

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 5 May on the following motion moved by Hon Pierre Yang —

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our most gracious sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [12.35 pm]: I seek to adjourn my contribution to the Address-In-Reply and continue my remarks at a later stage of today's sitting.

[Leave granted for the member's speech to be continued at a later stage of the sitting.]

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [12.36 pm]: Four years ago, at the 2017 election, I was given the opportunity to make some positive change. I took the role seriously, learnt quickly and did my best to do some good. I listened to people, travelled throughout the south west and found the issues people felt were not being heard or were being ignored. I also found issues that were so big that people felt powerless to even speak out. I soon realised that my role was not just to speak in Parliament on behalf of the people who are not being listened to, but also for those who had not found their voice and those who did not have a voice. I was also to speak for the animals, the plants and the planet. Our system of governance does not provide a voice for the environment. Our government structure was originally designed to represent the voices of wealthy, white males, reluctantly advancing to include those without wealth, women and eventually First Nations peoples. But the design of our system is not finished yet, because there is no voice for our young people or for their future and there is no voice for the health of the landscape, biodiversity or the planet.

Many times I have sat in Parliament hearing old, tired phrases about jobs and growth. But the words belie the motivation. The jobs-and-growth story often seems to gloss over the workers, the employees, and speaks more to the shareholders, the owners and the industry. There is unearned income for the owners of capital. Our system perpetuates the ability of those with wealth and power to increase their wealth and power at the expense of others, driving us to a more inequitable society. Yet this is the system we have, the system I was elected to and the system I learnt to work with. It has now delivered a government with a very strong majority. The majority is so strong that Premier Mark McGowan and his team can do just about anything. They have the choice either to maintain the status quo, keeping the gas industry, property developers and other big donors on side, or to be courageous, progressive and forward thinking and address the ills of our society, act to reverse the causes of climate change and lead us to a bright new future.

Western Australia is a wealthy state and our vast mineral reserves and other assets plus the knowledge and experience within our population means that we have the capacity to provide homes for the homeless, to care for people with addictions or who have mental health issues, and the ability for true recognition of First Nations peoples, alongside the ability to provide supporting social infrastructure as determined by First Nations peoples.

As a state, with Labor in government, we have the capacity to make Western Australia a more equitable society and to stop the degradation of our landscape. This government has the capacity to introduce carbon offsets that can direct funding towards rehabilitating degraded landscapes. It has the capacity to reach a 100 per cent stationary energy target by 2030 and, with the cooperation of the federal government, to rapidly increase the uptake of electric vehicles and move freight transport to electric or hydrogen-powered trains on rail. This government could preserve our remaining native forests, invest in the plantation industry and encourage a rapid uptake of regenerative farming. This may sound like utopia, but it is well within the reach of this government. It has the capacity, but does it have the will? It has four years with only its major donors or the general population to appease. Its major donors can fund the next election, but the population will vote. Imagine four years from now. What would Premier Mark McGowan and his team want on their résumé? Would they want an increase in the number of roads widened and skyscrapers approved? Would it show a decrease in the number of homeless people, people needing mental health support and in the prison population, alongside a decrease in crime? Would the résumé list the reduction in major weather events and wildfires, or will this government expect people will be accustomed to an ever-increasing climate crisis?

I have been privileged to speak in the Western Australian Parliament over these past four years on many issues. Sometimes, I saw that my words had been effective in getting positive change. Unfortunately, I leave now with many of the issues I feel strongly about still in limbo. Given the motion on soil carbon that was debated just moments ago, I think maybe I have had an impact. I thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for that little boost to my ego.

Throughout my term, regenerative agriculture has been mentioned quite often in this chamber. Not only is the minister a keen advocate, but also there has been some neutral or even positive acknowledgements from some members of the crossbench. Considering the rapidly increasing uptake and development globally, it has been positive to see fellow members of the chamber opening their minds to change, however reluctantly. Within the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, I understand change is brewing and I sincerely wish I could be here to see it mature into full-on support. I appreciate that the minister's promotion of regenerative agriculture will require broad support to fend off the detractors who benefit from the current industrial agricultural systems of land degradation and decreasing nutritional value. Current estimates of viable agricultural land are showing that globally we have just 40 to 60 years remaining worldwide should current practices continue. If that is not a wake-up call to people who like to eat, I do not know what is.

Regenerative agriculture is not rocket science. We need living micro-organisms in the soil to efficiently deliver nutrients to the plant roots. We need to keep the soil covered to hold the moisture in to keep the micro-organisms alive. We need to stop killing the micro-organisms. That is about it. If we do this, we will vastly increase the carbon in the soil. We will massively increase the water retention capability of the soil, enormously diminishing the impacts from drought. We will grow food with more nutrition and fewer chemical contaminants. Alongside these benefits, the diversified farming operations that go hand in hand with regenerative agriculture will increase economic and social opportunities in regional areas. Integrating animals, crops, trees and even hemp on one farm run by a number of families can provide a diversified experience and a wealth of shared knowledge. Investment in a hemp industry will open new industry opportunities for building materials, clothing and other textiles, as well as food and body-care products. We can even use hemp for railroad sleepers. We could go so far as to integrate timber plantations on farms to be milled on site to be used to construct the homes as the families grow.

This brings me to the topic of forestry. Early in my term I engaged a world-renowned consultant to detail a deliberative process for the government to use to determine the desires and expectations of a broad cross-section of people with regard to our native forests. I received no feedback. Now I desperately wish that this process is picked up and considered as the Conservation and Parks Commission prepares the next forest management plan due in 2024. Following the lack of action to protect our forests, I introduced a bill into this house last year to amend the Forest Products Act 2000. This bill sets out the steps necessary to make changes to conserve our remaining forests, protect our remaining biodiversity, develop the softwood and hardwood plantation industry and dissolve the Forest Products Commission. Please, no-one likes it. The Forest Products Commission is not required.

Understand that the state is losing financially on the timber industry even before we consider the \$135 million write-off in 2018 for an accounting error over the previous 10 years. Understand that there are fewer than 500 full-time equivalents employed in the native timber industry. Compare that with the 3 800 registered beekeepers in the state, with an additional 50 new registrations each month. Does this not indicate that it is time for a change? As bee populations decline worldwide, the opportunities for bee export become nearly limitless. The associated benefits of forest protection are extensive. An active and thriving forest draws down more carbon. A healthy and resilient forest contributes to rainfall through evapotranspiration. Reducing threats to the forests will support our globally significant biodiverse ecological systems. The timber industry will not end; it will simply be based on plantations. If we have not planted it, then we should not cut it down. Please do not knock this back with comments that it takes too long to grow a tree. Start now. Tree cropping integrated on regenerative farms works. Considerable work has been done over the years to determine where the mills and trees should be located. Use this information. It is now time to invest—urgently.

While on the subject of forests, please stop burning them. Dropping incendiaries to ignite them may help with your outrageous key performance indicator of dollars per hectare burnt, but it does nothing to protect endangered species, avoid critical ecological habitats, nor allow for the cool burns associated with Indigenous science and practice. These massive scale hot burns do not even protect us, because if regrowth occurs, it can be denser than ever, will likely have more weeds and may eventually deplete the seed bank for obligate re-seeders—that is, the plants that can regenerate from seed only after a fire and require continued harsh management. If we are after safety, please acknowledge and consider all the research, and recognise that there are different methods or mechanisms dependent on species mix, geology, past human intervention, rainfall patterns and so forth. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and it is not a process that should be undertaken with emotion. Fire is a tool—one of many. Let us put aside fear and emotive language, look at the facts and work to find sustainable outcomes. A desert will not burn, but do we want to turn our magnificent southern forests into a desert?

For some time, it has been known that the state's acts pertaining to water are well overdue for review. The southern forests irrigation scheme, regulation changes to charge miners and public drinking water suppliers for the actual costs of licensing, as well as the contemplation of the same for agricultural water users, have raised many important questions. Changes occurring to spring rights is also causing concern. On top of this, we must figure in climate change and the expected continued decrease in rainfall, particularly if we do not act quickly to restore our forests and soils, as mentioned previously.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's website indicates there will be a new act to replace the existing six acts. As this new act will cover water provision, drainage, sewerage, irrigation, allocation and waterway conservation, the drafters of the legislation certainly have their work cut out for them. I have concerns that the magnitude of this new act might overwhelm the potential for scrutiny available from this lopsided incoming house of review. There is so much that could be put into this act and so much opportunity to address many of the impacts of climate change. This new act cannot simply look at the past. It must address the future as modelled by experts, understanding the coming changes. Rainfall decline, more frequent violent storms, increasing pressure on limited water resources through pollution, development, population, industry and intensive agriculture, all these things will need to be addressed. This is an area for collaboration like no other. The stakeholders include not only industry, farming and residential developments, but also local governments, the landscape, and all our waterways, including the ocean and its biodiversity. Consider being visionary for this act and look to how we can improve our situation. Now is the time to invest wisely in assets that will reduce our ongoing costs, or even bring in future revenues. We must look to recharge our aquifers with clean potable water. We must maintain the health of our wetlands and waterways. We must ensure that rubbish and high nutrient loads are not headed downstream and out to sea. We need a government department that has responsibility for the quality of the water going through our ancient drainage systems. Even if good water management does not win votes, like new roads seem to, this is a time for bold action and visionary leadership. The government has the majority; show us what it can do.

On the subject of environment, there are a few items on my wish list, all of which I have mentioned in here before. First of all, how about a state of the environment report? Would it not be good for the government to have that on its résumé in four years' time—something to show that it has taken action and made a difference? If the government started that now, it could complete it by mid-2022 and have two complete years of results by the time electioneering begins again. The government could use it when the Liberals take the reins in the future to hold them to account. If the government needs assistance in writing key performance indicators for the environment, let me know—I know a few people who could help.

During my term I introduced a few private member's bills on the environment. I would like to take this time to remind the government about that. I understand that the Rights of Nature and Future Generations Bill was considerably more progressive than would ever enable it to get a look in, but I also understand that this is how some acts begin. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, which passed through this house in 2019, began nearly 30 years earlier as a private member's bill. I am not quite that optimistic, but I hope that suggesting that bill may have woken up a few people to the idea that we are not making decisions just for the people living today. Our decisions affect many people and the entire biodiversity for some time. One of the acts to be superseded by the new water act mentioned earlier was originally passed in 1914. I guess that there are other bills in force that are even older.

I continued with a more likely bill for the establishment of an environmental court, as has occurred in New South Wales, or an environmental tribunal similar to our existing State Administrative Tribunal, an entity that can make binding determinations rather than simply provide advice. If our Environmental Protection Authority is to perform its role adequately, it will require considerably more funding and considerably more power. I would not go so far as to say it provides a rubber stamp, but having seen some of the proposals and developments that have gone through in this term, I am sad to say that we sorely need considerably greater environmental protections. We have to get away from sizing up new industry or new developments based solely on their financial aspects, and really consider what sort of environment we want to leave to our descendants.

To make environmental protection very simple, I introduced one further bill that I hope to see influence the coming budget. Many in this place have acknowledged the difficulties and lack of accountability with which royalties for regions funds are distributed. On many occasions I have tried to demonstrate to regional constituents that royalties for regions is not being used as intended. It is not fully allocated, and some of the allocations are for services that were previously provided through other sources. An amount of \$250 million a year goes to the Water Corporation to provide equal water pricing across the state; and, as the Water Corporation then makes a surplus, the funds are returned to the state as a dividend. An amount of \$80 million a year comes from royalties for regions for a school bus service previously provided through the Department of Education. The private member's bill I introduced would provide positive benefits into regional communities by allocating \$100 million a year to the environment through the numerous land care and environment groups operating with an extensive workforce of willing volunteers working alongside government departments to restore, protect and rehabilitate our landscape.

