

ELECTION OF SENATOR

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): Honourable members, this joint sitting has been called to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator Joe Bullock, notification of which has been reported to this Parliament by Her Excellency the Governor, Kerry Sanderson, AO. I now call for nominations to fill the vacancy.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [11.02 am]: I propose that Patrick Lionel Dodson of Morrell Park, Broome, Western Australia, being a person who is eligible to be chosen pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia, as amended, be chosen to hold the vacant place in the Senate of the Parliament of the commonwealth created by the resignation of Senator Joe Bullock. I advise that I have Mr Dodson's assurance that if chosen, he is willing to act.

Mr President and Mr Speaker, can I begin by first thanking you and the staff of Parliament for arranging this joint sitting of Parliament. Also to members, I appreciate your presence here. I know it may have been inconvenient for some to be here for this joint sitting, but it is a necessary thing that this Parliament elect a replacement senator, and it is also the right thing for this Parliament to do.

As members are aware, Western Australian Labor Senator Joe Bullock announced his resignation from federal Parliament on 1 March 2016. The reason he gave was his inability to support the Labor Party position requiring members of Parliament to vote in favour of same-sex marriage. Whatever members may think of that issue, I think we should all respect and acknowledge that the decision of Senator Joe Bullock was a decision of his conscience, and I shall leave it at that.

On 2 March 2016, federal opposition leader, Hon Bill Shorten, put forward the name of Patrick Dodson as the replacement for Mr Bullock to serve out the remaining four years of his six-year term. The joint sitting will ratify the appointment of Mr Dodson, and as members are aware and as has just been stated, this joint sitting will elect a replacement senator for Western Australia. The President of the Legislative Council will then notify the Governor, who in turn will notify the Governor-General and the President of the Australian Senate. Mr Dodson will take his place in the Senate when sittings resume on 2 May 2016.

Patrick Lionel Djargun Dodson is a Yawuru man from Broome. His father, Snowy, was an Irish Australian and his mother, Patricia, a Yawuru woman. When he was aged two, his family moved to Katherine in the Northern Territory. When he was 13, he lost both parents within three months of each other. He and his six brothers and sisters were orphaned. Together with two brothers and one sister Pat was declared a ward of the state in Darwin, although he was still in the care of family members. He was awarded a scholarship to Monivae College in Hamilton in far western Victoria. He became captain of the school, and a member of the 1st XVIII and the Cadet Corps. After completing his schooling, he enrolled to study for the priesthood and was ordained in the order of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. In doing so he became Australia's first Aboriginal Catholic priest. Following his departure from the church in 1981, he turned his attention to Indigenous matters and in particular reconciliation. He played a variety of roles including initially heading up the Central Land Council; he was appointed as one of the commissioners of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; he was an inaugural chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation; he established the Lingiari Foundation to promote reconciliation and Indigenous rights, and to develop Aboriginal leaders; he was appointed as chair of the board of the Kimberley Development Commission and director of Indigenous policy and dialogue research at the University of New South Wales; and he became known throughout the country as the father of reconciliation. His life's work was recognised as a national living treasure, and in 2008 he received the Sydney Peace Prize. In 2009, he was named Western Australian Senior Australian of the Year.

Pat Dodson has a very distinguished record as an Australian citizen and as an Aboriginal leader and elder. He is in every respect a worthy nomination for the Australian Senate. I know he will serve this state well and I know he will be a strong and powerful voice for Aboriginal people in the Senate. I know that Pat and his family members are here today in the Council chamber. I congratulate you, Pat, and I wish you and your family the very best.

Members: Hear, hear!

The PRESIDENT: The Premier has proposed that Patrick Lionel Dodson of Morrell Park, Broome, Western Australia, being a person who is eligible to be chosen pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia, as amended, be chosen to hold the vacant place in the Senate of the Parliament of the commonwealth created by the resignation of Senator Joe Bullock. The question is that that proposition be agreed to. Is there a seconder to that proposition?

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [11.07 am]: I second the proposition of the Premier. Can I begin today by thanking the government, the Premier and the Parliament itself for bringing forward this procedure in order to ensure that the election of the new senator, Senator Dodson, is formalised by the Western Australian Parliament so he can take his role as a senator for Western Australia today. It is a very good decision by the Parliament and by the government, and I thank the government and the Premier for doing this.

