

Mr Colin Barnett; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Cunningham; Mr Pandal; Mr Cunningham; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Richard Court; Mr Ernest Bridge; Mr Julian Grill; Mr Bill Thomas; Mr Fred Riebeling; Mr Bob Wiese; Mr Kevin Minson

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, VALEDICTORY SPEECHES

Motion

MR BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the House) [10.18 am]: I move -

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.

As is often the case at the end of the parliamentary session when an election is imminent, a number of members decide to conclude their parliamentary careers. Eight members of this House have announced their retirement. That number of retirements from a House comprising 57 members will lead to a significant change in the representation in this Chamber. The members for Girrawheen, Kimberley, Eyre, Cockburn, Wagin, Greenough, Perth and Innaloo have all indicated that they will not be seeking re-election.

This motion is very simple and I hope moving it becomes common practice in this Parliament so that retiring members now and in the future will have an opportunity to make a valedictory address at a time when it can be witnessed by other members, the public, friends and members of their families if they so desire. It is appropriate to move such a motion at this time and that members show appropriate respect to retiring members by allowing them to reflect on their parliamentary careers and to make whatever observations they might wish to make.

All members recognise that being a member of Parliament - or, as the public labels us, "a politician" - brings with it much satisfaction and many opportunities and unique experiences. It also places a member and his or her family and friends in the public eye and often subject to a degree of public scrutiny, criticism and insensitivity.

I believe that all members in this House, despite political differences, are committed to serving this Parliament, their constituents and the people of this State. All members of Parliament appreciate that the work that all of us do helps literally hundreds and thousands of people within our constituencies. This is not a motion designed for the rest of us to make speeches - my brief comments have allowed the member for Girrawheen to return to the Chamber. It is an opportunity for those retiring members, if they so wish, to make valedictory addresses. I remind members that there will be an adjournment debate towards the end of the day, which will allow others within this Chamber to say whatever they wish in thanking staff and their colleagues. I commend this motion to the House. As I said, I hope it becomes common practice for this House in the future.

MR KOBELKE (Nollamara) [10.20 am]: I support the motion and commend the words of the Leader of the House. We clearly see this as an opportunity for those members who are voluntarily retiring to make a final speech to the House. Given the contribution made by the members who are retiring, I think it is fitting and proper that they should be given that opportunity. Clearly, the Leader of the House is a little concerned that other people who are not voluntarily retiring might use the opportunity to make a speech. That is certainly not our intention, but we understand a large number of government members may be retiring involuntarily, and if they wish to make arrangements with the Leader of the House to make speeches, we would not object to that. We support the motion moved by the Leader of the House.

MR CUNNINGHAM (Girrawheen) [10.21 am]: I stand here today with many of the same feelings I had some 12 and a half years ago when I delivered my first speech in this House. On that day in 1988 I was filled with an overwhelming sense of pride and humility. I stood here proudly representing the seat of Balga after a very tough by-election campaign; yet at the same time it was a truly humbling experience as I dwelt upon the trust that had been placed in me by both the electors of Balga and the Australian Labor Party. It was a trust that was to be bestowed on me for a further three pre-selections and three general elections. I went on, as history records, to represent the electorates of Marangaroo and Girrawheen.

I was privileged to follow one of the most remarkable politicians of our time. It was upon the resignation of my good friend Brian Burke, as both Premier and member for Balga, that I was endorsed with his support for the Balga by-election. Brian Burke was a master politician. He was charismatic, an excellent communicator, a genuine and effective local member and an excellent grassroots politician. Having won the Balcatta by-election by a handful of votes, Brian Burke built up his margin to some 10 000 votes. Unfortunately, his personal following was not passed on to me at the Balga by-election, when a 22.5 per cent swing saw that majority reduce to 2 500 votes. This set me a huge challenge. Undaunted, I, together with my electorate officer, Carmel Macri, have worked hard in the local community to build that majority back to just over 6 000 votes. Like my predecessor, I have prided myself on being a hardworking local member, always ready to assist those in need. I have tried at every turn to represent my electors to the very best of my ability.

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At this point I express my gratitude to Brian and Sue Burke, Terry and Luci Burke and all the Burke family for their support and friendship over many years. I am extremely confident that my successor, Margaret Quirk, an outstanding candidate for the Australian Labor Party, will further increase my margin.

We are all fortunate people to be members of Parliament, and I have never taken my position for granted. It is indeed a great honour to be elected to represent those people who put trust in me. I believe that I have fulfilled that trust, and I am grateful to the people of those three electorates.

Nearly 13 years as a member of Parliament has brought many highs and many lows. The highs are memories a member will always appreciate and treasure, and a member will try very hard to forget the lows. Next year will be my forty-fifth year as a member of the Australian Labor Party. When I joined the Labor Party in Toowoomba, Queensland in 1956, the party was in turmoil. We are fortunate today to have such fine leaders as my dear friend and the federal leader, Kim Beazley, Dr Geoffrey Gallop, Bob Carr, Peter Beattie, Steve Bracks, Jim Bacon, Mike Rann and Clare Martin - a far cry from the mid 50s, when I first joined the ALP.

No member of Parliament can be successful without loyal and supportive staff, friends and family. I have indeed been very much blessed to have had that support. The sayings "when fortune is fickle, the faithful friend is found" and "one can do without people, but one has need of friends" are so true. The most important saying that I cherish is "without friends, the world is nothing but a wilderness". There is a question that is often asked in politics: Is there such a thing as a real friend? I believe there is. When one's world is about to collapse, a true and faithful friend will stand up and be counted and will attempt to keep any darkness at bay. There are many friends to whom I am indebted. I have always considered staff, ALP branch members and the many faithful advertisers in my pride and joy - *The Leader* - a part of a group of friends that has made my position as a member of Parliament so much easier. Many people have been instrumental in assisting me in the electorate of Girrawheen, such as those wonderful supporters who continue to advertise in my community newspaper, *The Leader*; people like Con Jury; Sonny Hua; Danny and Vicki Kapinkopp; Jerry and Katie Gastev from the Princess Road Tavern; Tony Naughtin from the Satterley project, the "New North"; Tony and Vicky Calabro from the Girrawheen Tavern; Brett and Annie Clugston; my long-time friends, Bob and Slavka Tanasoski; Joseph Stojanovski of Sunshine Pest and Weed Management; and John and Lois Hooper of Westin Fitness Warwick. These are only a few of the advertisers who have given me great support. Bob Tanasoski and Batong Pham have also been exceptional in their loyalty, support and assistance in my electorate.