The environment does not need humans; we need the environment. This state and our government must wake up and seriously protect, preserve and restore the home that our environment provides. Put an end to clearing unless commensurate replanting or restoration work has provided results. Put an end to native forest logging. Seriously monitor water contamination or misuse; clearing without a permit; and contamination and pollution regulations. Impose effective charges when regulations are ignored or broken.

If members have not already noticed, regional development is something I care deeply about. Development of the regions should not be a piecemeal, ad hoc or laissez-faire exercise. We need some long-term planning. Part of that planning should

be focused on supporting and encouraging decentralisation of the population. COVID has driven many people to flee the city and head for greener pastures. This is a positive for the state. This should be seen as something to encourage. The regions provide funding for the state through mining, and food for the people through agriculture, which also provides export dollars. The regions are where we can fight climate change by drawing down carbon into our trees and our soil.

COVID has shown us that people see the regions as a place to be physically and mentally healthy. Encourage this. I recognise that there are some economies of scale in having people in close proximity, but this only goes so far. Perth already has dispersed across a broad landscape, increasing both financial and environmental costs. Economies of scale can also be achieved in regional areas by increasing the density in regional communities and getting benefit from the underutilised existing infrastructure. These regional areas can be hubs of activity if we plan ahead and make the best use of the local resources. Rather than get big, let us get smart. Localise food processing and manufacturing. Create abattoirs where the animals are raised. Make furniture and housing frames where the trees are planted. Process food where the crops are grown. We can do better.

Getting freight on rail will provide a long-term solution. Do not tell me we need a return on investment over 20 years. We have seen that rail lines can be built to last 100 years. Do it once; do it right. I have heard recently how much is being spent on roads in regional areas. This government cannot deny that the majority of this spending is justified by the number of truck movements. Plan for a sustainable future. Plan for freight on rail.

As we plan ahead and create infrastructure to reduce heavy freight transport on our roads, our regional areas will be safer for the rapid increase in regional travel. Again, COVID has changed our travel behaviour. I see this as providing many positive benefits to the regions and for our population. The more people who get out to the regional areas, the more people will choose to live there. The increased economic activity will make it more appealing to more people. The people who are moving into the south west are moving for a better lifestyle, not necessarily a lifestyle in which they spend more, but rather a lifestyle of good health, a friendly community, activity that takes them closer to nature, and so forth. As people arrive in our regional communities to live, we are desperately finding that we need more homes. This provides a tricky problem for the government as many of our small regional communities want to stay small. Here is where good planning can step in to work with the people, the local governments and the developers to ensure that sustainable communities with a range of price points, including some social housing, are integrated into the existing fabric of society using a collaborative approach to find solutions that work for everyone. Dream big. Here is the place to be aspirational. Open your horizons and see what possibilities exist.

Before people move regionally, they often visit as tourists. Our regional areas have so much to offer. First Nations tourism must be nurtured and supported, as it is our roots—our connection to the landscape, to time and to the natural environment. The more we can listen to Indigenous science and Indigenous history, the more we will understand our place in this world and understand the responsibilities of long-term management of this landscape. We have much to learn. Sharing this knowledge widely through tourist-type adventures will assist in keeping the knowledge alive. Combining Indigenous knowledge with ecotourism just makes good sense and assists visitors in getting the most out of their stay.

We can also build on opportunities for accessible tourism to be inclusive of people and their differences or limitations. I understand that some cave tours are now planned to limit noise and excess light to provide a calmer experience for people with heightened sound or light sensitivities. We can also develop activities specifically for people with mobility issues. Providing alternatives can make us a more inclusive society.

One idea which I have come across recently, and which makes sense if planning for a bright new future, is the suggestion of a vehicle racetrack specifically for electric vehicles. Think about it. Unlike the Albany Motorplex, which will be outdated in the not too distant future with its noise issues and concerns of pollution run-off, electric vehicles would make little noise and have minimal run-off concerns. The suggestion is to locate it at Greenbushes near the lithium mine and open it up to everything from trucks to scooters, and even gophers. Out of interest, during the election campaign I asked a few gopher drivers and received unexpected enthusiasm. I had not realised so many gopher drivers had an interest in racing! Universities and other research organisations could be involved to study battery and motor technology. Its location next to the lithium mine would add to the knowledge that we could obtain about how to develop it to grow the industry in that area. Noting the greater performance capabilities of electric vehicles, the researchers should have a rather enjoyable time.

I have noticed over the past four years that the view of this government and its energy entities towards renewables is evolving. From the initial complaints about how rooftop solar will damage the system, the government has advanced to tolerate rooftop solar and is even beginning to appreciate the benefits of integrating it into our systems. Over this coming term, I hope to see an embrace of distributed community-driven renewable systems, as this is where our future lies.

One brief comment on uranium. We know it to be problematic on many counts, and with all its associated negative impacts it is unfathomable that anybody would give any consideration to nuclear energy. In the previous Liberal government's last few weeks in government, it slid through approvals for four uranium mines. Now this government

will see those environmental approvals time out. Please let them. These projects pose serious environmental risks and economic liability that will extend over decades, if not centuries.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Hon DIANE EVERS: Back to business, and particularly small business. This is where our opportunity lies. Small business should figure prominently in our future. It is where innovation can occur. It is the largest employment sector. It can take on the development of the tourism operations and the value-adding to agricultural produce, hospitality and manufacturing. There are unlimited possibilities and opportunities for the development of small business, particularly in the regions.

This government needs to assist. It is not all about red tape and green tape. It is about equity and fairness. The issues are about competing with the larger players who have the means and motivation to reduce competition and ensuring that the big players meet their requirements and abide by the law even when they have better legal teams and financial wizards. I recognise that some work is being done on this front; for example, getting subcontractors to be paid fairly and on time, but this is all so slow. I hope to see further action over the coming term to level the playing field for small business.

In addition, if this government would like to be progressive, encourage cooperatives and other business structures that make it possible for more people to get involved in business ownership, sharefarming is becoming more of a global issue for agriculture. We all know that it is very expensive to get into agriculture, but through the opportunities of sharefarming—we can look around the world and see how it is being done, and being done well—maybe we can do that here and get some of the young people who are currently in the city but who would like to be out on a farm to find a way by which they can do it without having to have a million dollars or family connections behind them.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: That is a very good point, member.

Hon DIANE EVERS: I think it is something for our future—I would love to be there—and I would not mind being involved in the conversation.

Innovation in this area can help to diversify our economy, making it stronger and more equitable. Growing small business is where local economies benefit—local jobs, less travel, good for local government, good for communities. There are many benefits to increased small business activity and I look forward to seeing this government take action in supporting small enterprise development.

Of all the portfolios I held within the Greens, I feel I did not speak often enough on sport and recreation; it just did not come up much. There were environment-related issues such as skiing at Lake Mullocullup, a place of significant Aboriginal significance, and the consideration of mountain bike trails in the Porongurup National Park, both of which should not happen. It is not appropriate. It is destructive and it is not what we need to do. Other than environment issues, most of my concerns or interest was related to ensuring that opportunities for sport and recreation were diverse, accessible, inclusive, financially possible and so forth to encourage broad participation knowing that the benefits of fitness, health and social connection make our population and communities stronger.

Given my accounting background, I had the most fun at budget time. I think only Hon Dr Steve Thomas would agree with that. I walked in thinking how depressing it was having watched as the previous Liberal government spent its windfall from the previous boom up through 2014, leaving the state with a mounting debt. Now I have seen this government do not much better. The debt trajectory continued even though extensive cuts were made to staff and services. Some explanation can be placed on COVID-19 and the decision to try to keep the economy humming. I get that. I understand the government's intentions to keep workers employed and money flowing to shareholders. So, as COVID struck, money flowed to shovel-ready projects. Unfortunately, this provided an opportunity for its property developer friends and donors to fast-track development approvals right past the desires of the communities, with little regard for the environment or long-term planning needs of the state.

As an accountant, and considering the big picture, what struck me hard was the speed at which shovel-ready projects were put forward by Main Roads Western Australia. I have not held back in voicing my wariness towards Main Roads. Governments understand that building roads gets votes. People can see the work progressing, and for the most part they get a smoother, more efficient trip to their destination, but at what cost? For example, the Albany ring-road, budgeted at \$175 million, is progressing swiftly, yet for whom? When I asked for the expected truck movements on the new road, it appeared there would be just 1 200 trucks a day, only 300 more than currently travel on the existing road—and those figures were provided for the year 2031! The existing road of two kilometres rarely has more than one or two trucks on it at any time. The new route will be 17 kilometres rather than the current distance of seven kilometres. Members must understand that \$175 million is being spent on a road that is unnecessary. If there had been any sort of comprehensive planning and forward thinking, not just the four years of an election cycle, and not just from the department for building roads, a different solution may have been found. Understand that nearly all the freight transport on that route is either grain or woodchips going to the port. If the government had simply consulted with Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, which was already exploring a grain

terminal at Down Road industrial park, we could have spent \$20 million to \$30 million and shifted that freight task to rail. This would have addressed the traffic concerns at the roundabout and on the connecting roads. I just cannot understand it—other than how I understand that building roads gets votes. There is nothing workers like more than having a clear run on their daily commute. Unfortunately, having more roads leads to more cars, more trucks and more traffic. I see, however, that investment is going to public transport in the urban areas. It seems as though we have put so much into roads and now there is a bit spilling over. Maybe Main Roads has just run out of roads to build. I am not certain, but there is money going into public transport and I am delighted. Well done.

I even feel that I have been heard. Every year for the past three years I have asked the Public Transport Authority whether free public transport would be considered. I am delighted at the plans to cap public transport at two zones. I ask the government that when the trains become crowded to please not put up the price. More passengers indicate that more trains are needed; it is simple. More trains mean fewer people on the roads, and fewer people on the roads mean less need to expand and extend the road network. Give Main Roads something else to do; we need to plan for 50 years, not five. We have to make public transport smooth, simple and inexpensive, and people will use it—even more so, if the traffic is bad.

Another issue that is well within the government's grasp to address is homelessness. Look globally for solutions; there are solutions out there. Many cities are addressing the situation by providing homes for the homeless—amazing. It is that simple. The reduction in costs associated with homelessness—including health costs, local government costs, policing costs and so forth—make it cost neutral, or even positive. Think broadly. We can be a better, more caring society without hurting the bank balance, and if we get that plantation industry going—or even more quickly, a hemp brick industry—we can build the homes using local sustainable materials.

There are so many more issues that have doable, affordable, progressive, sustainable, sensitive, systemic solutions. The government has the support of the voters, it has the financial resources and it has the capacity. Does it have the will and the courage to take action? I can see the shoots of progressive thinking. Green hydrogen—thank you, minister; I think we are going in the right direction, and there is so much future ahead of us that way to greatly expand the technology for renewables. Turn it into hydrogen and transport it where we need to. I have even heard about somehow making fertiliser out of it; I do not have the chemistry background to work that one out yet, but I will get there! There has also been investment in rail—well done. I am really pleased to see that. There is an increased number of national parks. It makes sense now; just give us more, and the resources to look after them. That is all I ask.

