

RECOGNITION OF RETIRING MEMBERS' SERVICE

Motion

Resumed from 10 November on the following motion moved by Mr J.C. Kobelke (Leader of the House) -

That this House extends its appreciation to all retiring members both for their service to the people of Western Australia and their contributions to this House.

MR P.G. PENDAL (South Perth) [5.41 pm]: I obviously support this motion although I feel a little awkward given that the motion was clearly drafted by someone who is not retiring. The only way in which a retiring member can speak is to be seen to be singing his own praises. Nonetheless, I use this occasion to make some parting remarks after 24 years in this Parliament. I am somewhat disconcerted to have worked out that that represents 42 per cent of the time I have spent on this earth. If there was ever a good time to make an exit, this is it.

I will reverse the order of things and begin with a number of thanks rather than doing that at the end of my speech. I place on record my thanks to my wife, Maxine, who has been my best friend and among my best political advisers in the inordinately long time that I have been in this place. I thank her and my children, Sasha, Simon and Narisha. I thank them for all the ordeals they have had to suffer. I worked out that from their earliest years they roamed the streets as far afield as Gosnells and Southern River. They took it as read that everyone's family life involved stuffing unwanted pamphlets in people's letterboxes to the extent that they saw that as a natural part of children's upbringing. When I look back on that I must say that treating children like that should almost be made some form of criminal offence! I use the word "almost"! I thank them because public life has a cost to the people closest to us. Many of us have paid that cost. By the same token, we know there are upsides. For all their loyalty and support I am very grateful.

I also thank a number of people who have worked closely with me and who, in effect, ensured that I was elected in all the state elections since 1980. I thank my small group of campaign workers, including Vince Pendal, my brother, as chairman. I also thank another chairman, Bryan Hilbert, who should have enjoyed a parliamentary career himself. I also thank Kerry Davey, John Horner, John Kelly, Barry MacKinnon, Jeremy Lee, Faye Gribble and many others, probably up to 300 at the last election. As we all know, they are people who work with immense loyalty for a candidate and take pressure off him or her to ensure success.

I thank people associated with the Parliament itself, whether it is people at the level of Mr McHugh or Mr Mandy as the senior Clerks or the Chamber staff and attendants. I also include the gardeners outside, the waiting staff inside and the people in the Parliamentary Library. I have never had a cross word with any of those people. In my 24 years I have never found any sense of unwillingness on their part to do anything other than a good job for members and the Parliament they serve. Mr McHugh reminded me the other day that the turnover in staff at Parliament House, whether outside or inside staff or professional or administrative, is very small. That indicates to me a great love of this place, notwithstanding the way it is perceived in the wider community. To all those people I express my thanks for the many courtesies that have been offered to me.

I want the chance to reflect on four or five matters that I believe are worth reflecting on. My maiden speech in this Parliament was on commonwealth-state relations. For most people, then as now, it is a pretty dry subject. It is something that was close to my heart and it continues to be now. Ironically, it is only since the federal election was decided some weeks ago that the issue has come into sharper focus by some of the remarks made by the Prime Minister and a number of his ministers, which cause me some concern. Ever since 1901 people have predicted that the Federation would either kill the States or that the States would eventually strangle the Commonwealth. The latter was the fear in the early days. One hundred or so years later, none of those dire predictions have eventuated. That has been a good thing for the governance of this country. It has been a good thing to ensure that no-one accretes for himself or his Government absolute power. I hope that long after I have left and everyone here has departed, we continue to have a strong Federation. That Federation will only ever remain strong if the leaders of each of the state components seek to protect it. Mr Speaker, you can bet your bottom dollar that there is no-one in the federal arena who is interested in strengthening the Federation. Be it on the Labor or conservative side of politics, that is the reality. The strength and position of the Federation will only be nourished by the people who come out of Parliaments like this, notably Premiers and Leaders of the Opposition and their ministerial or shadow ministerial colleagues. Those are the people who constantly have to remind those in the federal arena that the system we have is worth preserving. I hope that occurs. Like everyone else, I have my little bits of gratuitous advice. One of the few downsides to what the Premier does in his ministerial workload is that he has too many subsidiary portfolios. I do not think there can be sufficient time for him to devote the time I know he is capable of devoting to the issue of commonwealth-state relations. Similarly, I am reminded that about a decade ago, when Jeff Kennett was the senior Premier in Australia, he brought about the creation of what is called the Leaders' Forum. It was a methodology by which the Premiers of the day met

by themselves; whether they were Liberal, Labor or National, it did not matter. Their agenda was to find ways to protect and preserve the Federation. I hope that some time in the near future the lead will be taken in this State to reconstitute the Leaders' Forum.