To those loyal supporters who have assisted me since my by-election in 1988, I am forever grateful. A very special and dear friend who was one of those supporters was Maria Liao, as well as her mother Pat and sister Cheryl. They have been a delightful family and have given me much assistance. I will always appreciate their kindness and loyalty. I also thank Jenny Gately, a dear friend whom I know I can call on any time to assist; Keith Mynard; Laurie and Bryce Hills; Cam and Virginia Gilmour; Jack Victorian; Brian and Chris Fisher; Sam Macri; Marino Salinas; Dennis and Barbara Cooley; Seamus and Natasha Cassidy; David Willett; Rudy Francis; Billie Callaghan; Evelyn Greenwood; Greg and Valma Watson; Darren Klarich; Billie Loo and Maria; Mike and Pauline McMullan; Max and Mayette Renwick; Dr Roger Wearne and Nancy Wearne; Brian Christie; Emi Barzotto; Martha Zedlak; Con Anastissiou; Tony Dyson; the Marcello family; Vic and Elizabeth Mitrevski; the Naumchevski family; Roger and Jackie Stanton; Phil and Sandra O'Neil; the Mooney family; Ann and Tom Robinson; Frank and Theresa Vincekovich; Hilda and John Deardon; the Pham family, a wonderful family in Ballajura; Jim Apostokdovski; Cane and Peter Rasmovski; Chris Necovski; Wayne Nelsen; Taffy Banfield; Paul and Kerrie Allen; Graham Madigan; Bill and Judy Barrett; and Neville and Patricia Catchpole.

From the trade union movement I give special mention to people like Paul Kelly and Jock Ferguson; a special thanks also to Mike Dean from the Police Union, who has been a good supporter of mine. I give special thanks to Pastor Rex and Faye Gabrielson, Bruce Miller, Paul Price and Alan Hlaing from the Girrawheen Baptist Church; to Reverend John Ramsbottom of the Girrawheen Uniting Church; and to Philip Baker of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Thanks also to Father John Jegorow from the Ballajura parish, Father Tom Gaines from Our Lady of Mercy Girrawheen, Father Don Sproxton of the Balga and Mirrabooka parishes and Pastor Bruce Mumm from the Assemblies of God.

I give special thanks also to City of Stirling Councillors June Copley, John Italiano, David Boothman and, especially, to the hardest-working mayor in Western Australia, Councillor Tony Vallelonga, and his delightful wife Mary. Special thanks go to the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Stirling, Mike Wadsworth, and to City of Wanneroo Councillors Maureen Grieson, Alan Blencowe and Judy Hughes, and from the Shire of Swan, Councillor Maria Haynes.

A special thank you is also given to my extended family - my brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces. I will mention only their Christian names because I will take too long if I add their surnames, although

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90 per cent derive from the Matias family. They are Tom, Bing, Susie, Jomar, Maila, Mena, Lillett, Richard, Gualberto, Karen, Doris, Jo-anne, May, Marites, Julian, Madeleine, Llewellyn, Ricky and Tony - they have been a very special family.

Mr Pental: No wonder you got the majorities you did! You are setting a very high standard.

Mr CUNNINGHAM: To my brother John, his wife Jill and their wonderful family, to my sister Veronica, her husband Eddie and my dear niece Teresa, thank you for your encouragement and support. These people, and so many more, have been great foot soldiers. They have been my inspiration.

I have been fortunate to meet so many young people from different walks of life - some politically, many through social justice, others through drug awareness and some through Young Vinnies and Cry for Life. I met a special young person two years ago - Clare Pike - who will one day grace this Parliament or Federal Parliament. This young lady is the most exceptional person I have ever heard speak on the front steps of Parliament House. During the abortion debate - at the age of 19 - she spoke publicly with passion, feeling and authority. The Clare Pikes of this world are very scarce. I will continue to encourage young people like Clare Pike.

One of the highlights of my parliamentary career was my selection as Opposition Whip in 1997 - it was a great honour. I thank my colleagues on this side of the House for their trust. I have no doubt that the next Labor Speaker - sorry, the next Labor Whip - I saw someone who wants to be Speaker and got mixed up - will sit on the opposite side of this Chamber, on the government benches.

Mr Ripper: Hear, hear!

Mr CUNNINGHAM: Another highlight of my parliamentary career was the opportunity to have an hour-long meeting with the Governor of Arkansas and his wife Hillary, with the members for Stirling and Warren-Blackwood, the former member for Bunbury and Doug Carpenter, the Deputy Clerk, during a visit to Little Rock, Arkansas, with the Select Committee on the Right to Farm in 1991. Sixteen months later, Governor Clinton became one of the most successful presidents of the United States. It was also a highlight and great honour to be selected to visit China in 1992 with former Speaker Mike Barnett, the current Deputy Premier and the member for Greenough. I have many personal stories to tell from both trips; however, time will not permit me to share them with the House. In some respects, I could be a very lucky person that there is little time. I thank the member for Collie and the Deputy Premier because I had a small problem, which became a large problem, while I was away.

Another special forum that I was fortunate to attend was the second World Congress of Families in Geneva in 1999. At that event I represented the Western Australian Leader of the Opposition, and Madame Acting Speaker, the member for Carine, represented the Premier. The member for Carine and I prepared a joint statement - I think it is the only one to have been done in this House - that was accepted and appreciated throughout the wider community. The member for Carine and I have made contacts with many family organisations since our report was published. I reiterate the remarks I made in this Assembly in November 1999 that I appreciated the professional assistance of the member for Carine, which helped produce that excellent report. I do not seek to embarrass dear friends, or to embarrass Madame Acting Speaker at all; however, there is a belief in the wider community that members of Parliament from opposite sides of politics cannot be good friends. Earlier this year I was deeply honoured by the member and her husband Kerry when they approached me to be the godfather of their beloved son Carl, through confirmation. Both my wife Julie and I are proud to count the member and her family as part of our family and as very dear and special friends.