But for all these baby steps, it is still not enough. The increasing impacts of climate change are upon us at a rate faster than our system of governance can even contemplate. Corporate interests have more time and resources to keep laws and regulations in their favour than any government has to create or enforce these laws. The job ahead of this government, should it choose to be bold, is enormous. It will require vision and strength to stand up to the old, tired habits of privileged wealthy conservatives who clutch to the misguided belief that their death will arrive before they are personally impacted by the damage humanity continues to inflict on the planet. Harsh, but true.

I understand that saying the word “economy” gets attention from these people, and it even gets votes if people think the government's words indicate they will have more money in their pocket. But what value is a robust economy if rates of poor mental health skyrocket, alongside drug dependency and suicides? Where is the equity if a thriving economy channels wealth into the hands of a few, while more people become homeless, malnourished or physically ill? The strength and resilience of our social structures must be a priority before we rely on the economy to sort things out.

Where will our society be if we have not reversed the worldwide degradation of our planet? Right here in WA, we have so much to protect that this government and preceding governments have taken for granted. How can we continue to believe developers and miners who consistently go bankrupt when projects go pear-shaped? How can we continue clearing and felling old, healthy, thriving forests, when we know their value for biodiversity, for human health and for moderating climate? How can we? How can the Premier? It is his government that has the opportunity to make a positive difference, to become world leaders, to raise its profile and increase its adoring crowds on an even larger scale. Be bold. Take action.

The steps have been laid out before you on many occasions. Do not worry about where to start, just start. Alongside green hydrogen and other renewables, make legislation to draw down carbon. In our soils alone, we have the capacity to capture enough carbon that we could go on burning coal. The point is to be carbon neutral by 2050—not just aspirationally, but in fact. In my world I would like to see us carbon negative well before 2050. Even as we become carbon negative, the excesses of our past and present will follow us for some time as the carbon already absorbed in our oceans is released. Carbon continues being sequestered in a mature forest, bringing it down from the heavens into its leaves, branches, trunk and down to its roots and into the earth. Carbon is captured in the trees of a plantation, to be cut and sequestered in those affordable and social homes we so desperately need.

Introduce carbon offsets on those companies that emit carbon in massive quantities. These companies must show results where they have sequestered carbon, and not simply hollow promises that they have plans to do so; otherwise,

they pay someone to sequester it for them. This can be achieved in land restoration, soil carbon increases and forest restoration. The government should have a look online at www.drawdown.org if it needs some ideas about how to draw down carbon and how to fix this planet. The important message is: carbon negative. We must find a sustainable existence where we are drawing down carbon—that is, net negative carbon—just to make up for the excesses of the past.

My work in this chamber now comes to a close. I hope I have made an impact. It is a strange existence, watching the games that grown men and women play, not to make a positive difference, but to score points. From time to time this place seems so much like a classroom of around year 6, and that is not to put down year 6 students! My expectations of the character of members of Parliament were higher. We seem to act as though, by putting on a suit or the equivalent, we are giving our positions the respect they deserve. By my standards, that respect is demonstrated by our actions, our integrity and our character. I recognise that this system is based on the Westminster system that has been around for hundreds of years, but that does not make it best or right. I think humanity is capable of something more. I see a world where people work collaboratively, recognising that planet Earth is our home, and if we screw it up, we will lead to our own demise. Indigenous cultures around the world recognised the value of protecting their home, and here we are, day by day destroying ours.

I give my thanks to my husband, Tony, for all he has done to support me through the past four years; thank you. Thank you to our son, Carl, and daughters, Rose, Jessica and Tia, for being there and giving my life value. I must thank my Greens colleagues here in the chamber. I thank all of them. Having a Greens team made scrutiny and oversight so much more possible. I appreciate that having the four of us looks nigh-on easy compared with the daunting task ahead. Thank you to all Greens and Greens voters. It is unfortunate that all the work we have done leading up to this day has resulted in just one Greens MP being elected. I have great expectations for the incoming Greens MLC, Brad Pettitt. I wish him all the best of good luck and support from the progressive thinkers in WA, to carry him through the next term. I really feel that scrutiny of this government is going to happen out on the streets, in the community, amongst the people who care. That is what I hope to encourage with my own work. I encourage people to work through Brad to make sure that their voices are heard here. We have to work together if we expect to have a positive future for our children and our grandchildren.

I would also like to thank my staff for all the work they have done supporting people who needed assistance to have their voices heard. Many supporters have said to me that the amount of work put out through my office was staggering, and I could not have done it without the excellent staff I have supporting me. My heartfelt thanks and appreciation goes to all the brilliant people I have met through the past four years. I have learnt so much, I grew as a person, and I made some good connections that may last a lifetime.

My genuine thanks and appreciation go to all people who work towards a progressive, inclusive, sustainable and equitable society for Western Australia, and to all those people who I feel so close to—the people who recognise that this planet is our only one, and when we damage it, we damage ourselves. When we lose a species, we lose it forever. When we reach that climate change tipping point, this planet will no longer be habitable by the billions of people who now live here. If you think the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, you ain't seen nothing yet. You had better get used to those climate-related natural disasters: floods, fires, droughts and cyclones. When they affect you or you cannot get insurance for your home, you will have to then step back and think: can I do more? The answer is: yes, you can. We are the privileged ones who have the time to actually make the laws and regulations in here that will affect our future.

In this room in the coming term, a positive difference could be made. Work like professionals and we could all prosper. If you continue to work like children and give us more of the same, we will all be watching as our beautiful habitable climate deteriorates. The new crossbench may see Brad Pettitt as the only voice on the progressive side of politics. That could result in many of the issues that I have raised over this term being all but forgotten—the environmental impacts of prescribed burns, the indiscriminate clearing of native bush, the need for and benefits of regenerative agriculture, the continued destruction of native forests, the lack of real recognition for environmental damage, the loss of biodiversity and so on. Those are just the environmental issues; I leave it to my colleagues to discuss some of the other issues. I focus mostly on my shadow portfolio responsibilities because I see so much possibility for our future, and it is in here where a lot of that can start.

Knowing this, I am committed to raising the voices of people who care about our future, who care about our landscape and who care about all people and not just those like ourselves. A great number of people put their trust in government to manage our society and to keep us healthy, but we need to do more. We need no new gas—of course, I mean LNG and not hydrogen; hydrogen, go for it—an end to native forest logging; an Environmental Protection Authority with authority; a planning department that understands systems thinking and innovation; innovative, sustainable long-term planning; a public transport system that people prefer over driving; electric vehicles running off renewable energy; bulk freight transport on renewably powered rail; a health system that works to prevent injury and disease; mental health systems that address the causes of poor mental health; and a police system that works to prevent and reduce crime, alongside a justice system where all people have equal access to justice that aims to keep people out

of prison while ensuring that people who do harm are dealt with fairly and victims are supported. Western Australia has the funds, through the iron ore royalties, which we see flooding in so quickly in great amounts, to be used for good purposes. Those royalties could be used to address these issues. We need to look at the problems as we try to address them and consider—just consider—whether there is another way to look at the problem. Is there a solution that does not require the traditional response of bandaid solutions or billion-dollar infrastructure? Can we look globally, think with an open mind and act with care and concern for the planet, people and prosperity?

I finish here with a dream of utopia. Go on, Mark. Leave a great legacy for future generations. Be visionary. Be bold. Thank you.

[Applause.]

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Martin Aldridge): Before I give the call to Hon Colin Holt, I remind members that this is the member's valedictory speech and, as is the custom of the house with first speeches and valedictory speeches, the member will be heard in silence without interruption or interjection.

HON COLIN HOLT (South West) [2.23 pm]: That is a bit of a bugger, really, because I find that interjections spur me on!

Hon Simon O'Brien: I will defy the chair; don't worry!

Hon COLIN HOLT: Thank you.

I actually have extensive speech notes here, which is quite unusual for me. I think there have been three occasions on which I have written extensive speech notes: one was my inaugural speech, the other on the delivery of *My life, my choice: The report of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices*, and this occasion. I will try my hardest to keep to script, although I have obviously already gone off it, because there are some really important things that I want to say, and they are the thankyou's to those people who have supported me. I am not going to spend a lot of time reflecting on my time in this place because I do not like talking about myself particularly much. That is why I want to concentrate on thanking those people who have supported me throughout my time here. If members have any important parliamentary business to attend to and they want to leave the chamber to attend to those things, I would not be offended one bit.

As Wadsworth Longfellow said, we judge ourselves by what we feel we are capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done. I am sure that plenty of people in this place, in the electorate and within the state of Western Australia will judge me on what I have been able to achieve and not achieve, and on my contribution. But I prefer to reflect on my performance from my viewpoint because I am my strongest critic.

Do I think I have done some good things in this place and within the communities I represent? I would say generally, yes. I am happy to say that. I think I have helped where I have been able to and I have worked hard to deliver for the people of the South West Region. But do I think I could have done more? Am I capable of doing more? I would say, absolutely. I think there is always unfinished business when taking on roles like this. There is unfinished business in every job that we do. It is difficult to leave some of that unfinished business behind for someone else to take up the cudgel and to deliver on. Undoubtedly, although I feel happy about the role I have played and my ability to deliver, I think that there have been some gaps as well; but, again, that is from my viewpoint.

When I first started in this place, a Nationals MP said to me that this job is like a never-ending flock of sheep that need drenching. As you get through one yard, the next bloody mob is right at the entrance of the race waiting to be drenched. You get through that mob and the next mob is there. There is always a problem to solve, there is always an issue to resolve or pursue, and there are always people to help because the issues keep coming and the people keep coming through your door.

Recently, my staff and I did a bit of a farewell tour around the south west. We went to Dwellingup where I used to have a mobile electorate office and met the craft group there. I would always time my visit at the same time as the craft group because the ladies who came to the craft group knew everything that was going on in Dwellingup. We turned up for a cup of tea, cake, scones and the rest of it, as we normally would do, and they reminded me about some of the things that I had helped them with. I had not forgotten them but I had sort of put them on the backburner. In my mind it has always been about solving the immediate problem at the time, which I would work hard to do and then I could say, "You bewdy, the community is happy." But then the next problem or issue, or the next person to help, would be coming through the door. The same thing happened when I went to the Shire of Harvey. They reminded me about the role I played to deliver their recreation centre. Again, I had not forgotten what I had done, but it was really just about getting something done and moving on to the next issue.

On Tuesday, I went to Albany with the federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs to help solve an issue for the RSL down there and to work with the city to deliver some outcomes. The issues just keep coming.

I acknowledge that the end of my time here has come and I am quite happy about that. I made that decision, but I strongly believe that I still have something to offer the people of Western Australia. I do not know what that looks like yet, but I am more than willing and ready to move on.

As members know, the role of an MP is unique and strange and it is difficult to understand unless you happen to be in it. There is no training, there are no guidelines, there is no real way of doing it, and, if you are lucky, you may find an MP or ex-MP or mentor to help you and to give you some ideas about how to do the job. But it has always been clear to me that I have to do it my own way. I am more than comfortable with the fact that I have been able to do it my way. I acknowledge that it is certainly not the way of everybody, and some people have said that the way I do things lacks some merit or is a bit crazy, but that is the way I do it and I am more than comfortable with how I have done it.