I believe that we should all be concerned about any plans by the Prime Minister to weaken the powers of the Senate. Members might recall that I put a motion on the notice paper on 19 June last year unreservedly seeking to reject the moves by the Prime Minister to weaken the powers of the Senate, for all the reasons I listed. Some of them were very good statistical arguments in themselves.

The Parliament continues to operate well. However, like any Parliament, it needs to constantly look at itself and think about reforms. One reform that I would dearly love to have seen relates to those great officers of the Parliament - I know there is some dispute about that terminology - whether we are talking about the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Information Commissioner or two or three others. I believe that those appointments should be made by the Parliament, not by the Government of the day and with us continuing the pretence that they are somehow officers of the Parliament. The Parliament itself could, with minimal effort, find ways of not only doing the headhunting, but also selecting those people so that they truly are officers of the Parliament and not seen as being mere appendages to the Government of the day.

Like most people, I have a few regrets. I hope the privatisation argument has run its course. I regret that I voted to privatise R&I Bank Ltd. At the time I was on the verge of not voting that way. It was one of the few occasions when I felt I did not remain true to myself by voting against that privatisation. There are all sorts of reasons we should have kept a state-owned bank. I say that as a person with a strong private enterprise orientation. That was not to be. We sold it and privatised it, and it has all but disappeared out of the State now. There are all the good reasons from the past that we should have maintained the R&I Bank in Western Australia.

I grew up in an era in which the advocacy was for mixed economies. In the 1950s and 1960s, we had one of the strongest economies in the world with a mixed economy; that is, mostly driven by the private sector, and some of it underpinned by government commercial activity. There is no doubt that some of that government commercial activity became excessive and needed to be removed. I played a part in the process of helping to remove some of that. I believe that the idea that we can have unbridled capitalism is as dangerous as the days in which there were fears about, and the actuality in some countries of, unbridled socialism or communism. Those were extreme positions, and those extreme positions, like any extreme, are always bad for our society. I believe that revisiting the notion of a mixed economy would take out of the equation the notion of an unbridled private enterprise or capitalistic system.

I also regret seeing what I believe has been the decimation of a great civil service. We have gone through so much reform and so much dilution of the system that we have reached a point at which the civil service certainly does not enjoy the status that it once enjoyed. At that time, people knew that they were making a conscious decision for life, if necessary, to serve their State or nation by joining the civil service. To some extent that has come about because we have politicised the civil service, or its upper echelons, and that has brought about some of that dilution that I am talking about. The fact that we got rid of some of the great officers of state is to be regretted. There was a good reason to have a surveyor general, but he has gone. There were good reasons to have a clearly defined chairman or chairwoman of the Public Service Board. That position has now gone. There was a good reason to have a government architect. To some extent the current Government deserves to be -

Dr G.I. Gallop: We have a Government Architect.

Mr P.G. PENDAL: I just got that in in time. The Government deserves to be congratulated for appointing Professor Geoffrey London, but on a part-time basis. Nonetheless, that is a resuscitation. I would like to see that happen, even in my absence. It is a strange thing, but people from outside and from the private sector still look to those positions as the leaders of their professions. They do not have any sense of dilution of the importance of their own positions by saying that they have a colleague who has just been appointed the Government Architect; and in being members of the private surveying profession, they do not see any downside in the fact that they were always taken to an annual conference at which their leader was the Surveyor General. It was a position of status; it meant leadership. I thought it brought about some intellectual rigour that no longer exists because those positions no longer exist. Maybe that should not have been allowed to occur.