Mr Court: You have been very gracious in those comments - before and now.

Mr CUNNINGHAM: I will always be gracious in regard to the member for Carine.

That World Congress of Families brought home some telling points. The sad truth is that many families live in less than peaceful circumstances. They live with tension - sometimes work pressures can keep them apart. All members have experienced those pressures. Peaceful families are created in a positive, caring and accepting environment. Members of Parliament sometimes unwittingly and unintentionally neglect their beloved families because of the pressure of commitments. Some of us are busy looking after other people's problems and neglect our own. The polli's prayer can be, "May your family so live in peace, that from you peace may spread throughout the whole human family."

The most important parliamentary committee that I ever served on was the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Intergovernmental Agreements, which reported on organ donation and transplantation less than one hour ago. Two extremely important issues which were always at the forefront of my parliamentary career

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and which involved the preservation of life were the drug and abortion issues, in which I was extremely proud to play such an important role.

My greatest success was undoubtedly the naming of drug dealers in this Parliament 16 months ago. At that time, our community was awash with drugs. At a recent breakfast I was told by one of the assistant commissioners of police - who criticised me at the time - that, in retrospect, I was probably correct. I will never doubt that had I accepted the advice of the police and left the matter to them, nothing would have been accomplished. Girrawheen, Balga, Koondoola and Mirrabooka still have many problems with drug leeches who peddle filth to youth. The scale of those drug problems in my electorate is less today than it was 16 months ago; however, we should never give up on those leeches who kill our youth.

My greatest disappointment came during the abortion debate, when pro-life members from both sides of this Parliament could not convince this Assembly with their arguments. It is a disappointment that some of the scars from that debate still exist, although only slightly.

Many initiatives were accomplished while I was a government member. These included the truancy program, the off-campus program, the automotive skills program, the Marangaroo and Dryandra Family Centres, the Ballajura Family Centre, the installation of traffic lights at Marangaroo Road, Wanneroo Road, Mirrabooka Avenue and Marangaroo Drive, and the many roundabouts throughout my electorate. My success with the installation of roundabouts in my electorate earned me the fond nickname Roundabout-Ted.

I recall the various problems that have existed in many parts of my electorate from March 1988 until today. Many improvements are due to the "new north" development. I have been very happy with the continuing progress of Nigel Satterley's "new north" program under the brilliant leadership of Tony Naughtin and his understudy, Robert Wallman. The "new north" program has put so much pride back into our suburbs. I am very thankful and appreciative that the Government selected the electorate of Girrawheen. I am also delighted that Nigel Satterley was selected, instead of the developer the Government had in mind. If it were not for the member for Nollamara and me, a different developer would have been chosen for Girrawheen, Westminster and Balga.

I now say thank you to the wonderful staff of Parliament House. I say thank you to the officers of this Chamber. They are very professional and dedicated staff. I thank the switchboard staff - Cathy, Marilyn, Rosalie and Leslie. They are the life of this Parliament. They are a most competent group of professionals. Many thanks go to the library staff. They are a dedicated, respected and helpful group of people. Many thanks to the dining room and bar staff under the leadership of Andrew Gardos. Many thanks for all the assistance given to my guests and me. The staff are a great credit to the Parliament. A very special thank you to the security staff for the assistance they have shown to my many visitors and guests. Thank you for a job well done to the groundsmen who tend the Parliament's beautiful grounds. A special thank you to two extremely professional people, one of whom is still with us and one of whom has left Parliament: David Klemm and Sheila Mills from the Parliamentary Education Office. David is still with the Parliament. He is a brilliant education officer.

In my 13 years in this Parliament there are no people that I have appreciated more than the Hansard staff. These brilliant people make some members look as though they are geniuses. Most of us are not. I am a person who has always known his own capabilities and I greatly appreciate their able assistance. I always knew that I would not reach genius status. Thanks a million to the Hansard staff.

I would like to give a special thanks to my colleagues, especially the member for Bassendean, who is a Whip's dream and can speak at a minute's notice. He is a true professional. Special thanks to my very loyal Deputy Whip, the member for Rockingham. He has a great leadership future but he has to bide his time. I have been very fortunate to make so many friendships. I have always listened to the member for Nollamara and opposition Leader of the House; I have always respected his judgment. I appreciate his and his dear wife Stephanie's support. A million thanks go to the Leader of the Opposition and member for Victoria Park and his dear wife, Bev; to the member for Peel and his beloved Ros; to the member for Midland and her wonderful husband, Greg; to Hon Bob Thomas and Carol; to Hon Ed Dermer and Sylvia; to Hon Nick Griffiths and Rhonda; and to all my parliamentary colleagues on this side of the House for all the assistance they have given me. The next Parliament will see a Gallop Administration; I have no doubt about it. It will be the most professional and caring Government for the new millennium.

I am in much debt to Senator Jim McKiernan and his staff, especially Sue Reid, who have given my office staff tremendous assistance in federal matters over the past twelve and a half years. Many thanks go to my very good friend Stephen Smith, the federal member for Perth. Stephen and I go back 20 years. We have been in many

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scraps together. I hear on the grapevine that we will continue to be in further scraps. Be assured, I will not fade away.

It would be remiss of me to not mention the impartiality of the Speaker and his dedication to making the Parliament a place to which all members are proud to bring their guests. I wish the Speaker a pleasant and happy retirement. May the members for Greenough, Wagin, Perth, Eyre, Cockburn and Kimberley also enjoy their retirement in health and happiness.

In conclusion, there are always very special people who must be acknowledged on the record. I have thanks to five very special people to place in *Hansard*. They are wonderful people to whom I want to say a special thank you: First, to my very dear loyal friends and wonderful supporters, advisers and workers, Bob Tanasoski and Batong Pham. They have been loyal and supportive for many years. I owe them very much. My special thanks go to each of them. A special thank you goes to my very dear special friend and confidante, the member for Midland. She always listens and gives me brilliant advice. I will always treasure our friendship and will always remember our early political meetings many years ago in Victoria Park. Special thanks to my ever efficient secretary, Carmel. She has been a faithful and talented partner in our role of looking after our constituents. We worked together and my success as a local member is her success. Without a good secretary members are nothing. I wish Carmel much peace and happiness in her retirement, which starts at midnight on election night.