I am reminded of a poem by Shel Silverstein called *The Perfect High*. I encourage members to google it, because I cannot read it into *Hansard* as it has some expletives. It is really a poem about being happy within yourself and being confident and comfortable in how you act—do not always keep trying to look for the next high, because the next high is found within yourself. I encourage members to look at that. I do not want to be accused of having some sort of midlife crisis Zen yoga thing—although that is kind of me and I am kind of at that point! The point I am trying to make is that I am fairly comfortable in who I am, what I have been able to achieve and the way I have gone about it, but I totally acknowledge it is not for everybody.

I came into this place pretty unexpectedly, perhaps a lot like it has been for the people who will be sworn in the week after next and for some who were sworn in last week. It probably happened a little unexpectedly for them, too, but there is nothing wrong with that. At the time, back in 2008, I was asked to run by the then Leader of the National Party, Hon Brendon Grylls. Wendy Duncan, who was the president of the party, said, “We’ve got no-one. Can you put your name on the south west ticket, because the preferred candidate pulled out?” I had been involved with the party for about three years and I was actually vice president at that time. She said we needed someone who knew a bit about the royalties for region story who could at least stand up and string a few words together—which, of course, I could not!—and I accepted the challenge. I was happy to, because, as I have said, I had been involved in the party since 2005.

I came to the party when I was running a community development company, and our work was almost exclusively with regional communities. I took the decision that I wanted to contribute more to those regional communities in whatever way I could. I did not really have any ambitions of representation or leadership; I just got involved and said I was willing to help where I could, and I became vice president, then president and then a member of Parliament. But I never took that step until one of my business partners, Lee, who is very, very good at poking people in the ribs, suggested it was time for me to step up and take a place at the table that we kept saying other people had to sit at. I was more than happy to do that. I put my name on the ticket. It was on the back of the call by Premier Carpenter for an early election. It could have been called an unexpected result, but perhaps not as unexpected as the result we have seen this time. The people of the South West Region had not elected a National Party MP for eight years. Wendy and Brendon said to me at the time, “Don’t worry, mate, you’re not going to get elected. You can go back to your day job. It’s no good; we just need someone to put their name on the ticket.” We have heard plenty of those stories, and I bet members opposite will have heard plenty of those stories in the last couple of weeks! As it turned out, royalties for regions was a new policy and a new concept for country people. At that time, we had also very much become an independent party. I think on the back of that and preference flows, by which you get elected to this place when you are in a minor party or you never quite get to a quota, I found myself elected. The good people of the South West Region have elected a Nationals MP three elections since—never with the full quota, but always relying on some overflow, generally from our good friends in the Liberal Party. The electorate has embraced the Nationals royalties for regions policy and our independent stance.

I have to say that I am probably a strident anti-coalitionist within the National Party. I strongly believe that when one vote, one value was introduced in the Legislative Assembly, the power of independence helped us rally against that tide and delivered us not the expected result of one or two members in the LA, but 10 members, which grew to 12. It is clear in my mind that our independent stance was a major factor in that result. I remember being president of the party and having to go to Canberra quite a bit to talk to our federal colleagues and management. Of course, if you have studied anything about National Party politics in Australia, you would have found that every state implements a different model. The federal guys have their own as well, which is a coalition. There is the coalition in New South Wales and the coalition in Victoria, but there are no National Party members in the South Australian or Tasmanian Parliaments. Over in the west, we are seen as the rump that tries to break the rules and do things differently. Then there is the Liberal National Party of Queensland.

I used to have to go over to Canberra quite a bit. I often went with Tony Crook, who had been elected as the Nationals member for O’Connor after the 30-odd-year career of Wilson Tuckey. We left the poor bugger with the unenviable task of prosecuting the independent stance of the Western Australian Nationals in the federal sphere. What a great challenge for him! I stood in that federal management office and got yelled at quite a lot of times by

federal MPs and state presidents. They said, “You Western Australians are going to be the ruin of every government.” I turned around and said, “I think you guys in Queensland, the conjoined model, are going to be the ruin of the Nationals.” I will stand by that every time. In my mind, Tony Crook is a bit of a political hero, probably unsung, in that we just sent him over there with the support we could give him, but we were never on site to help him prosecute that argument. I think he deserves great accolades from the party for what he did. I have to point out that he was ably supported by the Acting President, Hon Martin Aldridge, who worked with him very closely during that time. Happy birthday, Mr Acting President! Marty and Tony Crook did a sterling job in prosecuting our argument. It is a pretty lonely old job trying to prosecute something by yourself, and I am sure the crossbenchers understand that perfectly. The new incoming Greens member is going to understand that perfectly. When they are here by themselves, it is very difficult.

I have completely gone off script, of course, as I knew I would! I will try to pick some of it up. Since coming to this place, I have been very fortunate to play a number of roles. You cannot take on those roles without the support of your National Party colleagues, especially in this place. The National Party Legislative Council team has been working together very, very well. In my 12 years, we have had members come and go, but I think we have always worked very well together. We are all different people. We all come with different viewpoints, backgrounds and opinions, and that is how it should be. If we want to represent the people we do, we need to be as diverse as them. We have been able to demonstrate that through robust debate and argument about our viewpoints and rigour in our thinking, we could get to an outcome that everyone could work towards. I feel very confident that the members of the National Party who have served in this place, and also more broadly, have done that. I honestly thank them for their support and comradeship over that time, because like I said, you cannot do it by yourself. Every member of a major party would know that, and crossbenchers from minor parties with very few members would know how hard it is to deliver by themselves. I thank all my National Party colleagues, both past and present, for their support over time. They have all had an influence over me in some way.

This may not come as a surprise to anybody, but I am probably the most left in the Nationals WA party room. I have no problem with that at all. After my inaugural speech in here, someone from the Labor Party said to me, “Are you sure you’re sitting on the right side of the house?” I am, because I strongly believe that if a person wants to influence the culture of an organisation or a party and they want it to reflect their values, they had better get involved in it. That is what I have done. I have inserted myself into the Nationals political party and I hope that during my time, some of my values have been reflected in the culture of that organisation. I have no doubt that once I leave, others will come in and influence it in other ways, but that is okay too because everyone has their time and they contribute as much as they can when it happens.

I would especially like to acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition, Mia Davies, who was elected into this house at the same time as I was. I remember when she was a Legislative Council member and we used to sit up the back and share stories and support each other. I have seen her grow into an extremely hardworking Legislative Assembly member who is completely committed to the people of Western Australia and completely capable of doing a fantastic job as the Leader of the Opposition. I know that her father would have been very proud of her, her family is very proud of her and I am pretty proud of her, too. She is doing some amazing stuff, so keep it up.

I also served two terms on the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. It would seem strange to most people, but I actually requested to go on that committee. It is the committee that is the most democratic and engaging with the people of Western Australia. It is based on the petition system, which allows members to engage with the community and the people whom they represent. It provides a fantastic conduit for those community voices to be heard in Parliament. I will continue to be a strong defender of that committee as long as I possibly can. I encourage the ongoing members to think about the fifty-fourth report of that committee, which has a longwinded title but I will read it out anyway: *The functions, processes and procedures of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs — Are they clear for petitioners and do they reflect its core petitions role?* I encourage members of this house in the next Parliament to look at that report and implement the changes. I notice a motion on the notice paper in Hon Simon O’Brien’s name that is a little in conflict with this report, so I look forward to hearing that debate and how it might shake out in terms of what that standing committee will look like into the future. I am really proud of the good work that we have done as a committee. The committee system in this Council is seen as really valuable. That system has probably done some of the most valuable work across this Parliament and in other Parliaments that probably do not value it in the same way.

During my first term in the thirty-eighth Parliament, the committee produced a report titled *Inquiry into the transportation of detained persons: The implementation of the coroner’s recommendations in relation to the death of Mr Ward and related matters*. Madam President was actually deputy chair of the committee at that time. It is good to see you here, Madam President. When the committee said that it was going to inquire into how the coroner’s recommendations were going to be implemented, it put a spotlight on the whole issue and bang! Things started to change. The recommendations started to be implemented and tangible changes were made to how detained people

were transported. That was a great outcome. We did not even have to deliver the report because as soon as we put the spotlight on the issue, something was done about it.

During the fortieth Parliament, that committee produced its fifty-second report titled *Punitive not protective: When the mandatory registration of young people is not based on risk*. That report was only tabled in May 2020 and it was based on a petition with just two signatures; that is how powerful the petition system can be. That report was about how young people were treated within the judicial system and put on a mandatory reporting list, which is completely unfair. Everyone who was called in as a witness to give a statement agreed with the premise that this needed to be looked at. I encourage the government members who helped to pen this report and were on the committee, to take it up with the new government. I would like the minister who represents the Minister for Police in this place, Hon Stephen Dawson, to raise that report with the Minister for Police because everyone is waiting for the change. The police, the judiciary and the community are waiting for the change and we should be making it a priority. Good luck with that. I hope Hon Samantha Rowe and Hon Matthew Swinbourn can take up that matter. I try not to be too political but I just had to shove that in there.

I also need to thank the staff of that committee who had to put up with me quite a bit. I can be annoying. They knew I was annoying and they tried to circumvent me in quite a few ways, but I stuck to my guns. They were very supportive and nice but I was a pain in the proverbial, and they know it. The work of a committee cannot be done without its committee staff working as they do to deliver the outcomes that committee members want to see, so I thank them.

I was a parliamentary secretary for a number of ministers in a number of portfolio areas and I thank those ministers for that opportunity and their support. Of course, I was a minister for almost two years in the Liberal–National alliance government. The thing about a minister's role is that they need to be fair dinkum about it, to work bloody hard and to ask their ministerial office to work very hard alongside them. In fact, a minister probably spends more time with their ministerial staff in the ministerial office than they do with their own family and loved ones. Those staff become your family for that period of time because you build up a heap of trust and respect and you know each other very well. We worked hard for those almost two years.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to those people in my ministerial office. They were all wonderful people and many of them I will always call a friend. In fact, I talked some of them into owning a racehorse with me, and you need to be good friends when you own a racehorse together I can tell you! It is mostly about non-success, really. Karen, the Divine Miss M, Sue and Terri were willing to stay with me at Tuck Waldron's office when I took it over. I modelled myself on Tuck, including my haircut. Tuck had set the standard in that office. Everyone who knows Tuck Waldron knows that he is a very friendly, gregarious bloke. He set a culture in that office that I was very fortunate to move into. Kay rocked up with her trolley bag as housing adviser, even though I had not yet asked for an adviser. She claimed the desk and she was not leaving. She was of great value. I somehow talked Andrew, Donna and Andrea into giving me a hand for a couple of years; they gave up a lot of their life to pitch in and I thank them. Then of course there was Alex and Ben, the chief of staff, who both really ran the show. They kept the team together and working in the same direction. They are both extraordinary young men and they saved my bacon on quite a lot of occasions, most notably on a number of small bar tours that I they insisted I do as the "minister for liquor". We will not mention the Varnish bar—I do not have a lot of memories of that bar—but I took my role as the Minister for Racing and Gaming very seriously. When I was the minister, we delivered some really good legislative reform to the Liquor Control Act in this place, with bipartisan support on the supply of alcohol to minors and other things. That had been hanging around for four or five years. Ben and Alex's professionalism, intelligence and hard work is a great asset and a great credit to them and holds them in good stead for the organisations they work for now, and I need to thank them very much.