Mr President and Mr Speaker, it is a great day for the Parliament to be appointing such an eminent, well-qualified Western Australian to represent all of us in the Senate of this country. Pat Dodson is a man of courage, accomplishment, thought and achievement, but most of all he has an abiding resilience and a passion for his state, his community and his people. He is someone who is knowledgeable in culture, theology, government, business, community and family. His life's story is one beyond the experience and understanding of most of us, with the exception of the member for Kimberley and the member for Victoria Park. His life experience breeds a deep reservoir of compassion, gentleness, humility and a steely determination.

Patrick Lionel Dodson was born in 1948 in Broome to Snowy and Patricia. He is one of seven children. Prior to Patrick's birth, his father, Snowy, was imprisoned for 18 months for the offence of cohabiting with an Aboriginal woman. Both his parents passed away when he was 13. The children were taken to the Northern Territory by family—by uncles and aunts—on the back of a Chevy truck, it is reported, in order to stop them from being taken away by the authorities of the time in the Kimberley. He lived in the Northern Territory for a period with his aunt and uncle. Eventually, after Pat's dodging the authorities for a period of time, the priests in the Northern Territory intervened and organised for both Pat and his younger brother, Mick, to fly to Victoria, and they received a position at a boarding school called Monivae College in the town of Hamilton. They lived there for the duration of their high schooling. Pat and Mick were the only Aboriginal students at that college. Pat went on for a few years at the school to become the school captain. He received the Prize for Diligence for a number of years and became one of the school's sporting greats. After school, Pat went to the seminary and graduated, if that is the term, as the first Aboriginal Catholic priest in Australia. He served as a Catholic priest in the Kimberley in northern Australia for a period. After some years, as I understand, he had some battles with the establishment and the hierarchy within the church because of his desire to ensure that Aboriginal spirituality was recognised within the church in ways that were sympathetic to Aboriginal people. Because of his different way of doing things he decided that he would leave the seminary and go on and do other things with his life.

In 1977, he was the founding chairman of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. In 1981, he joined the Central Land Council. He was appointed the director of that organisation in the Northern Territory and was instrumental in ensuring that Uluru was handed back to the traditional owners. In 1989, he was appointed a commissioner of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. In 1991, he became chairperson of Aboriginal Reconciliation Australia. In 2003, he was appointed the chair of the Kimberley Development Commission. In 2008, he received the Sydney Peace Prize. In 2009, he was the Western Australian Senior Australian of the Year and in 2009, he was awarded the John Curtin Medal. In recent years, he has been working on behalf of the Yawuru people resolving native title issues in the Kimberley.

Pat is widely acknowledged throughout the country as the father of reconciliation, a movement that commenced back in the 1970s, when he was appointed the founding chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. He has been engaged in these issues ever since.

His abiding passions are reconciliation, the alleviation of poverty in our community and stopping the cycle of imprisonment among Indigenous people. I have noted some recent commentary by Pat about the issues of justice reinvestment.

I spoke to him this morning and asked him what he would like me to say in my address about appointing him to the Senate of Australia. First of all, he wanted to thank the government and the Parliament. Secondly, he just wanted to say that he was incredibly humbled by the decision to appoint him as a senator. He wanted to thank Bill Shorten and the Australian Labor Party for the opportunity to become a senator and he wanted to work together in the state and national interests. He said that he wanted to make sure all Western Australians benefit from the state's success. He has a passion for northern and regional Australia, building sustainable development and services to the regions and building resilience in all communities and individuals throughout our state, in particular, Aboriginal Western Australians. He has an ongoing commitment to reconciliation, but as I just outlined, his commitment, as important as reconciliation is, is broader than reconciliation. He also said some words about the West Coast Eagles.

Several members interjected.

President; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Ben Wyatt; Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr John Quigley; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Peter Collier

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes; he wanted to indicate his support for the West Coast Eagles. On an earlier occasion, I asked him about being appointed a senator and whether that would mean he would finally remove his hat. He indicated that he had researched the standing orders of the Senate and apparently there are no rules against wearing a hat into the Senate, so perhaps this will presage the appointment of Molly Meldrum to the Senate if one is able to wear a hat in the Senate.

On a serious note, I indicate my congratulations to Pat Dodson, to Pat's broader family, to the people of the Kimberley for giving us Pat and to the federal Labor Party and Bill Shorten for their foresight in approaching Pat to become a Labor senator. I am sure you will do a wonderful job in Canberra, Pat. You will be a great Labor senator and a great representative for all Western Australians.

Members: Hear, hear!

