life was all about rail; all the way from his time as a trainee guard with Midland rail right through to being a long-term member of the executive committee of Midland Railway Company and to the leadership positions he held in the powerful Australian Railways Union, which ultimately led to his election to this place. However, Fred and railways could never be separated; they were always one and the same thing. Other honourable members who have had the privilege of serving in this place with Fred will recall that any speech could be turned into a speech about railways. I served one year with Fred in 1992. I recall coming into the chamber after dinner one evening and saying to, I think, Tom Helm, “What’s happening tonight, Tom?” He said “Fred’s got a big speech tonight.” I said, “Good; what’s it on?” He said, “Railways”. I said, “But, Tom, we are dealing with the Medical Amendment Bill.” He said, “That’s okay; Fred will get it around to railways some time”; and he did, as he always did! The amazing thing was that by the time Fred got to the end of the speech, we realised that it was all about railways, in particular the Midland railway workshops, were absolutely vital to the progress of the Medical Amendment Bill!

Fred’s commitment, though, went much broader than that. Fred, as we all know, had an immense heart and an immense sense of compassion for his fellow man. When we read through—I will not do so—the service that Fred gave in a range of diverse community service organisations, and I suspect this record contains only a sample of Fred’s service, we begin to understand something about who the man was. He had an immense heart. He was an enormously generous man. We hear it said sometimes of people that such-and-such did not have an enemy in the world. Generally we know that that is not quite right. However, when people say it about Fred, everybody instinctively agrees with them, as Fred was one of those people who could never have had an enemy in the world because he never did the wrong thing by anyone. Somebody who served three years as the opposition Whip and 10 years as the government Whip and we still cannot find anything bad to say about him is a pretty impressive character.

Fred was in the Parliament only a week ago, I understand. Sadly, I did not get a chance to see him on that occasion. However, those who did reported that Fred was hale and hearty and his same old self. I guess that is the way we will always remember Fred. I certainly will always remember him in my first year in Parliament, and the way he protected me, took me under his wing and showed me what to do and what not to do. He was like that with every single member of Parliament, no matter what their time of service had been.

This record makes a very brief to reference to the fact that in August 1962 Fred married Helen. It does tell us that they went on to have two children—a son, Scott, and a daughter, Terri-Ellen. What the record cannot possibly
tell us is that Fred’s whole world revolved around Helen, Scott and Terri-Ellen. In my own way, I take this opportunity to express the government’s enormous sympathy and compassion to Helen, Scott, and Terri-Ellen for the loss of a giant.

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral — Leader of the Opposition) [4.10 pm]: On behalf of the opposition, I thoroughly support the comments made by the Leader of House. I agree with everything that he said about Hon Fred McKenzie.

I was deeply saddened to hear of Fred’s death just the other day, having seen him in Parliament House only a few weeks ago. As was always the case when members saw Fred in the corridor, he was always pleased to see us and made comments like, “Why are you still here? What’s wrong with you?” Things of that nature. He was always such a happy person that it was always a great pleasure to bump into him and have a chat about what he was doing at that particular time of his life.

In fact, Fred and I were elected at the same time, in 1977, so he was a brand-new member at the same time as I was. It was rather interesting, as the Leader of House has said, that Fred’s great interest was railways, as the big issue that confronted me in 1977 was the Court government’s decision on the future of the Mullewa-Meekatharra railway line. That railway was in very bad condition, and there were two choices—one was to either close it down and rip it up, and the other was to build a new one. It was a very hard decision for a new member like me to go into my new electorate and tell them I thought that the Court government should close their railway line. It was even more difficult because Fred McKenzie had told me in no uncertain terms in the house that he was going to make me wear that thoroughly, which he did in his own way. It was a very difficult issue and the Court government made the decision to close the railway line. It was very hard for me, but I remember the debates with Fred over that issue.

As the Leader of the House also said, Fred was the Labor Party Whip for many years. I will recount one little incident that I think epitomised Fred McKenzie. It was during the Burke government days, when the numbers in this house were pretty close. On one occasion then Premier Burke requested Fred to withdraw pairs in the middle of a debate. Fred said, “No. We don’t do that.” In the best tradition of Whips, he maintained the tradition that once a pair is given, that stays until such time as there is an arrangement that it does not continue to happen. That incident, which has stayed in my mind ever since, demonstrated the great love that Fred had for this chamber and the legislative system in Western Australia.