I think my approach has always been to be quite collaborative, both here in Parliament and in my electorate. I just think you get more done that way. I know it does not work all the time, but sometimes it does. That is the way I was always going to work. Even when I ask questions without notice to a minister in this place, often it is for me to raise issues to them that they probably need to look into, because I know that when one works with departments—we have mega-departments now—one just cannot know what is going on at every level. I remember when I was a minister on that side of the house and people would ask me questions, I would say, "Jeez, that's a really good question. I want to know the answer to that. Thanks for raising it with me." I would go back to my department and say, "What does this mean? Why are they asking me this? What's going on?" To me, it was a great revelation, because it helped me to understand more about what the department was doing, so I think there is a great value in questions without notice if people want to treat them the right way.

When I was minister, we did a lot of hard work. The sale of the Western Australian TAB was a hot topic at the time. I know it was dear to the heart of Hon Darren West, who turned up at every community meeting I went to and argued against me, only to then flip over when he got back into government. I remember I had to rally against the member for Murray–Wellington who was out there giving out bumper stickers, "No sale for the WA TAB!" Even at the very beginning, the Racing and Wagering Western Australia board and the CEO were completely against

the sale and came out and rallied against it. I decided that I needed to be better informed about the issue, because I thought at the time that was my role. It was my responsibility to the industry to ensure that I was the most informed I could be if I was going to advocate for a particular position. I found that a rewarding and difficult situation, because I had to front up to a whole industry that would often yell at me because the old way was delivering for them. My point was that we do not know what the new way could deliver. Let us see what it can do if we test it. We never quite got there, for a variety of reasons, which probably will need another hour to explain.

It is interesting that while I was the Minister for Racing, Gaming and Liquor, regional casinos came up on the agenda. I went and visited a few of them. I went to Alice Springs, and the Alice Springs casino said, "We do it because we want to see international travel and tourism opportunities, and they're the ones who bring in all the money." It is not true. They have a thing in casinos called churn, and it is the local people who provide the churn. It is the local people who turn up at three o'clock in the afternoon on a Monday or a Tuesday and provide the churn. They are the ones putting the 10¢ or 20¢ in, and that is what keeps them going. For that reason, I could not back any regional casino. In my opinion, it would be a disaster for regional communities. I understand the tourism argument; it is just that the arguments do not deliver. I was more than happy to get myself across that.

In the housing portfolio, I was the minister who took the \$560 million social housing investment program to cabinet and got that approved. That changed the way we did some of our social housing in those times. However, my time as minister was brief, and that was mainly due to party leadership change. I made the decision at the time that I was going to be the collateral damage to enable a "smoother" leadership transition, because a leadership change in the political world, as we all know here, is never easy and is almost always ugly. I thought it was pretty ugly at the time, so I made the decision that I was the one who needed to step back to make a smoother transition. But do you know what? We all move on. Just like every election, we move on. We take the medicine and we move on with it and try to contribute in whatever ways we can.

I would like to thank the staff of Parliament House and the Legislative Council, and also those in this house who have supported the Parliamentary Nationals WA team and the National Party. This is one of the strangest workplaces you would ever want to visit, but at least I have found that the people here are generally pretty sensible. They are just like you and me. A number of staff have come and gone over time, some who have endured beyond me, came here before me and are still here and will still be here. I hope that I have afforded them the respect they deserve, even though I often call them "chicken" or "brother" or "sister". There is no offence intended; it is a point of affection. That is the colloquial language that I use. They have never shown any offence, and they have always shown me respect back, and I hope that they think that I have respected them, because there is definitely no disrespect intended in the way that I talk to them. In fact, I have a great many friends in this place. I thank them for their friendship and support. I would like to name some of them, but I know what will happen is I will miss someone out and they will want to come and egg me later on. No, they would not! But I hope they know who they are, because I have really enjoyed our friendship. I have found interaction with the staff just as rewarding as anything. I really thank them for that. One day, I will get to play that game of golf, and I will get to have half a horse with that guy who wants to do that with me. At some point we will do that. I just want to say thank you to all of them.

I started my office in Albany and it was there for about four years, and then I moved it to Eaton. I have been very lucky to have had a fairly stable staff in my electoral office over that time. If you ever go to Albany, you will still see the signage on my office wall there, even though I left there seven years ago. They move quick down there! They have not been able to rent the office out, so I kind of have free advertising there. I now kind of regret taking off the really big sign; when I left, I thought I might be able to put it up in Eaton, but I have not been able to.

I think one common thread with all the electorate staff I have worked with is that I am not quite sure who was the boss; in fact, I am pretty sure I was not. I am pretty sure most of them were. As all country members know in this job, the people in the office are your frontline, your point of contact in the community, and they carry your reputation as much as anything. I think, in this sense, I have been very, very fortunate. I would like to touch on a few names. Sam started with me as a fresh, enthusiastic 21 or 22-year-old. We both had no idea what this thing was about, but I know one thing: he taught me more than I ever taught him. He was a great help. Roxy is a wonderful, generous spirit who was a great asset to me. She never pulled any punches and was not afraid of telling me, "That's a pretty dumb idea, that's not going to work." If you ever know Roxanne, you will know what I mean. She did not say it that way, I can tell you! Then there is Michelle, who joined my office around 17 months ago. She hit the ground running and is an amazing woman who knows how to get things done. It has been a great start to her electorate office career and I hope it continues for many years to come, because she will be a great asset to any office. Then there was Jules who stuck with me for quite a long time. What can I say? She was a tireless boss who drove me all the way. She is a smart and savvy operator who is totally committed to the community and its political representation. She always went above and beyond the call of duty, not because I asked her to but because she wanted to. She was enrolled in it. We had some fun and we had some tears. We had the odd angry face, which she would remember, and we had some wine. I have to tell members that she is the best at picking wine. In fact, at lunch, she did it again and picked the best wine on the menu. She is quite extraordinary at it. Jules, I am not sure how I can thank you

enough for your friendship and support. Relationships are established on shared experiences, and we have had a lot. When I look back on it, we have done a lot. We still have things to do, so thank you!

I want to quickly mention Codee-Lee, who came to my office for some work experience. She is a remarkable young woman, who is starting out on her career and her family career. She really brought a spark to the office with her kindness, her personality and her willingness to have a go, and she taught us a fair few things. I would like to say good luck to Codee-Lee.

Finally, I had better talk about Vicki. Vicki signed up for four years not knowing it would be 12! Our friendship started way back in Carnarvon, 15 years before I was elected. By my reckoning, that is 27 years of working together or knowing each other through, I have to say, some pretty stressful times for us both. She has been on her own journey. She is the most tolerant and understanding person I know, who is just the ideal face of the office. We probably should have had her photo on the office window, not mine. It would have been much better if people had been looking at her picture, not my picture every day. She is everything I am not. She is well organised, meticulous and good at detail and I am none of those things; I freewheel way too much. I reckon I must have driven her mad with my kind of organisation—it is a kind of organisation, but not her kind of organisation—and my idea of detail. Vicki, I could not have done this job without you. In fact, I would never have done it without you; I would have pulled up stumps a long time ago. Thanks for signing up for what has been a great journey with me.

I have always tried to be well grounded and to keep a well-grounded viewpoint while I have been in this position. I think the bubble of Parliament is a very dangerous place. It is my family and friends who have kept me well grounded. There is so much more to life outside this place. We talk for hours in this place—I am doing that now and I apologise—while all the time life and the world go on around us, and I have tried not to be distracted by the bubble that we exist in.

I want to mention the Spinifex crew, the squealers mob, the Jody and Gaz group of friends and the boys from the Harvey Golf Club, who really did not care whether I was an MP, a minister of the Crown or the feather duster I am about to become, because they would rubbish me anyway, as they always have. That is what I like and that is how it should be. They should see me for who I am, not the title I hold.

I would like to give my perspective of my time in this place. This is what has happened in a personal sense over the 12 years I have been here.

My father died a year before I was elected. When I first signed up he said, “What the bloody hell do you want to do that for?” He never lived long enough to see me as a member of Parliament, but I reckon he would have been saying the same thing now. I am pretty sure his opinion would not have changed; he would have said exactly the same thing.

My mother is now almost 94. She has gone from being an active senior, living independently, to now being in full-time care. She has really had enough of this life. She wakes up every morning and asks, “Am I still here?” and when she realises she is, she says, “That’s a bugger!” She really is ready to go.

My daughter, Ebony, was 19 when I was sworn in. She is the most wonderful, remarkable and determined young woman you would want to meet. She bought and ran her own cafe in Harvey when she was just 22. She is now a mother of two ratbag kids, Sienna and Niamh—spelt the Irish way; good luck with that!—and is completely supported by her brilliant husband, Matt. Even though he is from Victoria and is a Collingwood fan, we have still adopted him.

So I came into this place as a father and I leave as a grandfather. Back in 2009, when I was sworn in, our eldest son Zeke was 16. He had left home the year before that to tread his own pathway to an apprenticeship. He has been a fully qualified heavy diesel mechanic for eight years and is now an operator for Woodside, working alongside his partner, Meghan, whom we absolutely adore. He is a son I am very proud of, not just because of his work ethic but also because of the person he is. He cares about people and will always help when needed.

Then we have Denzel and Frazer. The boys were 12 years old when I first got here. We would bring them to dinner dressed in their oversized suits and shiny shoes. They are now 24-year-old men, bigger and stronger than their father, which is not hard—I understand; I am only five feet seven and three-quarters! They are both forging their own pathways in life and making their own decisions in this world. To grow through their teenage years and high school stresses when their father was stretched between south west communities, parliamentary roles and ministerial duties is a testament to the people they are. Floss and I even went away for six weeks during their year 11 exams, leaving them to fend for themselves. The fact that they survived that and did well at school is a real testament and a great credit to them. I am not sure why we did that—probably due to our own selfishness. They have brought into our family Shelby, whom we have truly adopted and love, and Caitlin, who has recently been inducted and we have not scared her off yet! There are a few tests to come. I want to thank all my children for your love and support.

I wanted to spend a little time on that 12-year journey from my family’s perspective because I think it is a perfect demonstration of why we do this job. It is not about what we get from the role, but what we can achieve for people and the community whom we serve: the ageing parent in need of increased medical support; the young businesswoman willing to take a risk and work hard; the young man wanting to get a trade and contribute to our

industries; and young adults working through their education and looking for opportunities that we, in this place, can help create. That is what I reflect on and those are the things that motivated me the most to get out of bed every day to try to achieve, obviously not just for my family but for all those in the south west and the rest of the state. That is what has driven me and that is why I wanted to be connected to the community rather than just rely on the bubble.

I have been very fortunate to be able make the decision to leave this place on my own terms, I believe. I do so with the knowledge that I have worked very hard and I have done some good things that I am proud of, but it is time for someone else to have a crack at this political arena. I leave also knowing that I am leaving with plenty of energy, capacity and passion to keep contributing to the WA community and its people in other ways. What that looks like I do not know yet. I am a great believer also in what you do in your past prepares you for the next stage of life or the next work you do, and I must say I feel well prepared for that next path.

Finally, I must make my last words today about my wife of 30 years, Floss! Firstly, I will apologise in advance: I am going to be under your feet and annoying you for some time while we both adjust to this new phase in life—sorry about that. I know you are already regretting it. But can I say that no gift will ever be enough, no words will ever fully convey and no actions will ever express how much I love you and appreciate you. Thank you for your unwavering support, especially over the last 12 years in this role, a role I was 100 per cent committed to but only because you were 100 per cent with me all the way!

And with that, Madam President, I thank the house for listening and I wish you all well.

[Applause.]