I come to my final point, because I promised that I would be unusually brief, and that is the touchy subject of parliamentary salaries. I really believe that we need some maturity on the part of the media in this State about the payment of public officials in Western Australia. I believe it is lazy journalism at its worst, because it is a self-creating story on every occasion on which the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal brings down a finding, whether it be each year, every two or three years, or whatever. The journalists - it is probably only the lazy minority - know that there will always be a story about that. It will be an easily accessible and eminently beat-uppable story to go straight to the page that deals with parliamentary salaries. The irony is that the parliamentary Salaries and Allowances Tribunal covers a bevy of other public office holders. They, in turn, are never

scrutinised. The notion that people build in a contempt for or even a hatred of the increases that are occasionally awarded to members of Parliament diminishes our office. Occasionally, we even contribute to that by being seen to be supportive of the media and saying that yes, the salaries are indeed too high.

I must say this: I am like the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier, I think. I have a great respect for Neale Fong. However, I believe there is something drastically wrong when a senior civil servant is paid more than the Premier of Western Australia.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr P.G. PENDAL: I cannot believe that we are in a situation in which those salaries are being paid. In this case, the Premier heads a corporation with a turnover of - I do not know - \$16 billion a year. The last time I checked, it was one of the five or six biggest businesses in Australia. We expect people to work in those jobs and receive minuscule payments compared with those in the private sector. A lot of soul searching must go on, and it probably should go on within the media, because it is not good enough for them to take cheap shots. If it were once every seven or eight reports, one could understand it. However, it is every report, year in and year out. Nothing changes. It builds into people's minds - the electors who send us into this place - that the payments being made to people to represent them are excessive. What strikes me as strange is that I do not think many of our constituents would ever tear their hearts out at what the media attempts to portray as being excessive salaries. Nonetheless, it still plays some role in diminishing the role of parliamentarians, which is absolutely pivotal to our development in Western Australia. That allows me to finish on the following note. Whatever view people may have about what is taking place in Baghdad and Iraq at the moment, it should be a sobering thought to remember that there are people in Iraq, some of them innocent, who are dying in the streets for the right to do what we are doing here; that is, to elect their own Government and not have a tyrant imposed upon them. That is one of the reasons that I am proud and comfortable about Australia's involvement in Iraq. It concerns me deeply to think that in Iraq, a country of some 20 million people, people are literally prepared to die to have what we so frequently belittle in Australia and in Western Australia. These things will not survive simply because we think they are our God-given right. There have been other countries over the decades that have lost their access to democratic Governments for reasons of that nature. Therefore, I hope that attitude does not set in to any serious extent in Australia.

I have just been reminded by my good friend and colleague the member for Churchlands about another story that I was going to tell, but I will not do that -

Opposition members: Go on! Tell us!

Mr P.G. PENDAL: Okay; members have talked me into it! We all have great memories. This is a good story to finish with, because it brings out a lot of little things. A few years ago when I was chairing a select committee I went with four or five members of this House to Melbourne. One of the members of that group was the current member for Murdoch. The member for Murdoch is a very fine looking gentleman, with a nice swarthy complexion. Therein lay the problem. I recall that we climbed into a taxi, and the driver, who I later found out was of Greek extraction, looked across the cab to my friend the member for Murdoch and said, "How long has it been since you left Athens, mate?", to which my colleague said, "Excuse me. I am Caucasian. I was born in this country." The next day, we got into another taxi, and the driver, who I now know was Lebanese, looked my colleague up and down and said, "When did you leave Beirut, mate?", to which my colleague said, "I am Caucasian. I was born in Australia." The next day, a taxi driver of Italian descent took him as having come from Naples or somewhere like that. That evening, we were at a hotel and were having a few drinks and a lot of laughs at the member's expense, and the member for Murdoch looked a bit taken aback at all of this and said, "It has been a problem all my life." When we asked him to explain, he said that it had started years ago when he was working for the New South Wales Aboriginal Affairs Department. He said that his role was to meet with some indigenous people in a particular place - I forget where - and one day as he got out of the official car a very fine Aboriginal leader walked up to him and looked him up and down and clasped him to his chest and said, "What mob are you from?", to which the member for Murdoch said, "I am Caucasian, like you. I was born in Australia". The Aboriginal gentleman then walked over and put his arm around him and drew him close in, and he is alleged to have said to him, "Don't be frightened, mate. Be proud of your heritage." I did test-drive that story today with a couple of people.