Fred always seemed to me to be the sort of old-fashioned Labor member of Parliament from a union background. He was a very decent, honourable fellow who was just so very easy to get along with and so even-tempered. I do not think I ever recall Fred getting angry at anybody about anything, even though, on the odd occasion in this place, even the most even-tempered members are provoked into saying something they might otherwise regret.

The opposition is deeply saddened by the passing of Fred McKenzie, who was a very honourable, very lovely man. On behalf of the opposition, I extend my, and its, deepest sympathy to his wife and family.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [4.14 pm]: I offer a few words in support of this condolence motion. Both the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition have expressed many of the words that readily sprang to mind when I thought about Fred yesterday after I heard of his untimely passing. They are words such as “honesty”, “loyal”, “proud”, “dedicated” and “principled”. One of the Fred’s qualities I always remember is that he was very much a strong supporter of rules and due process. Members on the government side of the house might think I am bad for that, but Fred was the master of it, which is something that should always be remembered about him. I ran into the former member for Ascot, Mal Bryce, today—I hope he does not mind me dobbing him in—and we were discussing Fred’s passing. Mal probably did something he should not have, and which Fred would have never have approved of, in that he recounted a story that came out of caucus many years ago when Fred was insisting that proper process be followed and the rules be adhered to. The then Premier, as I understand it, Brian Burke, quite exasperated, turned around to Fred and said, “I can’t believe it, McKenzie, you can make a vice out of honesty.” That sums up Fred, as someone who was prepared to stand up for what he believed was right, what the rules were and what was due process on issues upon which he believed he was principled. It did not matter if it did not make him friends around this place.

I first met Fred when I lived in Rivervale and he was the member for the East Metropolitan Region. He worked that area quite extensively because it had been part of his old provinces. I knew him for close on 20 years. He worked that community very hard as a member of Parliament. Another quality can be admired about Fred: after he retired from politics, he continued to remain active, dedicated and involved in that community. I do not mean this in any disrespect to other retired members, but Fred was probably more active in the community that he had represented than may be the case with lots of retired former members. In talking to Fred, he was still as active in his community—as was Helen, his wife—as ever. It is fair to say that they were one of those great teams that occur in politics, particularly in the way that things used to operate, in that often the man was out in front in...
public, and the woman was the strength behind. Helen was a person who was active in her own right, but she was also very supportive of Fred, and they were very much a team.

I have so many stories about Fred from the party, and I have counted many ballots with Fred for the Perth electorate council, and got to pretty much take over his role —

Hon Ken Travers: As well as Swan.

Hon Ken Travers: He was involved with counts in Swan as well, as Hon Kate Doust says. Fred was always very clear that the correct process must be followed. I have always been one to count a ballot quickly and get on and do it; Fred would take it through the processes, which often upset people, but when one looks back, he was always doing it for the right reasons.

I will talk about his honesty. I think this is the point the Leader of the Opposition was making. Fred was the sort of person who, in politics, is not that common. If a member talked to him about whether he would support his nomination for a position in the party or pre-selection, or whatever it was, he was the sort of person who would tell the truth. If he said he was going to give his support, a member could know, without doubt, that Fred would do so. If Fred was not going to give a member his support, he was accustomed to giving the member a good explanation and understanding of why he was not. That did not always make him friends, but it ensured that people respected him. If he had offered his support, that was one ballot that could definitely be counted to be going into the ballot box. He was incredibly loyal to his family, to the party, to his faction and to his community—in every way.