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Hon Colin Holt; you will be missed.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [3.09 pm]: In my first address to the house in 1997, I quoted this article of belief —

Under the blessing of Divine Providence and given goodwill, mutual tolerance and understanding, an energy and individual sense of purpose, there is no task that we cannot perform and no difficulty that we cannot overcome.

Later, when officiating at the opening of a major infrastructure project in 2009, I introduced my remarks in this way —

When I was very young and travelling in the family car through the South West I was intrigued to learn that my father had been a member of the team that had built the substantial wooden bridge we were just then crossing. I was enormously proud of having a dad who had made such an impressive and enduring structure.

There are a lot of Western Australians of all ages who can be mighty proud of their family connection to this project. 3 000 workers were involved in creating this magnificent addition to our road network—a total of some 3.8 million man hours, to create more than 140 km of carriageway with six interchanges, 10 intersections, 19 bridges. They moved 12 million tonnes of sand, a million tonnes of crushed rock base and 27 000 cubic metres of concrete. The bridge just here is two separate structures each 272 metres long. A prodigious physical and technical achievement, completed months ahead of schedule. Most importantly of all, they did those 3.8 million hours using heavy equipment and hazardous materials without a lost-time injury.

To those 3 000 men and women I say congratulations on a job well done; this will be an enduring symbol of your achievement and we are all very proud of you.

Thank you for your efforts.

The latest Kwinana Freeway extension and the new Forrest Highway is an investment in Western Australia's future.

Of itself, this is the largest single road project in our history. It has transcended several State and Federal Governments and I thank the many members, both State and Federal, for the roles they have played in its concept, funding and construction.

Occasions such as those demonstrate that my optimism is justified, and that is the message I want to leave with members for posterity.

I have to approach this speech with a theme, because I cannot possibly refer to everything that has happened over the journey—to the hundreds of local government members and officers I have worked with, the many inquiries I have been part of and all the remarkable incidents and events. But I do want to recognise that it is not all about me; it is about the many people who have made it possible for me to achieve whatever has been achieved and who demonstrated by their commitment and support that, by acting together and with the right motivation, we can do some amazing things.

I reflected also in 1997 on the debt I owed to my parents, Everard "Bill" O'Brien and my long-suffering but eternally loving mother, Dulcie O'Brien nee Shooter. He was the member for Murchison from 1952 to 1959, but, more

importantly, a fundamentally decent family man and she was a much-respected nurse and carer. I restate now my thanks to them for everything.

People come to Parliament with various aims. Some want to legalise this or ban that. I was motivated to enter Parliament because I wanted to be involved in public affairs, whatever the issues of the day, and pursue worthwhile outcomes, and I have been able to achieve more than I might have hoped.

I joined the Liberal Party in August 1985 at the ripe old age of 25. I ran for a tough seat at the 1989 election. I did very well, never admitting that I could not win, coming second. Informals came third! I became president of the Fremantle division, applied myself to growing the party, learnt that one man's branch stacking is another man's membership drive, and did all the other stuff you do when you are young, ambitious and keen in this game.

At this point, I want to acknowledge some of the many people who have supported me all this time, some for over 30 years, and never let me down, including Stephen Knight and Hayden Shenton; together with apologies to my oldest friend, Brad Hankinson, who is in theatre as we speak, for prevailing upon him to be the inaugural president of the Bibra Lake branch, a role we can safely say he needed like a hole in the head; friends and family members such as Marilyn and Clive Noall, who stood at a polling booth, she vivacious and no doubt vote attracting and him big and ugly and also vote attracting for another reason; my brother, Bernard O'Brien, who dressed up in his Liberal rosette finery, with his hat on, hoping that his Labor schoolmates from Mt Magnet would not happen by on that day, no doubt; and sundry O'Briens, Shooters, Mehmdets and so many others.

In 1993, I was number three on the South Metro ticket. We got 45 per cent of the primary vote; the Greens got five per cent. We got two seats and the Greens got one. No complaints. That is the system. In a strange-worthy example of stating the bleeding obvious, a kindly assistant returning officer gave me the nose-tapping advice: the secret is to get higher up the ticket. Then in 1996, at a surprise early election, I gained the number one spot on the ticket and was duly elected. That same electoral official came up, beaming, shook me by the hand in congratulations and said, "See, I told you that would do it."

Now, there have been many elections since and, to chop and change around a bit, in the thirty-ninth Parliament, I was chair of a standing committee. A new Labor member arrived for our first meeting. For the purpose of the exercise, I will just refer to her as Samantha. My colleague noticed that she looked a bit unsure and uncertain as she entered the room and I said to him, "Don't worry; she'll be all right. The Labor Party probably teach them the Liberals eat their young." Indeed, she was all right and the five of us had a great four years, with some very worthwhile inquiries, including a two-year inquiry into hydraulic fracturing, which produced a landmark report that passed muster with the Environmental Protection Authority inquiry a few years later. We travelled to exotic locations like the Canning Basin, the far north west of South Australia and Dongara! Hopefully, our friend concluded that we were not too bad after all and do not eat our young!

There is a TV show called *Australian Survivor* that members might have seen; it can be a bit addictive if you start watching it. It has the motto "Outwit, outplay, outlast". Members who are used to the political scene will understand. I have sometimes felt like I am just in a very long running series of *Survivor*, because when preselection came around in 2000 or thereabouts, some presumed to recognise my efforts by giving me the flick. My wife, Joy, came to the preselection meeting, which was an all-day affair, to show support and wait outside for the results. During the meet-and-greet stage, Joy's greeting to another candidate's partner of, "Hi, how are you?" was met with, "We're very well, but for you it'll be bye-bye." Charming! I am sure Joy had a great day sweating on our future. I am sure that after I held on by a slim margin, she enjoyed farewelling that same couple with a cheery "Bye-bye"!

I came in here on the following Tuesday and Norman asked me how I went at preselection and I told him that it was a near-run thing. He said, "Oh, yes; the first re-endorsement is a real danger point. Sorry; I should've warned you about that." The next preselection, or visit to tribal council as I have come to know them, was really interesting, with the late Doug Shave throwing his hat in the ring. Doug was a serious player, and this matter attracted considerable attention. A number of the delegates were friends of us both, which prospectively made things very difficult for them. In the end I scored the number one spot with a solid majority and he got number two by one vote. The bottom line is that he was the best counter of numbers I have ever encountered, but paradoxically he could also be ruthlessly pragmatic: "Outplay, outwit, outlast", as they say on *Survivor*.

Let me tell you a bit more about the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party is a collection of like-minded people working in concert to get members elected, and to get them elected in sufficient numbers to form governments. Together we have shared great highs and morale-sapping lows. The show always goes on, though, and there will be more of these in the future. As Hon W.N. Stretch used to put it, all governments fall. Bill also used to observe that there are some people who are indispensable; as proof, we have cemeteries full of them! But I digress.

One thing I do know is that I would not have arrived here or stayed here without the Liberal Party, its thousands of volunteers, its handful of staff, its many members, office bearers, state presidents, former state presidents and state directors. I refer to the Val Kloppers, the Jo Stantons, the Collette Wiltshires, the Sandra Browns and the Jim Maddens. To the Liberal Party and all its supporters over the years, I say a sincere and humble thank you.

This appreciation extends even to those among you who taught me the hard way that sometimes the only person you can take at their word in politics is the one who looks you in the eye and says, “I’m not voting for you.” Yes, even to those who try to take me down by various means, I extend a backhanded thank you as well. Those experiences helped toughen me up for a tough game, and in due course avoid being eaten up and spat out.

When I arrived in this place, on day one, I was elected to the estimates committee. When we knocked off I said, “What happens tomorrow?” They said, “Oh, it’s estimates week.” So on the second day I found myself in estimates hearings, even sharing sessions, which is a great introduction to the structure and functions of state government, the personalities, the major agencies and their budgets and all that. There were maiden speeches. Some members over the years have declared at the outset that the Legislative Council should be done away with. Those same members, in my experience—and I have seen a fair few of them—declare in their final speech that they have changed their view, with the benefit of experience. I commend those members for their frankness. That should be the answer to any armchair expert who persists in the view that a unicameral system is a superior option for legislative integrity.

I feel sorry for people who come in here thinking they know it all, because if you think you know everything, you are ultimately destined to learn nothing. In my political career it has been a great privilege and delight to explore so many parts of our wider community. People want to show their member of Parliament their project, their school, their business or their factory. They open up about their aspirations and share their concerns. I certainly worked hard to get to know my region and its people, and I think all members are busy. They work long hours and get roped in to serve on management committees and so on.

I soon learnt that most people go to their Assembly member first for assistance, then come to an MLC—sort of as a member of last resort, perhaps because they were not happy with the response they have received. The funny thing is, I always found that about 90 per cent of the problems that came to me—usually they were matters late in the piece, such as final notices or court summonses for unpaid fines—could be fixed with a phone call or an article of advice. That was surprising.

I also found satisfaction in sorting things out that others had given up on. Again, they tended to be difficult or protracted problems, but so much the better if I could make it happen through my own efforts. There is a place down on Almondbury Road in Applecross, between the high school and Garden City. They all told me, “It can’t be done. We’ve all tried. Don’t waste your time.” That crosswalk has been there for 20 years now.

The sound walls you see completed by the freeway off-ramps at South Lake—when they were the new freeway off-ramps, they were not completed, because of noise contours and stuff like that. I got on to Rob Harvey, who I knew through the Melville safer roads committee as a colleague. He was then acting as head of Main Roads. I said, “Rob, I don’t care about your noise contour measuring. My housewives in South Lake are getting your dirt blown onto their washing.” Rob is a decent man and a married man. Go down the freeway now and you will see those completed sound walls.

I was once told by a working group that I was on, “Look, we know it’s a tragedy this student was killed, but the thing is we do not put 40-kilometres-an-hour signs up on 70-kilometres-an-hour roads, we don’t put fences up on the median, and we do not paint the speed limit on the road.” If you go to Murdoch Drive now you can see all of those, there and elsewhere.

I had a lot to do with Kidlink in Kwinana. For years it did not have the wherewithal to move into the surplus Homeswest house that my predecessor had arranged for it years before, so my office had to step in and arrange the refurbishment through a number of private contractors that were involved in the Kwinana refurbishment at the time through council utilities providers, and I remember David Lloyd in my office being particularly effective; he is no longer with us now.

I was made an honorary member of the Totally and Partially Disabled Veterans of WA organisation, because I worked with the organisation to obtain a peaceful bushland site for permanent respite accommodation. I also managed to get it an ex-Public Transport Authority bus, which it put to good use. We then secured funding to build dwellings that have now long been occupied by veterans in need of such accommodation.

Yes, there are many things we can all achieve as private members assisting community groups and individuals, but we do not do it without owing a great deal to electorate office staff who, as our colleague Hon Colin Holt just observed, actually run the place. My current team of Danielle Rudolph, Laurissa Forbes, Natalie Strother and Myleigh Barclay have been with me, between them, probably for about 30 years, and they are more than wonderful. The end of my Parliament term is also a challenge for them as they contemplate the next chapter of their respective lives. I also want to acknowledge Kelly Terry, Renee Dunstan, Chelsea Kierath, Nichol Kabugua and every other casual, relief, volunteer or work experience helper who has contributed to the life of my office.

Hon Norman Moore often told us that you really need to be a minister to get things done. Well, that is easier said than done, as we all know. I did an apprenticeship for many years, establishing good working relationships in a variety of sectors, doing the hard yards of travelling the state, going out to sit on the oil drums, as Howard Croxton

used to say, and getting up at 5.00 am to ring around the media outlets to see if they would let you have a grab on whatever the issue of the day was.