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Deputy Leader of the National Party) [11.15 am]: Mr President, thank you very much. On behalf of my National Party colleagues, I have much pleasure in supporting this motion. The Nationals believe Patrick Dodson transcends partisan politics and, in our view, will bring to the Australian Parliament a unique perspective forged from a remarkable life's journey. Author Kev Keefe reminds us in his 2003 book *Paddy's Road* that Patrick Dodson was Australia's first Aboriginal Catholic priest, a royal commissioner and the acknowledged father of reconciliation. More recently, Tony Wright, the national affairs editor of *The Age* newspaper, provided us with the portrait of a tenacious leader born in Broome to an Irish–Australian father, Snowy Dodson, and an Indigenous mother, Patricia.

Wright wrote of the Dodson family's move from WA to Katherine in the Northern Territory and how Patrick at the age of 13, along with his brothers and sisters—seven of them altogether—were orphaned and became wards. We were reminded of how Missionaries of the Sacred Heart stepped in to help the orphaned Pat and younger brother Mick to obtain scholarships to Hamilton in far west Victoria to board at Monivae College. Wright tells us how Patrick won the Diligence Prize in five out of the six years he was at Monivae and how he became a middle school prefect and then captain of the school, captain of the all-but-unbeatable 1st XVIII and the adjutant of the Cadet Corps. Patrick Dodson has carried his zest for high achievement through life. This was underscored in 2008 when he won the Sydney Peace Prize, joining laureates such as Desmond Tutu and Ireland's Mary Robinson. He is a significant and astute Western Australian who we are sure will represent this state with distinction in the halls of Canberra.

Most of us here today will recall Patrick Dodson's extraordinary persistence and leadership that led to the signing of a \$196 million deal between the state government and Broome's Yawuru people in August 2010—then the biggest value native title agreement in Australian history. This agreement resolved native title deadlocks and dramatically increased land supply in Broome with almost 1 900 hectares freed for residential, tourism, industrial and future airport development. It gave the Yawuru people a platform for economic independence.

My Nationals colleagues have had many dealings with Patrick over the years both as a Yawuru leader, former chair of the Kimberley Regional Development Commission and director of the Kimberley Land Council. He is forthright in his approach and, in our experience, his word has always been his bond.

The Nationals support the motion, which will allow Patrick Dodson's transition to the Senate, because of his unique understanding of the special needs of people who choose to live, work and invest in regional Western Australia. We believe also that he will use the Senate opportunity to continue his advocacy for Western Australia's Indigenous people, especially when it involves economic advancement.

We wish Patrick well.

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.18 am]: Mr President, Mr Speaker and Premier and Leader of the Opposition, I acknowledge your roles and thank you for the opportunity for this joint sitting to take place so expeditiously to elect Patrick Dodson to the Senate.

I want to make some very brief remarks. I know the member for Victoria Park and the member for Kimberley also want to make a few comments, so I will spare the chamber lengthy commentary from me. I just want to say that this is a great day—this is an unequivocally great day for Western Australia in electing Patrick Dodson to the Senate. As a much younger man, I had the pleasure of working with Patrick in the early 2000s when I spent some time as the policy coordinator for the WA Aboriginal Native Title Working Group. In those days, the area of native title was very much one of hostility, anger and division in the community. I note the comments of the acting Leader of the National Party in praising the outcomes of a range of native title agreements that were really the vision held at the time by the Aboriginal leadership.

I had the great privilege and honour of working with people such as Patrick Dodson, Peter Yu, Brian Wyatt and others as they carved out a vision for native title in an era of agreement, striving towards mutually beneficial outcomes. I was struck by the incredible strength of the leadership that Patrick provided and the patience, respect and resilience that he brought to debates in the face of what was at that time extraordinary hostility and, quite frankly, racist-driven taunts to try to lower the debate back to its old paradigm of division and anger. I feel greatly privileged to have worked with Patrick, to have seen his leadership and to have seen him articulate a vision about a country that is just and reconciled. We are privileged today to be part of that journey, as Patrick brings that vision to bear.

As I said, I had the great privilege of working with Patrick. I was a diligent note taker and a great provider of refreshments during meetings, when I obviously played a very key role! But I did get to see the national leadership of the Aboriginal community in action. They are an extraordinary group of people—people such as Mr Peter Yu and others. But Patrick was head and shoulders above them all—a great leader of not only the Aboriginal community, but the entire nation. Although Patrick was able to provide that national leadership in the context of his own community’s native title outcomes, he was also involved in the detailed negotiations and community leadership. He is not only a man of great national standing, but also a man driven by the values of his community and the need to deliver good outcomes in his community.