Special thanks go to the most important person in my life, the person who has assisted me so much in my political and parliamentary career, the person who is always there. That very special person is my very dear wife, Julie. It is easy in this occupation to take people for granted. Julie has been a godsend to me and each day I give thanks for her presence in my life. Julie is a very special person, a great inspiration, and has educated me so much about life. I look forward to our retirement together. A very dear friend and former leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and a former Deputy Premier, Ian Taylor, describes Julie as a living saint who one day will be canonised because she has had to put up with me for 34 long years. Some people get only six years for murder! To all the wonderful people who have been of such great assistance to me for nearly 13 years, I give my heartfelt thanks. To my colleagues on both sides of this Assembly, I say thank you for your friendship. May you all have a peaceful and happy Christmas with your loved ones.

MR BRIDGE (Kimberley) [10.47 am]: I have been a member of Parliament for almost 21 years. During that time, things have not improved all that much. Last night it was planned that I would speak at about 11.30 am. Consequently, I planned for my family to be here for that time. I find that I am now speaking without their being present. However, I will not hold up the proceedings of the Parliament.

During my maiden speech 20 years ago, I went through all the thankyou's that I was excited to give as part of that speech. Now, 20 years later, I am going to revisit the things that interested me in a career as a member of Parliament. I will reflect in a positive way on the support that assisted me through the many years that I have been an advocate for the people of this State as a member of Parliament. Without a doubt, my family heads the list of people I want to acknowledge. They have given me absolute and continual support. My family and I have shared a career. It was clearly understood that it needed to be shared.

The electorate of Kimberley stood strongly behind me through those 20-odd years. That was borne out graphically in the last election when I stood for the first time as an independent candidate and was returned with a good majority. For that I thank the electorate of Kimberley. I also thank the Labor Party because without it I would not have had the privilege of serving as a member of Parliament. I would not have achieved some of those magnificent goals and outcomes that I now reflect upon with great pride and purpose. It is often the case that people come into a political environment through the agency of a major party and then, for reasons that emerge in subsequent years, find time to contemplate criticism of that party. I feel that is wrong. We must always remember that despite the circumstances that might have evolved in recent times, the grassroots of our position must always be factored into the position of the party. The party gave us the opportunity to enter into politics. I put on the record my appreciation of the Labor Party and my thanks to it.

Some major issues confronted me and the Labor Party that required management skills of the highest level to ensure that the outcomes were well managed. A major degree of maturity and responsibility was shown. Sensible management of these issues was factored into the outcomes. In this context, none was greater or more difficult to deal with than the day I made it known publicly that I would leave the Labor Party. That was a big decision on my part and no doubt it was a shock to the Labor Party. The management by Mr McGinty, the then leader of the party, and me of the events that preceded my announcement was outstanding. The fallouts and the viciousness that can follow such situations did not occur, and I will never reflect harshly on the Labor Party.

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The member for Fremantle managed the decision I made in a constructive way. He recognised that he could not change my way of thinking.

That was one of the great outcomes of which I have been a part. We were able to manage the situation so well that I look at the members of the Labor Party today and know we are all friends. I do not need to look back over my shoulders and wonder how they feel about me. I know how they feel about me - we are all mates, and that has not changed. Similarly, I have made good friends with the members of the Government over the years. There have not been too many times that we have felt unfavourably towards each other. A logical view has been taken about our disagreements; that is, the Government understood that my interests in this House have been a reflection of those of the community. The issues that I felt were important needed to be highlighted, reflected upon and stated in Parliament. Through that process I gained the Government's respect.

Being made a cabinet minister was by far the most important highlight and the most significant period of my time in Parliament, not only because historically I am the only person of indigenous descent who gained that position - that in itself is nice because it is a historical achievement - but also because it gave me that ministerial decree to drive many things - and drive many things I did. The Water Authority of Western Australia in those days did not like it, but I enjoyed it. During that time I was boss of that portfolio. As a result, many projects happened in the bush. The Minister for Primary Industry is nodding. Approximately 180 bronze plaques in the bush capture that period of success in this State's history. The big difference was that we were in control of what we wanted to happen. I hope that in future other ministers will understand the importance of that. At the top one has the ability to drive action and to make determinations; and one must take advantage of it. It is not always necessary to seek the indulgence of so-called advisers and professionals in one's attempts to execute a course of action.

I was involved in the exciting further dimensions of the development of the Ord scheme. As a consequence of that extension and further progress, progressing to the other stages of the Ord scheme will be achieved. The one regret I have is that I did not stitch up the Kimberley pipeline plan. Sadness surrounds the fact that, in my judgment, I was 12 months away from pulling it off when the people of this State, in their wisdom, decided to throw us out of government. They might have had good reasons to do so, but it was a tragedy for the State that I was not given the opportunity to at least start that project. That project would have meant more to this State in the future than all the other projects combined. It would have opened up the interior of the State. Who knows; some projects may well have been developed and supported by this Government and the public because they were seen to be right and working. That did not happen and one can only reflect on how it might have been different had that extra period of time as a Minister for Water Resources been made available.

I have always stood for ordinary Australians; in other words, the battlers. Whenever I have had half a chance in Parliament, I have made reference to the binding obligations placed upon us as politicians to remain strong. As I leave and other members enter the Parliament, I hope that members will remember these words: Never let go of the obligations we have to look after the interests of ordinary Australians because they make up Australia; they are Australians. Not only are they Australians, but also we are all Australians together.