I have many memories of Fred. One memory that I cannot ever get out of my mind was the occasion of a party fundraiser, that I think all members have been to and live in our memories. I remember going to a fundraiser over at the Belmont Returned Servicemen’s Club. The night’s entertainment consisted of Fred McKenzie, Eric Ripper—who I think is celebrating having served 20 years in Parliament, and served with Fred—and Tommy Butler. Along with two young women, they proceeded to give us a demonstration of aerobics. I do not think I could describe Eric Ripper, Fred McKenzie and Tommy Butler in T-shirts and shorts giving a demonstration of aerobics and do it justice. That was the sort of thing that Fred would do if he thought it was for the good of the party—he would put himself out there to raise some money. He probably embarrassed himself in the process and left indelible memories on all of us and scarred us for life as a result of having witnessed those three demonstrating aerobics. It would have been good if a couple of them had continued with aerobics after that occasion!

It would be remiss to have a speech about Freddy and not talk about the railways because they always loomed very much in Fred’s life. Fred was always very proud of the fact that his son became an engine driver and continued the family involvement with the railways. Fred was always very proud of that. I am pretty sure that one of Fred’s proudest moments occurred when, as a member of Parliament after the election of the Burke Labor government in 1983, the Perth-Fremantle line reopened, something that Freddy had campaigned for, along with many others. I did not have a chance to speak to him, but I am sure that Fred would have been equally pleased with all the other railway lines that have been built in Western Australia since. Railways were very much associated with Fred.

Many of the staff in this building have worked here for a long time. One of the interesting things about the Parliament is that staff are maintained for an extremely long period. We may not have served with Fred McKenzie but many of the staff who had served with Fred were visibly and deeply upset when they learnt of his passing. They do not have the opportunity to place their condolences on the record but I am sure that if they did, many of the staff who served with Fred would love to have had their sympathies about his passing added to this debate today. It was interesting to note the level of deep sadness from members of staff and other people in Parliament when they heard of Fred’s passing.

In conclusion, Fred will be deeply missed by all who knew him. I join with everyone else in the chamber in passing on my deepest sympathies and condolences to Helen, Scott, Terri-Ellen and their families. I am sure that Fred will be in heaven somewhere finding a railway line to look after.

HON GEORGE CASH (North Metropolitan) (4.23 pm): I also want to join with others in this condolence motion for Hon Fred McKenzie. Three words come to mind when I think of Fred—honesty, integrity and decency. There is no doubt in my mind that Fred McKenzie was an honourable person of the highest order. I came to the Legislative Council in 1989. Fred was the then Whip for the Labor government. Soon after I came to this house and I was elected Leader of the Opposition, Fred said to me, “You’ve been a member of the Legislative Assembly for a period of time. The first thing I’ve got to tell you is I don’t want you to bring any of the bad habits of that chamber into this chamber.” I obviously thanked him for his good advice but was not quite sure what he meant at the time. I learnt over a period of time that Fred’s word was his bond. There is no doubt in my mind about that. A handshake on a matter of procedure from Fred McKenzie was a gold seal guarantee that
whatever was agreed to would be carried out to the absolute full. That is something that earned Fred absolute respect from all parties in the Legislative Council.

Fred was also very protective of his own members. From 1989 to 1993 there was significant robust debate in this house about the then activities of the government. The opposition, as is its job, would target certain members over particular issues. I always remember Fred listening very closely to what was said. On occasions he would quietly speak to me after a given debate and say, “I think you went overboard in what you said in some particular areas.” I took it from Fred that he was saying, “All I expect of you is a fair go for all members. When you do not give them a fair go, I will tell you what I think about it.” He was always very genuine in the comments that he passed to me. If Fred McKenzie ever suggested to me that perhaps we were going overboard and unfairly targeting a particular person, we changed tack in respect of Fred because we believed that he was acting in the interests of the house as well as carrying out his duties as Whip of this chamber.

I was in Parliament last week when Fred and Helen were in the house. Every time I met Fred here at Parliament House with Mrs Helen McKenzie, he always stopped and had a very pleasant word. He always had a very cheerful disposition. He always took the opportunity to introduce his guests to me, which I thought was a very generous move on his part. Only a week ago he said to me, “I guess we’ll be seeing you in the future at former members’ functions.” I said, “Fred, don’t be too hasty; I’ve still got more than 12 months to go.” He was generous move on his part. Only a week ago he said to me, “I guess we’ll be seeing you in the future at former members’ functions.” I said, “Fred, don’t be too hasty; I’ve still got more than 12 months to go.” He was genuinely saying, “When you’re finished in this place, I want to see you at former members’ functions and be part of that particular team.”