I came into the disabilities portfolio with little experience. I was in the Developmental Disability Council's "Politician Adoption Scheme", having been "adopted" by Toni Catlow and her parents, Chris and Helga, but I was really starting from scratch. Over several years I got to know the sector. Haydn Lowe provided great support, as did John Knowles and a host of others. Colin Barnett and I launched a major project signalling disabilities as a major priority. After the 2005 election, quite a few people in the sector privately expressed their disappointment that I had not got in to deliver the outcomes that we had identified, which is some comfort; not much.

I had a number of shadow portfolios that kept changing with the merry-go-round of opposition leaders from 2005 to 2008. The amount of money I wasted on redundant business cards! Predominant amongst these was transport. I launched a policy about the future of Fremantle port container operations. Labor attacked me with enthusiasm; the Libs loved it. Now the Labor government is all for moving container operations to Cockburn Sound, while the Liberals are deadset against it! It surprises me that no-one in all this has thought to come and ask me what the thought processes were behind my proposal in 2006, when I first brought the idea into a public debate. I would tell them for nothing, and it might help. Still, perhaps some people reckon they know it all.

In late September 2008, we found ourselves in government after a remarkable string of occurrences. I was sworn in as Minister for Transport and, to my surprise and delight, Minister for Disability Services. About a week later I started suffering severe pains in my back for about three days continuously. To cut to the chase, I had been having a series of heart attacks. I owe my life to the expert care of cardiologist Dr Xiao-Fang Xu. After six days in the ICU at St John of God Murdoch I was able to go home on a very strict regime of rest and recovery, which does not go well with initial ministerial duties.

At a subsequent consultation I had with Dr Xu, as she was whacking on the blood pressure cuff, she said, "Oh by the way, my mum said to thank you for bringing in free off-peak travel for seniors." Xiao-Fang and her husband, Bruce, are now valued friends. My wife, also, was amazing in providing the care and diet that I required. I really did not know how ill I had been. It was a difficult time because there was a great deal to be done. I was initially unable to walk to the end of the street, let alone assume ministerial responsibilities and it took a long time eventually to clear the backlog.

In all the things that I have mentioned, there is one constant companion and one full capacity partner—my wife of 41 years, Joy. She has organised polling booths—indeed, whole election campaigns—in difficult seats. Of course, we upper house members are condemned to look after all the difficult seats—we have plenty now—sometimes, dare I say it, with difficult candidates who come and go. She organised fundraisers of all sorts—quiz nights, dinners and fashion parades. She even had Brendon Nelson walk her down the catwalk at one of them when he was federal leader. She has crocheted many blankets and donated to many worthy causes or run many raffles to raise money. She has been a branch president and suffered through more AGMs and conferences than any human being should have to suffer in a lifetime. With Mrs Lee Moore, she helped organise functions for members' spouses not only for social purposes, but as a form of pastoral care for members of the wider team who might otherwise feel isolated by the harsh realities of political life. In due course, Joy took over the role Lee had established, assisted by the very capable Margaret Buswell. More importantly to me, she has been the one person on whom I could rely in all circumstances—the one to help me be strong when I might be flagging and to endure when I might have thrown in the towel. There have been occasions that she has provided the inspiration for me to dig deep when extra effort was needed to prevail.

Many of you have noted my wide and eclectic collection of ties, and some of you have scoffed—go on and admit it—when I told you that my wife is the one who selects my tie every day. Over the years, many people have noticed us as a couple at a function and said, "Gee, you guys go well together, and doesn't Joy always look immaculate." There is no accident here. It is just that Joy is the only person who could possibly enable me to be simultaneously a minister of the Crown and a matching handbag!

Joy and I are looking forward to new challenges and new chapters. At this point, Hon Donna Faragher, I hope you have those tissues handy. Together with our daughter, Nadika, and extended family—grandchildren Rita, Hayley, Tania, Jacob and Jazzmine, and seven great-grandchildren—we have got a whole new purpose. It is great to have someone calling me "dad". I have so much to be grateful for and I am quite happy to declare it to the whole world. If it were not for Joy, my life would be crushingly incomplete. Thank you.

I come back, however, to the ministerial office. One of my first priorities was to re-establish the Department of Transport. That involved separating the transport areas of the then Department of Planning and Infrastructure and uniting them with Main Roads WA and the Public Transport Authority. I will never forget the look of gratitude on the face of Eric Lumsden as he was relieved of all the transport stuff—licensing, school buses, taxis, regional air routes, ramps, jetties and all the rest—so that he could concentrate on his beloved planning. The new Department of Transport works well, as does its various constituent parts. Visiting Carnarvon at the time of the new department coming into effect, I was surprised to be warmly greeted by the DoT officers at their waterfront office. They were

already wearing black jerseys with new Department of Transport logo on the breast. It turned out that they were not issued; they were so pleased to be within the Department of Transport that they had gone off and arranged for them to be made themselves.

The new head of transport whom we appointed was Reece Waldock, who I imagine would be known to most of you. He delighted in playing Humphrey Appleby to my Jim Hacker. I embarked on a great learning curve—me doing the learning and him doing the curving. There are one or two other people in this chamber he has worked with and they will recognise this. When I would come up with a bright idea and say, “Why don’t we do this?”, he would say, “Well, minister, you could do that, but what would happen”, and then he would recite a litany of potential disasters about how the world would end and everyone would hate it and I would be attacked left, right and centre. He would then conclude with the phrase, “But, minister, it’s your call”! I would then go, “Right, next item on the agenda.” If I looked particularly disappointed, he would say, “Don’t worry, minister. It’s my job to make you look good,” a challenge worthy of his talents I suppose.

When I left that portfolio at the end of 2010 I was provided a typed list of achievements. I have it here. It runs to about four pages, which I look back on with great affection. But some of it is what I would call “business as usual” matters such as funding rounds for regional boating facilities and regional airport development. But most of it, though, I am pleased to say is for standalone projects, and ones where I either had to fight to get the funding or fight to get blooming Buswell in Treasury, when he was there, from taking it away.

One of the major decisions I had to take to cabinet was for the deepening of Fremantle harbour and associated works that fundamentally would rebuild the north wharf area through land reclamation that would greatly increase—I would say at least double—the port’s land estate. Some might see that as a variance with my previously mentioned views on the future of container operations, but I can assure members that it was not without consideration that the cost of \$360 million could be ameliorated. The fact is that land will be able to be used for container operations for many decades if land-side transport links can be established in some sort of suitable form indefinitely. Conversely, they will greatly increase the value of the location in funding the development of other facilities elsewhere, if that is ultimately the chosen course.

Another notable success I want to touch on is the construction of the Utah Point multi-user facility at Port Hedland, which had stalled when I arrived. There is no blaming anybody; it was a partnership that had not been able to achieve what it needed to achieve. I was able to resurrect it, get the required government input particularly by way of funding—about \$80 million I think it was—and we were able to complete the building and open that facility. I am proud of both those projects. I cannot think of too many transport ministers who have built substantial new port facilities such as at Fremantle and at —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Check out Geraldton.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I said “too many”.

The Mandurah entrance road project was brought forward by a year and, more importantly, expanded to be a major four-lane road complete with rail tunnels to meet future needs. We initiated and completed the second stage of the Lancelin–Cervantes road, providing 55 kilometres of new sealed coast road from Ocean Farms Estate up to the Pinnacles drive. That was widely welcomed by tourists and locals alike, who had been calling for it for years. It took a great deal of pressure of the Brand Highway by separating much of the tourist traffic, which still remains problematic, from the heavy traffic, which had been in conflict for many years. I apologise to my brother, Mitch O'Brien, who for many years has had the biggest panelbeaters in the midwest at Moora, for any reduction in business that might come his way—tongue in cheek of course—because of the conflict being taken off the Brand Highway! Many of you would probably know Mitch, but he looked at me conspiratorially and said, “Simon, you have got very clever engineers at Main Roads, but they cannot engineer out the kangaroos!” The business is still running very well indeed!

I thought one of our biggest successes was the contribution of my department, particularly the Public Transport Authority, to getting the federal funding necessary to commence the Perth City Link project, which was failing until it was identified, basically by me, at a late-night meeting at Perth Airport with Colin Barnett and then Prime Minister Rudd, that what was actually wanted was a public transport project not a planning project. So we rejigged it, sinking the bus stations, the railway and all of that. The next thing you know I was out there announcing it with Minister Albanese just down the road here. That was a major coup at the time.

There were many other roads and bridges constructed at the time, much of them made possible by a more favourable tendering environment that fortuitously arrived, so there was luck as well. We introduced air-conditioning to school buses in the regions. I have already mentioned the free off-peak travel to seniors and people with disability. I also initiated the Butler rail extension. I took it through cabinet and the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee. I took the enabling legislation through Parliament, awarded contracts and started construction, but did not get to finish it, because that is what happens when you move on. There are always projects underway.

It is not very often a new ferry comes into service in South Perth. They are good, because they are the parts of the public transport system that almost pay their own way. It was a happy occasion when Maxine Pental, Joy, and the similarly irrepressible Shelley Taylor-Smith got together to launch a new South Perth ferry, *MV Philip Pental*, at about the anniversary of his passing. Do you remember Reece Waldock, whom I mentioned a minute ago? "My job, minister, is to make you look good." He showed me the two big bottles of bubbly with ribbons around them and all of that so that I was able to tell the ladies officiating, "You tip the cheap one over the boat to launch it and for the official toasts use the good one." Thanks very much, Reece!

In late 2010, there was a ministerial shuffle of cabinet, and having been the first Liberal transport minister since Cyril Rushton, I now became the first Liberal finance minister since Max Evans. We set up a new portfolio and another department I created within the portfolio of finance, commerce and small business. With the Department of Finance, formally commenced in July 2011, we had the redoubtable Anne Nolan in as director general, with some other very good people on board. The portfolio was responsible for a whole range of industry boards and so on, as well as the principal Office of State Revenue, Building Management and Works and the Office of Shared Services. I promptly took a cabinet proposal to wind up the Office of Shared Services, which in my view was a failing experiment that had cost hundreds of millions of dollars and was about to cost hundreds of millions more, and just about everyone was fed up with it. That move was well received by just about everyone in the public sector and beyond. It was lurching on and needed someone to bite the bullet and say enough, so we did. The first thing I did after the decision was to go to Cannington and speak with all the staff to reassure them that they would have options to return to their parent agencies, to be employed elsewhere or to receive a redundancy. It was their choice. Ultimately, I think most were satisfied with the arrangement. It was not easy, as you can imagine, and I think I earned my pay that week. Curiously, no-one has ever asked me how shared services, which are pretty good in theory, could work. If anyone wanted to ask on either side, I just might tell them! Just saying!