I thank you for your indulgence, Mr Acting Speaker. I thank everyone. In the very fine word that heads the business that we have been dealing with today, I say to all members: vale.

[Applause.]

MR R.N. SWEETMAN (Ningaloo) [6.05 pm]: I am very pleased to make a contribution to the retiring members debate. At the outset, like the member for South Perth, I want to pay tribute to my family - my wife Barbara and my kids Melanie and Josh. They have been a tremendous support to me. I married my wife more

than 30 years ago. The oldest of our kids is nearly 28 years of age, and our lad is 25. Politics for my wife has been particularly difficult. I can argue that it has also been difficult for me, but we are kept so busy in this job that I guess we are able to keep some of our emotions, disappointments, hurts and longings subdued. My wife Barbara has had to spend a lot of time home on her own. She has been running what is left of the business on her own and has been doing an extraordinary job. The member for Warren-Blackwood has talked about his wife Ros and the responsibilities she has taken on in maintaining the family property and things like that. Our wives are very similar. It was said to my wife in a meeting that we had a year or so ago with some friends in the Croatian community that she was a very hard worker. Some of her work has been quite labour-intensive. She has become very good at operating machines. However, she draws the line at getting a B-class licence, and I have had to respect her decision not to do that. She has become very adept at driving some of the machines, such as the backhoe, although not out on jobs, I must add, but just around the yard when someone wants a load of something or something has to be batched for concrete to go out. It took her a while to pick up those skills. My mates were no help, because every time one of them was driving past and saw a shock of red hair in one of the loaders they would pull in to see how she was going, and they would then look in the bucket to make sure that she was getting a full bucket and would tell her that they would report to me if she had only half a bucket, so she had a pretty difficult time.

As I have said, some of our Croatian friends said that my wife was a very hard worker. That is certainly a mark of respect coming from people like that, because anyone who has been to Carnarvon would understand how hard the families work in the horticultural patches. The men, women and kids work extremely hard to eke out a living on the banks of the Gascoyne River. My Croatian friends said to me, after they had observed how hard my wife was working, that they were thinking about making her an honorary river woman. I am sure she will be pleased to hear that I have recorded that in *Hansard* for posterity. It will be something for our kids to look at in the future. My wife has been a tremendous support to me. I made the point at the 1996 business awards in Carnarvon, during my acceptance speech for an award that my wife and I had won, that I could not have done any of what I have done in my life without the support of my wife, and later without the support, companionship and affection that we all enjoy with our children. I made the point that I could not have achieved anything without them; and, if I had achieved it without them, it would not have been as worthwhile. I have had a tremendous time so far in my life. I hope there are plenty of good times left. I intend to apply for a registered builder's licence on the Monday after the next state election, so life will begin again. I will need to acquaint myself again with chapped knuckles and things like that. I guess I will not look very elegant either as I get around the building sites next year until I strike a bit of fitness, but I am sure that after six or 12 months of working on a building site I will be able to wear clothes that are one size smaller and will look a lot healthier than I do now. A lot of people have commented on some of the ties that I wear in this place. That is due to the impeccable judgment of my wife. She still matches up all my clothes when I leave Carnarvon. I have chosen not to buy a unit to stay in while I am in Perth. Sometimes I think that was a mistake and at other times I think it was a good thing. It is not that I am worried about the fact that absence sometimes makes the heart go wander, but I am just keen to get back home. As soon as I have finished in this place, I am keen to be out of here and back in my electorate, or back home. My preference is to go home, of course, but sometimes it does not quite work out like that, and I have to go to my electorate to attend to issues on behalf of constituents.