I will miss Fred. I was shocked to hear of his death yesterday given that a week ago he was of a very happy disposition and looked very healthy. I certainly extend my deepest sympathy to Helen and his family. Fred will always be highly respected as a member of this place.

**HON ED DERMER (North Metropolitan)** [4.27 pm]: I will start off where Hon George Cash finished. When I learnt yesterday that Fred passed away, it was a shock. The shock was all the more acute because whenever I did see Fred, he always seemed so alive. The idea of him not being here to greet us from time to time in the future is part of the sadness. I certainly rise to speak in the spirit of regret and sympathy that other members have expressed. In addition, I would like to try to explain my very strong sense of appreciation to Fred McKenzie because I have learnt a great deal from him. There are not many people we can learn that much from. I certainly appreciate what I learnt.

I had the good fortune to work in the office of the younger Kim Beazley for 10 years. During that time he was the member for Swan. The boundaries of Swan varied. Approximately half of Swan corresponded to the East Metropolitan Region with half corresponding to the South Metropolitan Region. One of the things I enjoyed about my time in Kim Beazley’s office was seeing Fred McKenzie in action and watching him work. Fred’s concern for the needs of his constituents was absolutely sincere. In the long term I do not think that people can really pretend to each other. When the concern is sincere, people come to understand that it really is. In response to Fred’s sincere concern for his constituents, he got enormous affection and loyalty in return. This was a really important lesson to learn.

I am reminded of a story that Fred told me that I thought was quite funny at the time. It reflected the closeness of the relationships that he had with so many people in the East Metropolitan Region. There was a day when Fred came to Kim’s electorate office. We headed off to a function in South Guildford. This was back in the days before state members had state vehicles. Kim and Fred drove off in Fred’s vehicle. Kim and I had to go elsewhere after the function at South Guildford so Kim asked me to go in the commonwealth car with the driver so that both vehicles would be available at the end of the function and Kim and Fred could go their separate ways. This all seemed very straightforward. Next time Fred came to the office he told me that one of the constituents had seen Fred and Kim driving Fred’s car to the function in South Guildford and, in a very anxious state, his constituent phoned Fred at his electorate office because he was concerned that Fred and Kim were being followed. He knew it must have been one of those terrible Liberals who was following Fred and Kim on their way to the function at South Guildford because this “terrible Liberal” had a very black beard! I was, of course, in the commonwealth car sitting next to Kim’s driver. Sadly, my beard is more grey than black these days, but at the time it was black. That beard being worn by someone in a chauffeur-driven large, white car, following Fred and Kim meant that it must have been one of those dreadful Liberals doing the following. This story entertained me at the time. To me it reflects the sincerity of the relationship Fred had with so many people in his region. I think that gets back to the genuineness Fred held in his heart for the people he was endeavouring to assist and to serve in the various ways he was asked to as the member for East Metropolitan Region and the province. I am not sure of the title of the province before it changed.

**Hon Ken Travers**: Belmont.

**Hon ED DERMER**: Certainly it was the Belmont and Rivervale part that was common with Swan and South Guildford.
The other interesting learning area for me was Fred’s role as the Whip. We have heard from the Hon Leader of the Opposition and Hon George Cash today about his work as the Whip, and Hon Peter Foss was always citing Fred as the exemplary government Whip. I was delighted to hear it. None of it surprised me because having seen Fred’s hard work and sincerity in a different theatre, we can understand that, in his role here as a Whip—although I had not seen that directly—he would be similarly sincere and honest in his work. Half the time when members opposite were articulating Fred’s service as a Whip, they were probably trying, at least obliquely, to give me a few lessons on how to perform in the same role. I am very pleased to continue in that role and bear in mind the tradition Fred set, and, in a very imperfect way, try to emulate his standard.