I just wanted to say, Patrick, how proud I am today. I think I am more excited about your election than I was about my own! I am very pleased that we are able to take this step today. Again, I acknowledge the leadership of the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Presiding Officers in holding this joint sitting today. We often observe how people’s stature is raised upon their election to the Senate, but can I just say that, today, the Senate’s stature has been raised by the election of Patrick Dodson.

MR P. ABETZ (Southern River) [11.22 am]: I rise to congratulate Patrick Dodson on his nomination to the Senate to take the place of my good friend Senator Joe Bullock, who resigned recently. As has been mentioned, Professor Dodson is a well-known public figure and his many achievements have been well documented already, so I will not go over those. The term for Mr Dodson that I particularly appreciate is “the father of reconciliation”. I believe he has made a wonderful contribution, with his lifelong efforts to bring about reconciliation between those whose ancestors were here before 1788 and those who came after that date. As the Premier and others have mentioned, in his younger days Mr Dodson served as a Catholic priest. As I do not know Patrick Dodson personally, I am not aware to what extent he still embraces the Christian faith, but I am sure that most members would agree that his stance on reconciliation issues and his determination to serve his fellow Australians reflect something of the Judaeo-Christian values on which the institutions of our nation are built.

As the Premier mentioned, Senator Bullock, who makes no secret of his commitment to the Christian faith, has relinquished his Senate seat because, in good conscience, he is unable to support the edict of the Labor Party that all Labor members must support same-sex marriage legislation after 2019. It seems that the secular fundamentalists have taken the Labor Party captive. As Gareth Parker put it in *The West Australian* of 14 April —

The Labor Party has shown it cannot accommodate traditional religious social values (the exile of Joe Bullock is the final proof of this) and so over the past 10–15 years the Liberal Party has done very well out of being the broad church that provided political sanctuary for these exiles, who tend to be fundamentally decent folk.

After reading Gareth Parker’s article, I confess that the thought did cross my mind to send my friend Joe Bullock a Liberal Party membership form with a note stating that political asylum seekers are welcome in the Liberal Party.

To get back to Patrick Dodson, I am sure that Patrick Dodson is used to being a very free voice in the community, speaking his mind and espousing traditional Aboriginal social values, and no doubt he will find it challenging at times to have to toe the party line. As long as no conflict exists between his views and the ALP’s stance on things, he will be free to speak, but when the fundamentalist secularists who dominate the ALP have spoken, he will find that he will at times need to be silent. After 2019, Professor Dodson will no longer be able to be a voice for the traditional Aboriginal view of marriage as expressed by over 70 Aboriginal elders from 47 different nations who signed the Uluru Bark petition to federal Parliament last year urging the Parliament not to legalise same-sex marriage, but instead to honour the age-old Aboriginal view of marriage. One of the Aboriginal leaders who went to Canberra to present that petition, Aboriginal leader and elder Rodney Rivers, is a constituent of mine. I would like to read the six short clauses of that petition —

1. The Aboriginal People of Australia are the original inhabitants and the first Nation people of this great southern land Australia.

Extract from Hansard

[JOINT SITTING OF THE COUNCIL AND ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 28 April 2016]

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President; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Ben Wyatt; Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr John Quigley; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Peter Collier

2. Our continuing cultures and traditions are 1,000's of years old and are recognised as the oldest on Earth.
3. Although Aboriginal People come together as one nation through many different self-governing language and kinship groups with unique cultures and traditions, the sanctity of marriage between man and woman continues to be held in honour among all.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Mr P. ABETZ: It continues —

4. Our Fathers and Mothers are also honoured and form the foundation of our families, clans and systems, and pass down our teachings, our culture, our traditions, from generation to generation.
5. It is therefore an affront to the Aboriginal people of Australia to suggest another definition of marriage.
6. The Aboriginal people of Australia strongly call upon you to reject any attempt to redefine the institution of marriage, and in doing so, Honour the sanctity of both the tradition of marriage and the spiritual implication of this sacred union.

Mr James Stephens, a Wiradjuri man who spoke at the press conference after the presentation of the petition, said —

... we are simply making a statement on a well-known fact acknowledged by the Australian Government and numerous academics. And that fact is marriage between a man and a woman is sacred between our people ...

Indeed, in 1986 the Australian Law Reform Commission released a report entitled “The Recognition of Aboriginal Customary Laws”, which has a whole chapter on the nature of laws surrounding marriage in traditional Aboriginal culture.

The PRESIDENT: Order, member! I am questioning the relevance.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: In this chamber, we believe in free speech and we practise it, but your comments need to be relevant to the proposition before the house, and that is the appointment of a senator.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Mr P. ABETZ: As Mr Dodson has been a very strong advocate of the rights of his people, I am sure that he is well aware of the consequences that have flowed from the introduction of same-sex marriage laws in other jurisdictions. It has resulted in the loss of freedom for people who hold the traditional view of marriage to express that view.