I was pleased to work with another building agency, and Building Management and Works was a great success story, and still is, I think. The works program we had inherited in late 2008 was beset by cost overruns. I do not want to make this a political thing, but there were all sorts of difficulties that were systemically embedded, as well as an unfortunate economic environment at the time. Government projects worth over \$10 million—there were 58 of them at the time I think—were on average 92 per cent over budget. I did not bring on the works reform package, but I did consolidate it with BMW with a thing they called strategic asset management to make sure that these projects were actually funded and planned right in the first place, so we did not have people wanting to put car parks under the Perth Arena, then take them out and then put them back again, or put extra floors on hospitals when they had almost finished construction, and all of those things that are very poor practice indeed. I used to take a spreadsheet of all of our larger projects to cabinet every now and then. There would be about 60 or so on them at any one time. The spreadsheet listed all the projects in progress, maybe 60, as I say, at any point, with a green, amber or red light by them to show whether they were at risk of cost or time overruns. I was very glad to see that the predominant colour was green, green, green. That is a tribute in particular to the people in that agency. In commerce there was a great deal to be done, and working with the team headed by Brian Bradley and Anne Driscoll, who many of you would know, was a great pleasure indeed. We did all sorts of things that were outstanding. I think we were charged with a sense of purpose. I do not know why so many things had been languishing, but most of this legislation here, which I took through this place, is from commerce. We did a great deal in sorting out problems in commercial and retail tenancy. One of these large volumes here is a rewritten Workers' and Compensation Injury Management Act. I remember Greg Joyce, the chairman and, Michelle Reynolds, the then CEO, of WorkCover were so happy with that outcome—it went through the Parliament, and I acknowledge the then opposition for its assistance—that they arrived at my office at the next meeting with one of these enormous box of Whitman's samplers. I had never seen one like it; it was about an arm's length long. For months afterwards my ministerial staff were saying, "Hey, does WorkCover need any more legislation going?"

We did all sorts of things, and I will not try to go through them all, but there were some things that are worth noting. We brought in Sunday and public holiday trading and the world did not collapse, but most people found that after Saturday, Sunday was now the most popular day of shopping. I even brought in a workers' compensation system for the first time for jockeys. They had their national president and everyone out here on the front steps with me. I was really hoping we would have some pictures, because it is not often I am in a gathering and I am the tallest person in the picture! The national president of the Australian Jockeys Association said, "Minister, we really appreciate what you've done; that is what counts. If this had been a bad story about cheating at the races or something, the media would have been here in their droves, but this is good news, so we're happy, let's leave it at that", and we did.

I appointed the state's first Small Business Commissioner along with his alternative dispute resolution service, which does not sound that sexy at first glance but it provided a free or low-cost alternative to resolve disputes without people having to get blooming lawyers, courts and what have you involved and it taking forever. It has been a great success and it continues to this day under the commissionership of David Eaton, whom I appointed. I also want to acknowledge Jacky Finlayson with whom I worked closely at the Small Business Development Corporation.

It is in disabilities that I want to conclude my discussion of ministerial jobs. We were able to greatly increase resources in a range of areas, something carried forward by Hon Donna Faragher as a subsequent minister as well. I will mention just one area: the Alternatives to Employment Program. Members may think “Oh, bewdy!” Well, the Alternatives to Employment Program is so important. Previously, families with a child with very high-care needs would receive perhaps two hours per week of respite assistance after that child had left school, while full-time schooling in effect provided about 40 weeks a year of respite. We increased that entitlement from about two hours a week on average to four days a week. I want to give a shout-out to the people in disabilities. About one in six of us has a disability. Look at the numbers in this room. About one in six of those needs some assistance in their daily life. Of course, another smaller cohort requires a very high level of care and assistance indeed. But of all of the care that people need that is provided through the various mechanisms, a lot of it by government, 73 per cent is provided by family and friends. If it were not for that spirit of caring that exists across all divides in our community, our system would collapse and a lot of people would be in a parlous state.

I have told this story before but I want to tell it again. Several years later, I was visiting a senior campus and over morning tea in the staff room I was approach by a lady who said, “I hope you don’t mind. I just wanted to say thank you very much for the program you brought in when you were Minister for Disability Services. We have a grown child with high-care needs and we know many other families in the same boat. Thanks to you, our family, unlike others that we have seen in the past, has stayed together. I have been able to keep working, which has saved my sanity and brought in some money. Unlike others, we haven’t had to commit our child to care or suffer divorce or even suicide in the family. We are doing okay and I just wanted you to know how much it is appreciated.” Madam President and members, I think that is why we are in this game, to achieve those sorts of outcomes.

I would like to thank my ministerial staff over the years. My chief of staff all along was Eacham Curry. He was that big, shaven-haired bruiser who apparently the member for Armadale at the time took exception to as an adviser in estimates, I believe—happy memories. I also thank Brett Barton, Tony Papafilis, Keetha Wilkinson, Steve Eadie, Nichole Kabugua, Dean Roberts, Alan O’Brien, Ursula Checksfield, Lom Piggott, Susan McCall, Ginny Jankowski, Yvette Roper, Hanh Tran, Mae Sta Maria, Phil Payne, Peter Groves, James Campbell-Everden, Charles Hayne, Ashleigh Clarke, Stella—Stella knows I could never pronounce her name but it will be in *Hansard* as Grgurinovic—Jessica Humphrey and Rebecca Hawkins. Rebecca Hawkins was one of my personal assistants who used to look after my diary and, jeez, she was good. She was the apple of Mrs Minister’s eye—they use to call her Mrs Minister—because she would look after the diary so well and make sure arrangements were made. But I will never forget—again, like the Australian Jockeys Association—Bec, bless her, was about yay high. After all those years of doing it all for myself in opposition, if someone needed an appointment, not a ministerial appointment, but for an electorate issue, I would say, “Why don’t you come up on Friday at whatever time?” And I would just put it in the computer calendar thing. The next thing you know, Rebecca would be there looking up at me, lips pursed, hands on hips like this, and go, “Now, minister, you know you’re not meant to do that, don’t you?” Then in due course she would go on and say, “I’ve spoken to you about this before, haven’t I!” Me, my old chief of staff—the big shaven-haired bruiser—and anyone else who was nearby would all be shuffling our feet and I am going, “Yeah, sorry, Bec. I won’t do it again.” Bless her!

Madam President, I am hoping to conclude my remarks shortly so that I can earn the gratitude of members, by decision, for you to leave the chair early for afternoon tea. With that possible point of ingratiating said, I will just note that I have been a member for 24 years. I guess that amounts to around 500 sitting weeks. That is a lot of standing committees and committee inquiries. I know I have attended over 200 cabinet meetings, each of which was a substantial exercise. Here is where I do the old codger bit! I never had a mobile phone or an email until I came into Parliament. There were 34 members then—36 now. It surprises me how few names that we have all had between us. When I arrived in 1997, we had the three Murrays. The Liberal Hon Murray Nixon, who I acknowledge in your gallery, Madam President, and the Nationals WA Murrays—Criddle and Montgomery. Recently, of course, we have three Colins—two of them are Nats. Indeed, there are some in my crowd who think that possibly, on occasion, one might even be a bit much! We used to have a couple of Toms—Tom Helm, who used to make me and everybody else laugh, and Tom Stephens, who I quite liked even though he was mad as a cut snake! God bless you, Tom, if you are reading this. But it gets worse, Madam President. Now, we have two Alanna-hs! By any measure, we are exceedingly blessed!

Bill Stretch, who I mentioned before, was one of the great characters who I met in this place as a colleague and I just want to recall briefly the benefits that I received over the years through the example, experience and friendship of members like the Hons George Cash, Norman Moore—these are my mentors—Peter Foss, the inimitable Derrick Tomlinson, the lovely Muriel Patterson, Bruce Donaldson, Robyn McSweeney, with whom I shared an office—that ministerial office and then the on-the-way-out office—for eight years, and many others. I also acknowledge the late Kim Chance, the Hons Nick Griffiths, John Cowdell, Ljiljanna Ravlich, Murray Criddle and Ken Travers as members who featured on so many occasions on my parliamentary experience.

There have been 107 members of the Legislative Council during my time here—or 109 if we count a couple who have been and gone twice. Therefore, I hope members will understand that I cannot mention them all, but I do say to each of them: thank you for sharing and adding to my life experience as a member of the Parliament of Western Australia. To all members I would say, we have had many shared experiences. I will miss you and, of course, I wish you well in every phase of your lives.

To my Liberal colleagues, I am not going to go round and give an individual greeting on the floor of the house. Judge not lest ye be judged. But to those of you who will be going on, if you continue to perform as well as you have during all the time I have been here, the future of the Liberal Party and the Parliament is in good hands. I wish you all the best.

To others, I will single out only our new Leader of the Opposition, and congratulate him on acceding to that role at the tender age of —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Fifty-three.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: — fifty-three. All members need to know for now is that he is a short-tempered veterinary surgeon, so some of you blokes over there, do not be too smart alecky. That is my advice; take it or leave it.

I have some general reflections, Madam President, as I bow out. One thing that the media and reporters particularly want to see is people they can write about who have, in their terms, set the world alight. I have always preferred to see a minister's role as stopping bushfires in the first place, anticipating problems and making sure that either they do not occur or that measures are in place to deal with them. I think that is the measure by which all ministers should ultimately be judged. I also point out, and some do not agree with me on this, but I reckon—I firmly believe, in fact—that it is a minister's duty to be a buffer between the bureaucracy and the people they represent and not an apologist.

In politics, we hear so much about getting tough on this or cracking down on that. When I reflect on my time in Parliament and in government, I am very pleased that my contribution has not been centred around that. It has been about making it easier for people to go about their lives and their businesses. I am very satisfied to be able to look back on my time here in that spirit.

Before I go, I want to thank some long-suffering people in the Parliament. The “Clerks party” and chamber staff. There have been many over the years. To all of them, together with the committee office staff, and, indeed, all the staff of the wider Parliament, particularly in the dining room, and the paymaster—I have one more transaction with him—I say thank you for your service, but, more pointedly, thank you for helping me to go about my role in a professional and tolerant environment.

To you, Madam President, it has been a privilege to know and work with you these 20 years, now. We have had an interesting time over the last four years, working ever closer together. All sorts of issues of the day come along, but I will say this: I know that there are unique challenges in the role of President. Sometimes, you cannot freely acquaint members at large or your party room with facts that are related to your job in a way that others may pretend they can. I do not know if you are able to share or if those members at large know about some of the stresses and strains that you have been exposed to and how you have dealt with them, but I will tell members that the Deputy President does know. In that capacity, I say to you that you have performed and continue to perform your role with distinction.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: May I go on to say that it has been my very long experience in public life that those who are prepared to stand up to the duties of their office and perform them when others might presume to suggest that their duty lies elsewhere, those who resist that sort of pressure and show integrity and strength thereby, are the people who grow in stature, respect and understanding. You, madam, deserve all of those accolades. It is a great privilege to serve with you and I wish you well in the future.

To all members, I recognise that it is a hard game we are in. As Norman used to say, “You don't go through it without acquiring some scars along the way, and if you haven't got any scars, then you probably weren't a player.” Having spoken about all the good stuff, as one does in farewell speeches, I will acknowledge the tough road that you all have ahead. It can be tough when you have all sorts of pressures from your party room or the media or constituents—whatever the pressures are—and people presume to tell you what your duty and responsibility is, but you know in your heart of hearts that it lays somewhere else and in what you are going to do about it. I wish you all the best in being able to deal with those challenges that you will confront in the future.

In offering my house—this house; it is not mine anymore—my most genuine best wishes for the future, to each and every one of you, I conclude where I began —

Under the blessing of Divine Providence and given goodwill, mutual tolerance and understanding, an energy and individual sense of purpose, there is no task that we cannot perform and no difficulty that we cannot overcome.

[Applause.]

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 292.]

The PRESIDENT: Members, I think the clocks may be wrong this afternoon, and so noting the time, in accordance with the request of Hon Simon O'Brien, I think I might leave the chair until the ringing of the bells.

Sitting suspended from 4.07 to 4.30 pm