I can remember when I started in this job. It was a bit complicated to start with, because the election was called earlier than I thought it would be. I had tendered on a job for Main Roads, and had won the job and was preparing to start it when the election was called, so I had to defer the start. I had to go and campaign, and fight the election. I was elected, but I still had this contract to take care of for Main Roads. We started work on the contract and thanks to the goodness of my friends' hearts, and the contractors who used to work with us, we all bogged in and started on Boxing Day. On 28 January we finished the job. This was pretty fortunate, because I had already deferred one induction meeting. The Premier had insisted that all new members come down for an induction. That had already been rescheduled because I had commitments. I did not say I was trying to finish a contract, but I knew I had to be there on 29 January, or I was dead. At 6.30 pm on 28 January, on the site, about 55 kilometres north of Carnarvon, we did the preliminary handover and I left the rest of the job with my friends to be formally handed over the next day.

That night my wife and I shared the driving to get to Perth for this very special meeting the next day with the heavyweights of my party. The Premier, Richard Court, was there, along with Hon George Cash, Hon George Strickland, Hon Clive Griffiths and Hon Norman Moore. In four hours they gave us many pearls of wisdom, things that have helped me get through the eight years I have been in the Parliament. At the end of the meeting my wife asked me how it went. I tried to condense it all. I was always taught that, going into a meeting or conference, I should always try to remember three things. The three things that stuck were that I was told by Richard Court to make sure that I was well dressed; another member of the group told me that I should always be on time; and I can still remember vividly Hon George Cash telling us about exercising our own free wills in matters of conscience and things like that, and making sure we did it appropriately. He said we should not do

anything reckless, because we would get sick of eating dinner on our own. I told my wife that I thought I had it covered, and I could make a go of it. I just had to dress properly, be on time and not be a smart-arse. My wife was very confident that she could help with the first two, but I would take a bit of nursing through the third. Anyway, we got there, and we have had some disappointments, but we have also had a lot of fun.

I was very privileged that my maiden speech was delivered as the mover of the Address-in-Reply motion, and I will forever be indebted to the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Cottesloe, who asked me to do that. The gallery was packed, and it was an intimidating experience. I was right where the member for Pilbara is now, and I stood in fear and trepidation. I knew what I wanted to say, and I had a lot of notes. I can recall one of the ministers - I think it was Doug Shave - asking me what I intended to do with the pile of notes. I said I was doing the Address-in-Reply. He told me how it should be set out, and that it should be in big type, because this was a big occasion and I had to get it right, but that only gave me more goose bumps. I guess I said most of the things I wanted to say. Given the opportunity again I might say some of them a little better. It was a tremendous occasion, and years later, people were saying they were there when I moved the Address-in-Reply, and had heard my maiden speech, and told me what I had said. It is amazing that somebody could remember something from an occasion like that. They remembered some of the things better than I did, in fact.

What can I say about the Parliament itself? It is hell on earth for a pragmatist. I remember being introduced to a group of representatives of Curtin University of Technology and Open Learning Australia by the former Director General of Education, Peter Browne, for whom I have the highest respect. He did a tremendous job in his field. I do not know whether he was cautioning these people so that they could package the message right for me, but he introduced me as the world's greatest pragmatist. I thought that was quite interesting. I guess to some extent that is what has got me into a bit of trouble from time to time in this Parliament. I continue to be frustrated at the process. I wonder what Isaac Newton might think today with his laws of relativity and everything else. Members who have spent their life in a profession, particularly a practical profession, in which they could look behind themselves at the end of the week and see where they had been find it a bit hard to do the same thing in a completely different environment. This is not a place in which the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: The straight line is not too good!

Mr R.N. SWEETMAN: No.

I do confess that I have found Opposition a hard place to be. I have hated the experience. I recall Sir Charles Court saying that I would never be any good until I had done a term in opposition. I told him that I had done eight years in local government and I reckoned that would do. That is eternal opposition to my mind. However, this is something else. It is hard when we try to be positive and constructive. It is the game we must play. I am just not good at it. In that respect I must be a bit happier that I am backing out of it. Everyone is optimistic that the Liberal Party will be in government after the next election. I hope for my colleagues that that is the case. However, if they are not in government, I would continue to be a legacy to the team. Therefore, for all the right reasons, it is probably best that I will not be here.

