

**DR CHRISTINE (CHRISSY) SHARP**

*Statement*

**HON DIANE EVERS (South West)** [5.33 pm]: I rise tonight for my last speech in here to talk about a former member of this house and a dear friend of mine, Christine Sharp. Chrissy is currently fighting for her life, as she has been fighting for the forest for so many years. I knew she was unwell late last year. After having surgery, she thought that she had an infection. I was sitting in this chamber when I received a text from her saying that she had just had major emergency surgery to remove a tumour that was obstructing her intestines. I responded, in my naive optimism, “So you’re on the mend now?”, not realising the significance of what she had said—that she had cancer. Within a week or so she was told that she had about two months to go, and she went to find a second opinion and a third opinion and they came around to the idea that with significant aggressive treatment, she had a chance of extending her life.

She has undergone two rounds of chemotherapy and received results saying that it looked better and there were no active cancer cells. She had a bit of a respite and not long after that she was told to maybe do another round just in case, but she said that she just could not do it. As many members would know, anybody who has gone through two rounds of chemotherapy does not feel too well after it. Then it all fell apart. Things were not going so well. The doctor convinced her and her family that she really should have chemotherapy, but it turned out to be a kidney issue, which is now being treated. I have not had an update for less than a week. All I can say now to any members who know her or who have heard others speak of her, is that she could use all the love, best wishes, kindness, prayers and anything you can send, because that is what is working for her. She has so many friends and they are all doing everything they can to keep her going.

She told me that the thing that kept her going from the start—this time it could be very difficult—is writing a book on our south west forests. She is not prepared to give up on that yet; she has a lot more to say, and I really hope that she has the chance to do that. As I said, Chrissy is a very dear friend and my number one supporter. I have learnt so much from her. She has been working to protect our south west forests since the 1970s. She did a PhD on politics and ethics at Murdoch University back in the 1970s.

With her husband, Andrew, they established a small tree farm in Balingup. They sell trees from their farm across the state—possibly even interstate—to so many people for revegetation, plantations or for their homes. That has been going quite well. She also co-founded the Golden Valley Tree Park. If any members who have an interest in trees ever travel through Balingup, the Golden Valley Tree Park is based on an old homestead area and it has trees from around the world. It has its eucalypt area as well, but right now, if anybody gets a chance to see it, the autumn leaves are turning. I have seen some beautiful photos recently. I went there recently because Chrissy’s friends had put together a mandala for her to help spread some good tidings. The park is a good thing to see.

Chrissy has also been a member of the Donnybrook–Balingup council. She began with the Greens back in 1989, which is when we got together. She worked on the campaign for Louise Duxbury, who was running for a seat at that time. She has been on the board of the Environmental Protection Authority, where she was a member from 1989 until 1993. She ran for and was elected to the South West Region in 1996 and started in 1997. Chrissy stayed with us for two terms. She told me that when she was elected chair of the Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development during her first term, she was the first female chair of a standing committee. I believe she was also involved in the establishment of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs and chaired that from 2001 until 2005.

I met Chrissy when it was coming up to her time to leave here, and I regret not getting to know her sooner. It was not really until 2016–17 when I was running for the seat that we knew each other well enough that she was so delighted to host my campaign launch at her home in Balingup. It was there that I met one of my future staff members, who was also a recent candidate. She just beamed when she looked at me and I felt that if somebody like her could think that well of me, I must be doing pretty well. Over that time, she tried to pour all her information into me about forests and I try to add that with other things that I could find, but her depth of knowledge is just enormous. It is unbelievable.

In 2018, Chrissy was the joint environmental volunteer of the year. She worked with the Forest Products Commission on the Djarlma plan, with a few of the people on its independent panel, and put that together. She saw that jarrah forests were dying. In 2011, there was a drought in Western Australia, which caused a massive die-off of jarrah forests, but some of them came back. But she saw that and she was looking at the research on it that showed that the watertable dropped up to 18 metres in some of those areas. The research also showed that the volume of rainfall had fallen in that area. We know now that Alcoa is clearing it as quickly as it can to get the bauxite out of it.

I would like to refer to a submission. Chrissy is still very active in this space, and I just hope that we have her around for years to come to continue her work and to mentor me and others. She wrote a submission on the Environmental Protection Amendment Bill that was put forward last year. In her submission she talks about

ecological thinning. She has seen these jarrah forests. She knows that in the 1930s the government realised that the forests were growing back too thickly, because jarrah does not self-thin. She found that in the 1930s one of the work programs to get people back to work involved hiring 10 000 men to go into the forest to thin the forest by hand to make it a healthy forest once again. They understood ecological thinning back then. Whereas now, we understand it, but Chrissy is still trying to describe it to Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions staff and environmentalists so that they know what it is and understand it. But the difficulty we face is trust. There just does not seem to be trust within the industry, the environmental movement and government to work out what we can do, and then do it to save that forest.

All I ask is that you think good thoughts and send Chrissy your prayers, your love or whatever. We need to keep her with us. She was in Parliament during the 2001 to 2005 Gallup-led government when old-growth forests were protected. She was working on high conservation value forests then as well. That was a wonderful step. It was fantastic to be able to set aside some of those forests. But right now, our forests are still dying. They are still decreasing in size. I read in the news only today that in the last 20 years—it starts out as a good news story—an area the size of France has been regenerated as native forests around the world. An area the size of France over the last 20 years— isn't that great! The report then went on to say that seven times that amount of forest has been cleared in the same time. An area the size of the United Kingdom was cleared last year. To me, an area the size of the UK is about the same size as the south west and the wheatbelt combined. In Western Australia we are doing our bit to continue that massive clearing. We see it happening all the time and we are not taking responsibility for it. We do that knowing the work that Chrissy and so many others have put in and the science that is showing us what we are doing. I do not want to say, "Let's do this for Chrissy", because I would rather have Chrissy—I need her—but we need the forests as well. Thanks for listening. Send her your love, your prayers. We need to keep her around so she can finish that book.