My final plea to the members of this Parliament is never to lose sight of that reality and their obligation to fight for that cause. We should be doubly careful that we do not sell those virtues lightly, as we are inclined to do now, particularly in the way we are trading off the wonderful assets of this country. We are doing some very damaging things in pursuit of the dollar. Considering those beautiful assets of this country that are no longer owned by us, it is questionable whether that is the right course of action. I do not question it, I say it is wrong. The Government should be very careful about going too far with corporatisation. It is hard to find any way in which corporatisation supports the values of the ordinary Australian. My hope, as I conclude my time in Parliament, is that those of you who remain, and those who enter Parliament at the next election, will remember to keep Australia as it is, and keep Australia for Australians. I will conclude with a song -

I'm a dinky-di Australian, and I sing an Aussie song
I sing about this country, the land where I belong
I don't sing that Yankee stuff, with its southern drawl
I sing good old Australian, and let that music roll

Just take the song about this pub and the spider on the seat
The helicopter ringer and many similar beats
We don't sing that Yankee stuff, with its southern drawl
We sing good old Australian, and let that music roll

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Thursday, 23 November 2000]

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I'm a dinky-di Australian, and I sing an Aussie song
I sing about this country, the land where I belong
I don't sing that Yankee stuff, with its southern drawl
We sing good old Australian, and let that music roll

I went up to Tamworth, and at the judges' panel sat
And the few that sang Australian style, to you I lift my hat
At least you tried to be yourself, of that you must be proud
The rest were half-baked rockers, and their music far too loud

I'm a dinky-di Australian, and I sing an Aussie song
I sing about this country, the land where I belong
I don't sing that Yankee stuff, with its southern drawl
I sing good old Australian, and let that music roll
Yeh, I sing good old Australian, and let that music roll

MR GRILL (Eyre) [11.04 am]: Life is so unfair. Why do I have to follow the member for Kimberley? It is with mixed feelings that I stand here today to make my valedictory speech. The Labor Party, the people of my electorate and the people of Western Australia gave me the great opportunity to serve them, and I am pleased to have had that opportunity and a little sad about leaving here today. When I made my maiden speech, nearly 24 years ago, I made a traditional speech, thanking my predecessor and drawing attention to the mining industry, and thanked the loyalty of the electors of Boulder-Dundas. That seat changed from time to time during my political career, but parts of the electorate always remained the same and stayed constantly loyal to me throughout that period. I was right to make that traditional speech. I never dreamed I would be here for 24 years. I told my assembled heads of department and staff that, when I became a minister, it would be short, brief, wonderful and heroic, but I would not be around for all that long. I was wrong on that, and many other scores.

I look back on my predecessor, Tom Hartrey. He came from that wonderful Irish orator school of lawyers - fierce and flamboyant, classically educated, intelligent and articulate. He is a goldfields legend, and it was a great honour to follow him into Parliament. Hartrey's predecessor, a minister in the Tonkin Government by the name of Arthur Moir, decided, after a long and illustrious career that, at the age of 68, he really should retire and make way for a younger man. Tom Hartrey was 69 when first elected. He had six good years and was probably the shortest-serving member for the seat that took in Boulder and its surrounds. Others, like Philip Collier, who was Premier for many years, went before him. I was also correct in referring to my electorate, because, although the electorate boundaries have changed, I have experienced an unbelievable loyalty from my constituents. I went through a few dark periods during my career in politics. For eight years I was under constant investigation. My homes and my offices were raided on more than one occasion. During that period I came under some flak from the media, who suggested that I should stand down from Parliament altogether. I did stand down from my ministerial position, but I did not stand down from Parliament. The more people in the media called for me to resign, the more the people of my electorate rallied behind me.

I remember giving advice to Mark McGowan, a new member coming into Parliament for the first time. I told him that whatever happens during his time in Parliament - I think it will be a long time for him - he must never forget the grassroots. I hope I have not forgotten them, as they have never forgotten me, and they were always very loyal. Some ill-informed people will say that people in my electorate are rednecks, even racist. The people in my electorate, and ordinary Australian working-class people in general, are among the fairest-minded people in the world. Years ago an old union official told me that I should never lose faith in the ordinary working people of Australia. Many members know this person. He suggested that, if I did lose faith, perhaps I should give the game away. I have never lost that faith, and I have a high regard for ordinary Australian working people. They are kind, considerate, and terribly fair-minded.

The goldfields generally has been kind to me; just as it has been kind to so many other people before me and after me. I went to the goldfields with nothing, except my law degree and my fiancée, who later became my wife, and it has treated me extremely well. The goldfields of Western Australia in a historical sense has made this State. That is where the big populations were, that is where the big migration took place and where the great wealth upon which our State was founded was made. The one factor that marks out those people is that they are the risk takers in our society. They were the pioneers and the hard workers. They were also, and still are, the hard players. We sometimes say that this is an entrepreneurial State in which people take risks and gambles. That culture came from the goldfields and the brave people who populated the goldfields before the turn of the century and since then.

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I was right 24 years ago to have praised the mining industry and the people in it. It is the economic backbone of our State. I have watched the booms and recessions of that industry, and the people in the mining industry go through those booms and recessions with fortitude and endurance. I have always admired that. I have admired the prospectors. My brother is a prospector, and I have done a bit of prospecting. When the first prospectors went to the goldfields they risked their lives. Many of them lost their lives, because they perished in the bush. For instance, in the great retreat from Siberia, which is part of our history today, many of these pioneers perished in the bush and now are in unmarked graves.

The miners who have worked in the big mines in the past, and who work there now, risk their life and limb every day of the week. Many of them have been taken in rock falls. Nearly all of them in the early days were affected by the persistent diseases in those industry - tuberculosis, silicosis, and pneumoconiosis. They worked on those terrible machines - the widow-makers; the high speed drills that in those days operated without water and ultimately killed nearly every one who worked on them. Those widow-makers are not part of the industry any longer, but they were being used not that long ago. Everyone who went underground knew that their lungs would be irrevocably damaged as a result of working on them. Over the years I have represented many women who have been made widows by the mining industry. Those widows exhibited all the fortitude that their husbands have exhibited over the years.

I now mention another group of people; that is, the risk takers in terms of finances. I suppose Claude de Bernales springs to everyone's mind as one of the most flamboyant and well known, but there are many others. They are in the industry today risking not only their life and limb, but also their fortunes. I refer to the gold and nickel industries and the other great mining industries, but especially to gold. Gold is the great hope of the battler. Some people would say that in many respects gold is the battler's last hope. I know of many people who came to the goldfields with very little - just as I did - and walked away with a lot of money and a lot of respect. They have made a really great contribution to society as a result of the wealth they have won in the goldfields that I love.