Point of Order

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Mr President, I have a point of order.

The PRESIDENT: I do not believe there is a need for a point of order because I know what the point of order is going to be. If it concerns relevance, I have already drawn that to the member's attention. I would ask the member to address the motion before the house.

Debate Resumed

Mr P. ABETZ: I trust that many Indigenous people in Western Australia who are looking to Mr Dodson to be a voice for traditional Aboriginal cultural values will find an ally in him. I trust that Mr Dodson will continue to make a very significant contribution to furthering reconciliation and to maintaining the freedoms of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that the secular fundamentalists would want to take away from those who do not share their view of the world. I wish Mr Dodson all the very best as he takes up his role in the Senate.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! We conduct business in this chamber in a courteous and polite way. I invite the members who want to come into the chamber to take their seats.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [11.31 am]: If I can bring the discussion back to Pat, perhaps —

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

President; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Ben Wyatt; Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr John Quigley; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Peter Collier

Mr B.S. WYATT: I begin by acknowledging the Noongar people of our great state, noting that many Noongar people are in the gallery today. To me, electing a Yawuru man on Noongar land to the Senate makes today a very special day indeed. I begin by acknowledging Pat and all his family and friends who have made it here from the Kimberley. Like most speakers before me have said, it is a privilege to speak in the Western Australian Parliament on our constitutional duty to elect a new senator for WA. The privilege is greater in these circumstances as we today make Pat Dodson a senator for Western Australia.

Rarely in the history of Australia's Federation has Parliament had the honour of appointing to our national Parliament a person of such quality and expertise as Patrick Dodson. Indeed, for Pat there has been a certain inevitability to the trajectory of his life that now leads him to the commonwealth Parliament. Since Patrick was first nominated by the Labor Party to fill the casual vacancy following Joe Bullock's resignation from the Senate, the response across the political spectrum has been overwhelmingly positive. In that context, I commend the Premier for convening Parliament for this special event and for the public comments he and others have made about Patrick as a senior leader who will represent all Western Australians in the national Parliament. I am sure that Pat will justify this level of cross-party support. What we can say about much of this positive commentary surrounding Patrick's rise to the national Parliament is that he is seen as a non-partisan figure who transcends the traditional mould of political combat. I rightly believe that Patrick will serve Labor with great distinction and certainly will not be dictated to about what traditional Aboriginal custom is.

[Applause.]

Mr B.S. WYATT: Pat, more than most, is a man well able to make those decisions. I know through many years of personal association with him, and we should all know when we understand the life of Patrick Dodson, that he is a true believer in the cause of Labor's historic mission. I also share the belief and hopes of many that Patrick will have a transformative influence on national politics. I know of no other Australian politician who has the capacity to reach across Australia's political divide in search of common ground for the benefit of the whole nation. Patrick is not known as the father of reconciliation for nothing—all his life he has been building bridges over the rivers of discord and teaching this nation about the attributes of dialogue and healing.

Born in Broome in 1948, with his formative years spent in the Northern Territory town of Katherine, Patrick as an orphaned teenager went to board at Monivae College in Victoria's western districts. It must be acknowledged that both his parents were imprisoned in the early years of racially based separation and control. They were imprisoned for crimes of love—Patrick's father at Fremantle and his mother at Moola Bulla. One can only imagine the challenges that a young Aboriginal kid from remote Australia, experiencing the grief of losing both parents, would have faced in the heartland of Australia's social elite in the mid-1960s. However, although unsurprising to those who know him, Patrick surmounted all obstacles to become captain of that great school as well as captain of the 1st XVIII. Along with his brother Mick, they are arguably Monivae's most famous graduates. After school, Patrick entered the seminary and in 1974 he was ordained a Catholic priest in his hometown of Broome; he was the first Aboriginal person ordained a Catholic priest in Australia. Soon after, he was appointed priest at Port Keats mission, now known as Wadeye. There he began an extraordinary journey exploring the philosophical common ground of Aboriginal spirituality and Christian theology, a journey he continues passionately today in his thinking and teachings. But even for Patrick Dodson, there were matters that simply could not be reconciled. He found the church too conservative and too obstructionist and he left, although many of us have been on the end of a Patrick Dodson sermon since those days! Without in any way being blasphemous, Pat had a greater calling—our nation's recognition of the rights of Indigenous people. Patrick has been the most consistent and relentless leader in the cause for constitutional recognition of Indigenous rights over the past 40 years, and the fact that the prize is within our nation's imaginable grasp owes so much to Patrick Dodson. We owe him a debt of thanks for that.