Another even more important area in which we can learn from Fred McKenzie was the tremendous strength of the relationship between Fred and Helen McKenzie. I did not have the good fortune to get to know Fred and Helen’s children, but watching Fred and Helen together over a long time, they reflected the idea of a totally mutually supportive, inseparable partnership. Part of what concerns me most today is how difficult it will be for Helen to adjust to this change in her life. I think the understanding between them was very mutual. Fred was such a huge part of Helen’s life that, now that Fred is elsewhere, it will leave a correspondingly very large gap. I am sure that Helen will draw comfort from her children and other family members and friends. I cannot imagine how she will get used to such a change after being so used to having Fred as part of her life. If anything can help provide comfort in this very difficult circumstance it may be the fact that Fred’s life has given Helen and their children and everyone who knew him a tremendous amount to be proud of. There is so much to be proud of in Fred’s life that will hopefully give Helen and her family some comfort in these difficult times.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Nick Griffiths): Members, I have known Fred McKenzie since before he was elected to Parliament. He was a man of great principle and was very ethical, as members who have spoken have pointed out. He was a trade unionist who loved the railways. What has been said of him is very true. He could always say something about the railways when he spoke on any topic in the sense that he was always on track. He was the government Whip for the period leading up to the change of government in 1993 and was a member of this house for 16 years, from 1977 to 1993. In the last term, from 1989 to 1993, he was the member for East Metropolitan Region.

When Fred retired from Parliament he of course left his electorate office. I had the good fortune to take over his electorate office. Notwithstanding the fact that Fred retired, he was a frequent visitor to my electorate office. I understand he was last there on Monday. Fred never retired; he always made sure that one of his successors had plenty of constituents to see and he was always on hand to give me good advice whether I asked for it or not. However, it was consistently very good advice.

I have had the privilege of knowing him and Helen for a very long time. I knew him before he was a member of Parliament, I knew him when he was a member of Parliament, and I knew him subsequently. Since he ceased being a member of Parliament, I saw him engaged in many activities. He was very active in the Australian Labor Party. Other members who have spoken have made reference to his role as a returning officer. This was volunteer stuff. He did many things in the wider community. He was a man who loved food. Helen is one of the best cooks in Western Australia; she is an absolute legend. I know that not only because I have tasted her cooking but because Fred McKenzie told me so, and Fred, as has been said, is a man of his word. There are a couple of aspects about his love of food I should mention: first and foremost his love of Helen’s cooking; second his devotion to his community. He was someone who loved people. He was very active with the meals on wheels organisation. He used to take meals to people who could not look after themselves, notwithstanding the fact that, from time to time, he had health difficulties. The other aspect I should mention—again members have referred to this—out of respect for his relationship with parliamentary staff, he was a great customer of the parliamentary refreshment rooms. He loved coming here. He loved saying hello to the staff and to other members. He was here regularly. He was also very active in attending former members’ functions, including regular get-togethers that occurred at Parliament House.

He had many interests. One of them was that when he was a member of Parliament he would regularly leave his electorate office for a few minutes and go to the “bank”. When he went to the “bank”, he made a lot of deposits but rarely made withdrawals. The “bank”, of course, was what he used to call his local branch of the TAB. He had a tremendous love of racing, which he kept up; he continued to donate. That was his preferred method of giving money to the community. He did not have the same view of the casino, but he was very tolerant of people who went to it. In particular, he was very tolerant of Helen, because she preferred that method. Members should forgive me, but I do know Fred. He liked playing bowls, as did Helen. I last played bowls with him at the recent Parliamentary Bowling Carnival in Sydney. I felt that I should have apologised to him, but I did not. I was the skipper and Fred was on the team. There were quite a few teams playing and we got the wooden spoon. Fred was a very good bowler—I do not want to talk about my bowling—and he loved playing bowls. He particularly loved playing bowls at the local Belmont RSL. In recent years the parliamentary bowls team has attended the Belmont
RSL to play bowls. I think Fred was fairly pleased with that because the last time we went there was last year, and the parliamentary teams defeated the Belmont RSL teams. That was a win for us.

When I think about Fred, I remember his sense of humour, his optimism and his smile. I extend my deepest sympathy to Helen and Scott and Terri-Ellen and their families. In accord with our usual custom, I will arrange for copies of *Hansard* to be forwarded to them. Members, please stand to show your respect to the late Hon Fred McKenzie.

Question passed, members standing.