It is one of my laments that the mining industry is no longer fully understood in the city. The links between country and city are not as strong as they once were. Many city people do not understand the way in which their economies and their fortunes are tied to the fortunes of that mining industry. I look back over the past 24 years with a lot of pride at the achievements we were able to garner during that period. I started to add them up and make a list at one stage, and I surprised myself.

I would like to thank some of the people who have made those achievements possible. The first person I acknowledge is my wife; she is present today in the Speaker's gallery. Many members of Parliament and people in politics have partners who support them, but not all of them have partners who support them in their political lives, or who are prepared to get right down into the political fray. Luckily, I have a wife who was prepared to do that. She got into the political fray, quietly and with dignity, but nonetheless she did all the jobs that needed to be done by a good organiser, which she is. She ran all my campaigns very successfully, as an adviser and as my right hand. I have been very lucky because of that. My wife suffered terribly during the eight years of that incessant investigation by the police and others; the raids on her homes; the indignities of all of that; and then the occasions when she had to front up to the police to explain matters. I might add she did that very well, and once they heard her side of events they had to drop the cases. Nonetheless, she had to go through that. She appeared in court with me; she did not have to, but she did. She was always by my side. My children Siobhan and Shannon had to endure both public and private indignities and denigration, as a range of people have had a go at me behind my back but in their presence. They always defended me bravely and fearlessly, so I have a great regard for them as well.

The boundaries of my electorate changed dramatically over the years. It is a very big seat. At one stage the boundaries extended to the Warburton group of Aboriginal communities and Esperance, out to Eucla, and took in the Southern Cross region. It always took in the heart of the goldfields, although never the core - Kalgoorlie. Nonetheless, it took in Boulder and parts of that area. We have had to maintain three houses during much of the period I was in Parliament - at Esperance, Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Perth. My children and my wife were shoved from pillar to post, following me around the electorate and helping me with my parliamentary duties.

Parliamentarians get a lot of denigration. I would like to place on record, because it is probably not well known, that a number of people in politics, like me, left professions to come into this place. We were doing reasonably well in our professions, and when we became members of Parliament we took a pay cut. I do not think that is always recognised. I have been accused of many things while I have been in Parliament. Prior to becoming a minister during the Burke Government - I must admit I thought I would become the Minister for Mines, but that never happened to me and was not my luck - a colleague and I controlled a publicly listed company and some subsidiaries. I sold all the shares in those companies and did not buy another share for 10 years. I would also

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like to place on record that despite the image of pork-barrelling and snouts in the trough, which sometimes epitomises politicians, that image is wrong. For instance, never once have I ever applied for a parliamentary trip overseas, or taken one. Never once have I travelled overseas, or interstate even, with any parliamentary committee on which I was serving. That does not mean I did not go overseas. I went overseas representing our State as a minister, and I have taken some study trips. The image that is promoted at times in the media is unfair. I wanted to put a couple of those things on the record.

I also thank my staff, especially my staff when I was a minister - both the public servants who were under my jurisdiction and the people who were not public servants who came onto my staff. I had a big staff, and I was criticised for it. However, during the period that I was a minister there was so much on the boil that one needed to have a big staff. Many of those people were thought to be misfits in certain ways, but they were extremely talented. I will mention just a few of them.

First, I mention Professor Rodney Vaughan, the son of one of the doyens of our party. He came out of the University of Newcastle and travelled across to Western Australia while I was the Minister for Transport. He designed that part of the Kwinana Freeway with its bus lanes and counter-traffic lanes. The sad thing is that Rodney died of cancer at a very young age, shortly after completing that work.

I also mention Ernesto Sirolli. Even my staff could not understand why he was working for me. They said, "Why do you keep that fellow on here? Why do you let him go down to Esperance so often? What is he doing down there?" He had a new theory about employment creation, and we gave him the opportunity to promote that theory. There is now a testimony to the work he did, because this State has a whole range of business enterprise centres. They are now in place, and they are a monument to him. He is now a successful consultant in the United States. However, he was considered very much a misfit in those days.

I also mention Professor Peter Newman, who came onto my staff. He was a great supporter of the reintroduction of the Perth to Fremantle railway line, and he did a huge amount of work on that. He and Ralph Hoare from Fremantle together formed the nucleus of the team that revamped Fremantle at the time of the America's Cup. They did it with such sensitivity and such flare that we have a lasting monument to them in that place.

Lois Anderson is well known in the Labor Party. She was the assistant secretary for some years. Currently, she is still an organiser. When someone had to go down to Bunbury, she was the one who went. She went there to live, and she managed the Bunbury 2000 program from Bunbury. If one goes to Bunbury today, one realises what a success it has been. If people can remember what Bunbury was like before that process commenced, they would not recognise the place; it is so different and so much better.

Peter Middleton works for one of the ministers at the current time, and some members will recognise him. What a wonderful public servant he is. He is dedicated, even-handed and neutral. He always offers good advice. When he worked for me, he worked until nine o'clock, 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock every night. Some members will testify to that.

Peter McKerrow is one of the greatest operators the Labor Party had. He worked on my staff and helped many of us win our seats. He is a selfless person. He never stood for Parliament, but he would have made a wonderful parliamentarian. He has now gone to Victoria.

I also thank my electorate secretaries. Donna Plumber now works well with the party. Cheryl Bird was an older woman. However, she went back to school and got her leaving certificate. She learnt shorthand and typing. I was told not to employ her because she was too old; nevertheless, I put her on. What a success she has been. She has gone from being an electorate secretary to running a very big business in Perth. Those sorts of things happen. I thank Cheryl Bird, Jenny Roth and Charmain Cragan, who is one of the most efficient electorate workers I have ever seen.

I also thank Nigel Higgs, who was my press secretary when I was a minister. If anyone could keep a person out of trouble - I needed a bit of that - Nigel Higgs was the man.

I also thank the public servants. Some of my colleagues had problems with their public servants. However, I never had problems with any of my public servants. The heads of my department were excellent. I never had to shift any of them on. I do not want to go through their names now - it is an illustrious list of names - because there are too many of them and I am worried I will miss out somebody. However, I thank them for some of the proudest moments of my life. We achieved a lot during that period, and the way they went about doing their jobs was wonderful.