After Wadeye, Patrick lived in Alice Springs for a number of years where he headed up Australia's most influential body at the time, the Central Land Council. There he led negotiations over the return of Uluru to the traditional owners and was drafted by his peers to chair the National Federation of Land Councils. He became a political warrior, negotiator and Aboriginal land claims organiser in that tough school of politics—indeed, perhaps the toughest school of politics. However, Australia came to know him as a statesman, promoting modern policies and dialogue to escape this nation's burden of colonial history.

In 1989, Patrick was appointed to the role that perhaps he is best known for—a royal commissioner to investigate the underlying issues concerning Aboriginal deaths in custody. The WA Police Union was fearful that in the wake of John Pat's death and other unconscionable deaths, their members would be targets of a witch-hunt. Instead, Patrick reached out to them in a spirit of partnership and reconciliation knowing that good relationships between the police and Aboriginal people were fundamental to sustainable justice. It is widely acknowledged that Patrick's influence on the royal commission in both its philosophical thrust and its recommendations was significant. It is rare—possibly unique—that a royal commission report should remain so

relevant and quoted so often 25 years after it was presented, but that is the case for the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Possibly the fact that the body politic of our nation failed to implement the recommendations in the spirit that they were intended is the reason that the report and its 339 recommendations haunt our state and nation today—it haunts us all with each additional Aboriginal death in custody. We still need to fundamentally correct the causes of the overwhelmingly disproportionate imprisonment of our nation's first people. The policy direction of that report, which speaks so powerfully to what Patrick Dodson stands for—government's duty of care to Indigenous people, Indigenous empowerment and self-determination, and the Indigenous community in government partnerships—is as relevant today as it was a quarter of a century ago.

In 1991, Bob Hawke appointed Patrick the chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, which oversaw the 10-year statutory Aboriginal reconciliation process. Over a number of years, Patrick brought warring parties—traditional owners, miners and farmers—into a constructive dialogue with the aim of finding common ground to resolve their differences. Against the background of the Mabo and Wik High Court judgements on native title and the Australian Human Rights Commission report on the stolen generation, Patrick made the recognition of Indigenous rights and dealing with our nation's history core to the reconciliation process and turned the statutory reconciliation process into a continuing people's movement. But just like the Catholic Church, Patrick could not reconcile with then Prime Minister John Howard, who wound back statutory native title rights with the Wik 10-point plan and could not bring himself to acknowledge on behalf of the nation the grief and trauma of the people affected by the policies of successive governments that were responsible for tearing families apart. In early 1998, Patrick resigned from the chair of the reconciliation council. For the next 12 years he committed his energies to preparing the Yawuru native title claim, successfully litigating the claim in the Federal Court of Australia and then leading negotiations over a wideranging compensation agreement between Yawuru, the state government and the Shire of Broome. The Yawuru native title agreement, like the Noongar agreement, is an instructive and powerful model of how self-determination and community empowerment can work on the ground.

Patrick Dodson's achievements have been extraordinary, but one senses that his best years are still to come. Whether he is in government or opposition, I believe that Patrick's influence on the body politic of this nation will be profound in the coming years.

The cause of constitutional recognition—meaningful constitutional recognition—has been long and frustrating. Despite best intentions, recognition has remained evasive, often surging in momentum only to then be becalmed in the stale winds of an anxious conservatism. In Patrick's hands, as our Senate representative, constitutional change to recognise our nation's Aboriginal people is finally coming into our grasp.

I have known Patrick for many years. He will bring to the commonwealth Parliament a focus on areas that have bedevilled our nation since Federation—Indigenous constitutional recognition; addressing the intolerable rates of Indigenous incarceration; and the future of northern Australia and remote Australia generally. These are issues that go to the heart of not only Aboriginal Australia but also to the heart of our great nation. These are all issues that fascinate me and should be of interest to all Australians and, in particular, Western Australians.

With Patrick Dodson we have taken an opportunity to bring into the national Parliament a person of particular expertise unique to the Senate and the Parliament. I am delighted beyond words that the Labor Party has taken the opportunity to usher Pat into the Senate. I have great pride in being a member of the Western Australian Parliament that endorses the nomination of Patrick Dodson as our senator, and I wish him well on that journey.