I continue to be an idealist. I hate the expression: Oppositions do not win Government, Governments lose them. I was told at least 12 to 15 years ago that I would never get anywhere because I was too idealistic. Over time I continued to tell people who did not believe in idealism that it had worked. At last it has not worked, but those people were wrong for a long time. It will take a tremendous change of mind-set in all members of Parliament - I am not singling out any member - and the media to change the current situation. The job of an Opposition is like that of African dogs - tear down the prey and go for the sensitive parts. All the things we tell our kids not to do, we do in this place. We look for weaknesses, we look for chinks in the armour, we look for ministers who might have had a bad time because of what is going on in their lives at home or wherever else, and we just burrow in. I hate it and I will be glad to be away from that part. I believe we, as legislators representing the community of Western Australia, must lift the intelligence level in the Parliament. There are other ways to go about the business of Parliament than simply looking for an opportunity to scrag, drag down or deliver a king hit behind the play and those sorts of things. I am an idealist. Who knows when that might happen? However, I am optimistic.

A lot of things have been said about the conduct of members of this place, but in the past three to four years I really do think things have become better. There are some thoroughly decent people in the Parliament of Western Australia. That is tremendous. I just wish that would come through a little better in the media from time to time so that the general confidence of people in the community in their representatives would include more understanding, tolerance and respect overall.

With 12 minutes gone, I will now talk about my electorate. I have been a fairly difficult conveyor to my electorate over time. I have taken great care in trying to nurture the expectations of my people, to continue to

condition and help where I can and to educate them through change. One thing is true - we keep saying it - and that is change is constant, but people can inadvertently back off and refuse to change for a variety of reasons. As soon as they stop evolving, as night follows day, ultimately there will be imperatives for change, whether it be in a year, two years or five years. The distress, hurt and pain of rapid change has been part of Australia's history over at least the past two decades. We evolve with these changes, but people can get change fatigue. Governments then feel that they must back off a bit. That may be the right thing to do in the circumstances, but they must be careful not to back off altogether. We have to continue to engage, educate and condition the people for change so that they do not have convulsions when we have to bring about rapid change.

I have been happy to continually challenge misconceptions and myths, whether in opposition or in government. One of my real successes, and it was quite a simple thing, happened when I was about six months into the job and had a meeting with the grower industry. It was a real worry for that industry when I was elected because it already knew me very well from my days in local government. It was a bit fearful about my being its member of Parliament because it thought I was an economic rationalist, an economic dry and all those sorts of things. Even then it knew about my position on handouts and subsidies and developing a grant mentality that actually stifles initiative and enterprise in the individual. Governments must be careful not to overdo it in that area. That particular meeting was attended by well over 75 growers. I was counselled by my good friends from the Department of Agriculture that these people were suspicious of my views, and that I should just tiptoe through this particular meeting and then trickle the message out over time. When I got up to speak, it started off well. I was happy with how it went and there were no machetes being waved at the back of the crowd, so I started to get a bit flamboyant with my views. To cut a long story short, the growers were basically inquiring about what the Government was going to do for them. I said that the Government was not going to come over the hill like the cavalry to rescue them, and that they had to become masters of their own destiny. For what it was worth, as their member of Parliament, I gave them whatever advice I could as I had some understanding of business and how it worked at each end. Sadly, until my election, my growers did not have a good enough understanding of the business beyond the farm gate. I deliberately undertook to educate people about that, and it has been a resounding success. The output from the horticultural area in the Gascoyne was constantly between \$35 million and \$40 million a year for the best part of 12 to 15 years. In less than seven years, the output has improved to \$55 million a year; it is regularly above \$50 million. That is a fairly significant increase, and with further changes, particularly with the privatisation of the water system, the future is assured for the growers along the Gascoyne River. I am particularly optimistic about the opportunities and prospects that that presents for us.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

Mr R.N. SWEETMAN: In my first four years as a member of Parliament, my electorate suffered from three natural disasters. It was a terribly difficult and stressful time to see people suffering and trying to reconstruct their lives and businesses. It was a particularly hard time. On 4 February 1997, the Ashburton floods occurred as a consequence of rain on Mt Vernon. I had been a member of Parliament for only six weeks, so I was in at the deep end. The fortunate thing about that natural disaster was that it did not affect a lot of people. It affected 13 pastoral properties and the roadhouse at Nanutarra at Ashburton Bridge. People got through that and those properties now have incredibly high value. It is quite extraordinary how these things happen. The country was so scalded that people might have thought that it would not recover in their lifetime. Wyloo station, one of the properties seriously affected in that flood in 1997, sold for more than \$4 million the other day. There is grass growing in areas where it has not grown before. Although the flood caused scalding and everything else, it also took the buffel grass and native seeds further out, and tremendous revegetation occurred. Fortunately, the Ashburton got four or five good years after that; so that did help the process.