I am not a great one for restructuring. We did a lot to make the railways a lot more efficient and productive. However, we did not restructure a lot of things. If I can give any lesson to parliamentarians going into a

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ministerial job, it is to be careful about restructuring. One can demotivate one's staff, and the Public Service generally, by restructuring. At times, restructuring, as we all realise, is inevitable. However, people should be very careful about it, because I have seen some restructuring go absolutely astray and demotivate departments for a long period.

I will now mention a few of my political friends. Not all of them are in vogue these days. The first is my old political friend, colleague and comrade, and a person with whom I have gone into many fights, Graeme Campbell. I have fought against Graeme and with him - mainly with him. He is a very fearsome opponent indeed. In politics these days he is seen very much as a maverick - he is out of politics. However, Graeme is one of the most successful politicians I have known. He needed a 10 per cent swing to pick up the seat of Kalgoorlie at the 1980 election. He picked that up, with not much to spare, and then turned that into the safest Labor Party federal seat in Western Australia. When I first went into politics, the Labor Party did not have a seat north of Kalgoorlie or Geraldton. With Graeme, Ernie and a few others, the Labor Party went forth and won all of those seats to the north - every one of them. We picked up three of the five upper House seats, and that area became the jewel in the crown for the Labor Party. A lot of the glue that kept all that together can be attributed to Graeme Campbell. He might be a bit out of favour these days, and he may not be in my party, but I lament the fact that he is not in my party. He will always be a friend of mine, and I know that at heart he is very much a Labor person.

In the early days, Graeme and I had a couple of friends in Perth - one of them was here just a while ago - Stephen Smith and John Cowdell. These days it would appear to be a fairly unlikely linking together of personalities, but back in those days they were the young Turks in Perth. They were the Perth end of the Axis, as we called it, and Campbell and I were the Kalgoorlie end. Strangely enough, Graeme Campbell would not have got into Parliament if it had not been for Stephen Smith and the number crunching done by Stephen and John at the Perth end. It was a strange sort of relationship, but it was a very close relationship for a long time. Although we are probably not as close as we used to be, I pay tribute to Stephen for that period in our lives, because it was a wonderful time and we did a lot of good things together.

I also pay tribute to another one of my colleagues who is no longer in our party, Mark Nevill. I first met Mark when he was a young geologist in Kambalda. He was highly idealistic and we got on together very well. He was then a very successful geologist, as most people would appreciate. We had the unenviable job in 1983 of winning a large part of the Esperance seat, which was really tiger country for the Labor Party in those days. Mark performed superbly in that role. We ended up winning about 45 per cent of a seat in which we had never picked up more than about 20 per cent before and in which we currently pick up only about 9 per cent. I pay tribute to Mark for that and for all those great years we had together as comrades in the Labor Party.

I also pay tribute to somebody else who is a little out of favour with the community and perhaps with the party as well - Brian Burke. Brian demands loyalty from a number of people - Norm Marlborough, the member for Peel, on my left; Ted Cunningham, the member for Girrawheen, who has already spoken; a lot of other people and me. He demands loyalty because he gave loyalty. I believe that history will treat him a lot more fairly and better than recent history has. Brian had the clearest vision of anyone with whom I have dealt about where Western Australia should be going. He was the one who really understood that Western Australia was a financial colony of the eastern States, and he tried to do something about it. He was the one who understood that we needed to do something about downstream processing and value adding. We all chant that mantra these days, and there has been some success in that arena, but not a lot. For all the flak we received for it, we went closer to getting a petrochemical industry back in those days than we have since. Brian understood many things, which have become better understood since then. When people talk about cronyism during that period, it was not cronyism; it was Brian Burke and others saying that they would support local industry, local companies and local people against the big overseas companies. There was a period when Sir Charles Court was in power that he thought it was essential to woo the big overseas companies. I do not criticise him for it; he did it, he was successful and the Pilbara blossomed as a result. Brian tried to ensure that the local companies blossomed. It was not cronyism or favouritism in that sense; it was simply an attempt to ensure that local businesses got a fair share of what was happening in this State.

My old friend Peter Dowding and I went to law school together. He is one of the most charismatic people ever to enter Parliament. He is very talented and a brilliant lawyer. He is an enigmatic figure in many ways. At the end of the day, I do not believe he had the financial and commercial expertise to handle the maelstrom into which he was thrown in 1988. He might well handle it much better today, but in those days he did not have the necessary commercial experience. To some extent he and others - including myself - were wanting.

I also pay tribute to an old friend - an old campaigner - and the greatest Minister for Finance this country has ever seen. I refer to Peter Walsh. He has always stayed loyal to the working class and to his roots and

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principles. He is a bit tough, but a wonderful person. I pay tribute to his son-in-law, Gary Gray, who was one of the greatest organisers the Labor Party has ever had. He was certainly the best fundraiser this country has seen. He was a great political strategist and had great rapport with business. He is a huge loss to our party.

Ian Taylor and I worked together very well in Kalgoorlie. I also mention my friend to my left Norm Marlborough. In many ways, he represents the human face of our party and the connection to the old working class, which I hope we never leave behind.

I could have said much more today. However, I will conclude by saying that we parliamentarians are cruel to ourselves. Our workload has increased dramatically since I first stood for election in 1973-74. In those days we did not have electorate offices or electorate secretaries. I ask members to try to imagine how they would get by without an electorate secretary, a research officer and an electorate office today. Almost in inverse relation to that increased workload, our status has diminished. That is partly because we have been conned by the media into viciously attacking each other. I believe we can do our job without doing that. There is room for us to be much kinder to each other. Members should consider the political arena in the United States. Even at the worst times - such as during the nadir of Clinton's period in government - the media and fellow legislators always treat the President with respect. Perhaps we should emulate that situation. That is how it was when I first came into this place, and I hope we revert to that. I believe we have much more scope to be kinder to each other. Unless we are, we will not attract good young people into Parliament. We are lucky to have the quality members we have today. At the behest of Mr McGinty, I have been involved in encouraging people to stand for election on behalf of the Labor Party. He knows how hard it is to get high profile people to agree to stand, even when they are offered a safe seat and a direct path to a ministry. The reason they do not want to participate is that they do not want to see their families attacked in the way in which we have seen families attacked in the past few years.