In conclusion, Mr President, can I note that the Kimberley has produced some incredible leaders in our history. I note by way of passing June Oscar, AO, and her Desmond Tutu Reconciliation Fellowship Award, which was announced overnight. Can I also note that it would be nice to have—without any negative comment to other senators—a Senate office outside metropolitan Perth, and I look forward to that office opening in Broome, Pat. To the man in the big black hat, the thoughts, wishes and hopes of all Western Australians travel with you.

Members: Hear, hear!

[Applause.]

MS J. FARRER (Kimberley) [11.42 am]: Mr President, first I would like to seek permission to use my language.

The PRESIDENT: Members, we are operating under the Legislative Assembly standing orders, even though we are in the Legislative Council, so we are all in this together. Just to inform members, the member for Kimberley has done the right thing in requesting approval to use her native language. You need to give an undertaking that there will be nothing unparliamentary in the words you use.

Ms J. FARRER: Thank you, Mr President; I can assure you that that will be the case.

President; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Ben Wyatt; Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr John Quigley; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Peter Collier

The PRESIDENT: And after you have said a short piece in your native language, you will need to repeat it in English for the benefit of Hansard so that we can have it recorded. Do you agree with those conditions?

Ms J. FARRER: Thank you, Mr President; I do.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you.

Ms J. FARRER: First of all, I would like to say that I acknowledge the Noongar people on this land on which we are here gathered today, because they are people in our culture, and, wherever we go, we acknowledge the different tribes. So I would like to acknowledge the Noongar people.

[*Words spoken in Gidja language —*

Keligan, menkawun kurlu-kurlu ngenan.]

This means that today I am happy inside.

Boolga is the name Patrick Dodson was given because he had white hair and a beard as a knowledgeable man. I proudly welcome Boolga into Parliament today.

[*Words spoken in Gidja language —*

Nawam-pi perrem taam-pi.]

That means that this is the house for the big people.

This is a tremendously significant occasion for all Australians. Boolga is a powerful advocate for social justice and human rights. He brings a vast array of wisdom and leadership to Parliament that will no doubt provide valuable insight and much-needed contributions to positively advance our national issues. I have known Boolga for over 40 years. He is a proud and very learned Yawaru man in his culture. He has dedicated his life to not only his people but all of us as fellow Australians—and today we should all be proud of this person.

Boolga was Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social justice commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, building upon the outstanding work to which he has dedicated much of his life and been focused on, and that work will now be enhanced even further through his role as senator for Western Australia.

[*Words spoken in Gidja language —*

Kurlu-kurlu ngenan.]

This means that I am happy and proud.

I am comforted to see more Aboriginal people enter the political arena and look forward to collaborating with Boolga—Mr Dodson. I would like to say today from us here in Parliament, congratulations, Boolga.

Thank you, Mr President.

[Applause.]

MR B.J. GRYLLS (Pilbara) [11.46 am]: I know that there are many speakers today, so I rise quickly to wish Pat Dodson all the very best in the opportunity that has been presented to him to be a senator. I thank Bill Shorten and the Australian Labor Party for putting a man of Pat Dodson's stature into Parliament. I simply make the point that there is no greater political achievement than to take the position of an oppressed minority to the fore in public life and to win the position so that now, in 2016, this Parliament, in a bipartisan way, endorses you as a giant of Western Australian politics, as the father of reconciliation, and endorses you unanimously to go to the Australian Senate.

If you go back to the start of your career, as has been eloquently put today, you started your fight for Indigenous reconciliation in an environment in which there was none—and your leadership has changed that, so that we all today recognise you for that role. I simply say thank you, Pat Dodson, for what you have done up until today, and, Pat Dodson, may you go well in the Australian Senate. Congratulations.

[Applause.]

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler) [11.47 am]: Mr President and Mr Speaker, I am very proud today, as a member of the Western Australian Parliament, to be able to speak and support the Premier's nomination of Mr Pat Dodson to be a member of the Australian Senate.

I first came to know Mr Dodson when he was a royal commissioner on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, where he was charged, along with the other royal commissioners, with examining the deaths of 34 Western Australian Indigenous people who had died while in custody. My function in that royal commission was to represent some 232 police and custodial officers who had been summonsed to appear before

that royal commission. It is fair to say that that royal commission was born in controversy and that its hearings were often surrounded in controversy. The proceedings were initiated, as the member for Victoria Park has said, by the tragic and unnecessary death of the late John Pat, but there were many other deaths as well. I had the privilege of appearing at the bar table with some of the finest legal counsel in Western Australia, and, indeed, senior legal counsel from around Australia, and to a person they were all impressed by the intelligence, unbiased nature and humanity of Royal Commissioner Dodson. It was a privilege to appear in front of him.