Cyclone Vance is still the biggest cyclone to have hit mainland Australia. Cyclone Steve in Carnarvon caused huge damage, and Governments, both federal and state, did a tremendous job in 1999 to help Exmouth recover and, again, in 2000 to help Carnarvon recover. In his speech, the member for South Perth mentioned the Governor, Michael Jeffery, and I will mention this for what it is worth. There is an expectation on members when they visit areas where there has been an issue or a problem. However, there was no expectation on the Governor when he visited those devastated areas and mingled with the people; it was just tremendous. As distressed and downcast as the community was, it was wonderful when Michael Jeffery walked among people and said hello and offered some encouraging words. I am not saying that as a monarchist; I am saying that, as the head of State, his task is different from ours. When there is a calamity of one sort or another - I pray they do not happen - members should think of the Governor. It is very important to engage him in many things because people still look up to and respect that institution.

Natural disasters bring out the best in people but also on occasions they bring out the worst in them. However, we will not go there.

My electorate of Ningaloo is a fantastic place. It is one of contrasts and contradictions. For only as long as it takes to hold our breath, we can go from the most impoverished land form to a world class marine environment.

It is extraordinary. We market ourselves up there and talk about it as a place where the desert meets the reef. That is certainly so. I will have a lot of time on my hands after Christmas. The member for Carine will recall eating crabs and drinking red wine with my wife and I on the beach in Bateman Bay, where Mauds Landing was to be sited. That was fun. We also shared a hamper at Christmas time with the member for Mitchell, his wife Lee and young Alec at 17 Mile. We sat in our chairs in about a foot of water as it washed across the reef. My electorate is something people need to see. I extend an open invitation to all members to visit - but not all at once!

Population decline in that area will be with us for some time but we need to be aware of it and we probably need to be more diligent and take a more sophisticated approach to it. We must investigate what prospects will benefit some communities and try to put in place initiatives that will help their circumstances. There must be employment and enterprise. In many towns, sadly, welfare is the biggest industry, particularly in the mining and pastoral regions. Apart from that there are issues of education, health services and quality of life. It is difficult for Governments to reverse the trend and they should not be expected to do that on their own.

In Carnarvon there is a tendency, generally now more than ever - I am sure the Leader of the National Party will say the situation is similar in wheatbelt towns - to send our income and profits down the road on the advice of our bank manager or our accountant. We do it for all the right reasons; we buy properties that will appreciate in value and return us a reasonable yield. Bank managers and accountants have given that advice to their clients for the past 25 to 30 years. However, it is finally really beginning to bite. It is not recognised as the important issue that it is. It is easy to bucket Governments and say that they must do something about it. We could reverse some of the problems if we were prepared to back ourselves in, make investments and return some of our profits and income to the area in which we live. Ultimately, we cannot force people to do what they do not want to do or live where they do not want to live.