I would like to make one minor correction to the speech of the member for Victoria Park, because not only was the royal commission charged with investigating the social background of the circumstances that led to the death of our fellow black citizens, it was also charged with scrutinising and auditing the investigations subsequent to those deaths, which required detailed examination of the circumstances of each particular tragedy.

The process must have rent Royal Commissioner Dodson's heart in two when he had to dig down into that detail of the circumstances of the deaths of so many Indigenous people, but never once did these emotions sway him from his task or from the most unbiased, gentlemanly and cordial fashion in which he dealt with all manner of people who appeared before him, whether they were Indigenous witnesses, police or other custodial officers. I want to take the opportunity today to thank Mr Dodson for his previous task, which, as the member for Victoria Park said, was certainly a huge contribution to our society. In part, it stemmed a terrible blight—I say in part because we still have deaths in custody—upon our society. It was, indeed, a privilege to appear before him as a royal commissioner. It has been a privilege since at legal conferences to blow the froth off a couple of beers with him and talk about some of those issues. It is a greater privilege to be afforded the opportunity here today in the Western Australian Parliament to be able to step forward and second the Premier's motion that Mr Dodson be elevated to the Senate of Australia. I wish him well. I congratulate him on his life's work and I wish him godspeed in all he does in Canberra. Thank you very much, Mr President and Mr Speaker.

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [11.52 am]: Thank you, Mr President and Mr Speaker. I approach the lectern, which we do not often do in our chamber, for the very first time with a degree of frustration but also a degree of great pleasure. The frustration is that these are my notes and everybody else has said everything that I was going to say, so I will park that lot. The issue I really want to touch on is that I have known Pat over recent times as a member of Parliament but our paths actually crossed a long time ago. Pat mostly does not know that and I did not know it until recently. I worked in the Central Desert at Yirrkala, Papunya, Fink and at Yuendumu during the period that Mr Dodson did what I think was one of the greatest services to Australian people, which was the return of Kata Tjuta to the people of the Northern Territory. In that regard, I would like to say something in Pintupi, and I will translate it.

[Words spoken in Pintupi language —

Palya Tji-Ipi.]

That means, “Thank you good, male elder.”

[Words spoken in Pintupi language —

NginInytju Tji-Ipi.]

That means, “an honourable, clever fellow”. Thank you very much indeed, and congratulations, Pat. You deserve it.

The PRESIDENT: Does any other member wish to speak? The Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [11.54 am]: Not even close, Mr President; it is a debate that we frequently have in this chamber!

The PRESIDENT: I have been thrown out by the different seating arrangements; the Leader of the House.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you, Mr President and Mr Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to support the motion and to congratulate Pat Dodson on his eventual elevation to the Senate. Congratulations, Pat. You are a very, very worthy recipient of such an honourable position. It gives me great honour from a personal perspective as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to have a man of the calibre of Pat Dodson in the Australian Senate. As a Kalgoorlie boy, I grew up with the Wongutha people. I have a deep personal regard for Aboriginal people and I am very, very conscious of the fact that even though we have made a significant inroad in closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, particularly over recent years, we still have a long, long way to go. I was in Kalgoorlie just yesterday and the distinction between the two groups of people—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people—has never been more profound. Quite frankly, I think there is a collective unity of purpose in our nation and in our state, in particular from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, that we do close that gap and the distinction between the two people. Even though it is still quite

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President; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Peter Abetz; Mr Ben Wyatt; Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr John Quigley; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Peter Collier

profound, there is a genuine unity of purpose, as I said, to close the gap. It is going to take people of Pat Dodson's calibre to ensure that that pathway to reconciliation continues. Pat Dodson has the experience, fortitude, energy and commitment to ensure that we do close the gap and we do reconcile Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people so that, at last, we are as one as a nation. We are all Australians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Congratulations, Pat. From my perspective, I look forward to working with you and ensuring that we do all we possibly can for Aboriginal people in this great nation of ours. Also, congratulations on behalf of the government and the Legislative Council. You are a worthy recipient of the role of senator of this great nation of ours. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT: Members, I am required to ask this: are there any further nominations? Members, there being no other nominations, I declare Patrick Lionel Dodson, of Morrell Park, Broome, Western Australia, elected to hold the place vacated by Senator Joe Bullock. I congratulate the newly elected Senator Patrick Dodson, who is present in the President's gallery with relatives, friends and guests. The joint sitting is now concluded.

Question put and passed.

[Applause.]

The Joint Sitting concluded at 11.56 am