I refer now to one of my passions and something I will continue to be concerned about. The Premier and the Leader of the Opposition are in the Chamber but the Ministers for Indigenous Affairs and Community Development are not. The Government must not relax in seeking to address the incidence of child abuse within Aboriginal communities. It has allocated a substantial amount of money over four years to bring about results in that area. However, it must remain ever vigilant because there is still a lurking and insidious evil in some communities. The Government must understand the extent of it. We have a propensity not to talk about it. When Dr Hollingworth was the Governor General he was deemed to be responsible for the fact that abuse, particularly sexual abuse, occurred within his jurisdiction. He was forced to step down from his position. I am wondering when that might happen to a Minister for Indigenous Affairs. I know that information about this issue is relayed to Ministers for Indigenous Affairs on a regular basis in every State and nationally. I wonder whether someone will ultimately be provoked. It is a bit like the stolen generation - once the situation got ahead of steam, it developed a life of its own. I think we need to be cautious as a Government, and as an alternative Government, in making sure that issues of child abuse in Aboriginal communities and towns in Western Australia are fully and diligently investigated. Too many Aboriginal people seem to have the attitude, "I was abused as a kid, and it didn't do me any harm." We have to understand that we are generally getting a picture that has been slightly distort and gilded. We have to make sure that we get behind that veil to see what is going on. That is one of my driving passions. If we do not attack that issue, we cannot look to resolve the issues of disadvantage and of social and family dysfunction in the Aboriginal community and in our rural towns in Western Australia. We have to address that problem and remove it. If we do everything right now, we are only a generation away from solving the problem. However, let us not make it two generations away.

I have some further thankyou's. I say to all my parliamentary and Liberal Party colleagues, thank you for tolerance and forbearance. I say thank you to the parliamentary staff - all of them are beautiful people. *Hansard* deserves a particular mention because I think I would have easily been its worst case in this place. I can recall being called into Chris Hall's office once because I had a propensity to make the odd change to the *Hansard*. I was sure that the recorders did not hear me right! Chris explained to me that changing a word was okay and changing a line on occasions and, at the stretch of the imagination, a paragraph might be okay. However, I had rewritten the whole page! He said that if I wanted to disagree to that extent we would have to look at the camera footage. We were much better after that. I do not know who convinced whom. I think the *Hansard* reporters started to anticipate what I was going to say or, at the end of my speech, they interpreted what I meant to say and crafted the *Hansard* to fit what I said. I remember Hendy Cowan saying that there are three speeches - the one you want to give, the one you have given and the one you wish you had given. I was always rewriting my speeches in tune with the ones I wished I had given.

The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure said in question time today that I did not have enough mongrel in me. I had a fair amount when the Opposition was in government. I am sure that a few colleagues might reflect on that. The member for Stirling was the previous Minister for Primary Industry. I have reminded him of this story, but he does not remember it so he must have been caught up in a lot of other things at the time. I can

remember sitting down at a meeting with him. It did not last long. It was brokered by Deidre Willmott from the Premier's office because I was not on good terms with Monty and he was not on good terms with me. The meeting ended in two seconds. I said that I did not have to listen and out I went. A week later I told this story to Ross Donald, who is a good friend of Monty's from when he was working in Carnarvon. He said, "Uh oh, Monty reminds the elephant." I thought, okay. It took three months. A meeting with constituents was organised in his ministerial office down the road from Parliament. When he sent his advisers out to grab us, in went the constituents. I was left in the foyer. I told Ross the next week and he chuckled and said, "Order has been restored!" He was not at all surprised, so he obviously knows the member for Stirling very well.

The past week has been one of the worst periods of my life. It has been a terrible time. I am not encouraging anyone to read Nietzsche, but I will conclude with Nietzsche, who was one sick puppy. I went looking for a quote that I knew he was responsible for. The information I read when I was looking for that quote was morbid. At the time I was having a serious problem. My faith was under pretty serious attack by people from whom I expected better. One Nietzsche quote read -

In Christianity neither
morality nor religion come
into contact with reality
at any point.

Another of Nietzsche's quotes is that the Christian resolution to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad. That is terrible. I do not agree with that now and I did not agree with it when I read it. However, I was in such turmoil and felt a bit cranky. I was even a bit cranky at God. Nietzsche is wrong. At that time I had sympathy for him because I could understand the state of mind he was in when he wrote it.

I have tried to delve into the Scripture in the past week to make sense of my circumstances. It has been pretty difficult. Job suffered huge trauma and calamity in his life. When he was getting encouragement - for want of a better word - from his friends, who instead of supporting and encouraging him wanted to tell him all the things that he had done wrong and explain why God had to punish him, Job put up his hand to try to put an end to it and said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." I will leave Parliament and re-invent myself in another form. I will get back to basics, enjoy life with my wife and try to reconsolidate and restrengthen my faith and have a good time.

[Applause.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr M. McGowan (Parliamentary Secretary).