Finally, I want to thank my mother, who is in the gallery. I thank her for her advice, vitality, support and inspiration. I also thank her for coming along to all those rotten court cases. Thanks, Mum! It was not fun and I very much appreciate her staying at my side during that period.

I wish my party luck. I believe it will win government under the guidance of Geoff Gallop and Eric Ripper, and I hope it enjoys a long and prosperous period in office. I also thank my colleagues opposite. They have been generous and I have had a good time. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR THOMAS (Cockburn) [11.36 am]: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak today and to reflect on the occasion of what will be my last speech as a member of this House. Being a member of this place has been the greatest honour I have achieved in my life. It is a wonderful institution and it is worth nurturing. It can make great contributions to the governance of the State. I will make some observations about how it operated in the past, how it operates today and how that can be improved.

The essential nature of the Legislative Assembly is that its members are elected from single-member constituencies. That is the difference between this place and the Legislative Council, and it is the defining aspect of our role in the Parliament and in the governance of this State. Sometimes members are described as "members of Parliament". There is no such thing as a member of Parliament - one is either a member of the Legislative Council or a member of the Legislative Assembly. Members of the Legislative Assembly are elected by territorial constituencies and require a majority vote of 50 per cent plus one. That means we must be answerable to and represent a broad cross-section of the public. It is not possible to be a zealot and continue to be a successful member of this House; one must be balanced and able to look at a broad range of issues from a wide range of perspectives. That is a very desirable quality for a House in which the Government is formed.

One of the primary functions of this House is to be an electoral college. After the election is held, the most important task confronting this House is the formation of the Government. Once that is done, unless the numbers are very close, government legislation is unlikely to be amended in this place. That role of forming the Government is very important and it should be undertaken by a House that comprises members elected from single-member constituencies, not through proportional representation.

I will make a few comments about the Legislative Council and the way it operates. Since I was elected, the Parliament has been transformed by the introduction of electoral reform involving proportional representation in the Legislative Council. When upper Houses were created, the notion was that they would bring a different perspective to bear on legislation from that of the popularly elected Houses. They were designed to represent wealth and privilege and to ensure that the popularly elected Houses did not do too much to dismantle the privileges and wealth of those who enjoyed them. As years went by, that became unacceptable. The upper

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House in this State moved to adult franchise and it effectively became a duplicate of the lower House. Members were elected from single-member constituencies and, for the most part, the votes reflected those in the lower House. Except for the fact that the gerrymander was more enhanced in the upper House, it was very much a mirror of the lower House. There was no point to its existence because it offered no different perspective on legislation.

The introduction of proportional representation has changed that remarkably. It transformed not only the Legislative Council but also the Parliament as a whole. It is now possible, and likely in some cases, that government legislation will be defeated in the upper House. That is desirable. If the distribution of political sentiment in the community remains as it is now, or similar, in the years to come no major party will have a majority in the upper House. Upper Houses accommodate not only members of the major parties but also members of groups such as the Australian Democrats, the Greens (WA) and so on. Various groups take advantage of the electoral opportunities that now exist as a result of the introduction of proportional representation. As a result, the upper House becomes the House of ideas. Legislation should be subjected to scrutiny in an environment that allows those ideas to be canvassed and given greater attention. Single-issue parties will be elected to such a House to represent a proportion of the population. However, members of those groups will not be elected to this House. That is also appropriate, because the House that forms the Government should have that breadth of perspective that is likely to be conducive to good government. Members of those groups do represent a certain proportion of the population and they will not be elected here. It is desirable that they not be elected here, because what we want in a House in which the Government is formed is that breadth of perspective that is likely to be conducive to good government. Houses that are elected from proportional representation, such as the Legislative Council, are a desirable part of politics, because not only can minority parties be elected but also major parties can put people there whom they would not want in an electorate because they might have ideas that may not be sufficiently popular to allow them to be elected in lower House electorates. Nonetheless, they can make a very important contribution to politics and to governance in general.

I will quote two examples, one of which was mentioned earlier by the member for Eyre during his speech. The two examples to which I refer involve two people whom the Labor Party in Western Australia sent to the Senate, John Wheeldon and Peter Walsh. When I first became involved in politics, John Wheeldon was a senator from Western Australia. He was prepared at that time to campaign in opposition to the Vietnam War. That was not a popular position then. Had he been representing a seat in the House of Representatives - a lower House seat - it is unlikely that he would have been able to adopt that position and campaign as he did, or, if he did, he would have lost his seat, and that would have been counterproductive. Who could say now that it would not be desirable for someone like Wheeldon to be around to advance that point of view? The point of view that he was advancing then is now accepted as having been the truth; yet it would not have been possible had it not been for a House with proportional representation.

Peter Walsh was mentioned by the member for Eyre. I have an enormous degree of admiration for Peter. When the Labor Party was in power federally, he brought to government a degree of stringency, which, everyone would agree, was highly desirable in financial matters. Peter Walsh probably would not have been elected in a lower House constituency. If a deputation of constituents wanted a covered assembly area at a primary school, he was the sort of person who would give them a lecture on why they should not want it and send them away. If he did not do that, he would adopt a different attitude from the one which contributed so much to the Government. There are other examples I can think of.

It is very helpful to have a bicameral Parliament, of which one House is elected by proportional representation. It is also very desirable to have a House like this, which represents the broader perspectives of the community, rather than the narrow-interest groups, which form the Government.

There should be some constitutional reform in this State. During the early times when I was in Parliament, a committee, chaired by the Leader of the Opposition, was set up to review the Constitution in this State. Putting aside the major issue of one vote, one value - we could talk about that for a long time and not get anywhere - a number of areas of constitutional reform should be undertaken. Possibly the easiest, but one of the most necessary, is to have a Constitution that people can read and understand. If one wants to know what is the Constitution of this State, one will find that there are two Acts of Parliament and numerous amending Acts, and a lot of them contain what are known as the constitutional fictions; they say things but do not really mean them. If one picks up the Constitution of Western Australia and asks what is the Parliament of Western Australia, one would see that the Parliament comprises the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council and the Queen. We all know that it does not mean that; the role of the monarch is notional and her representative should act upon the advice of her ministers. Whole areas of the Constitution are simply fictitious. For example, there is no mention in the Constitution of the office of the Premier. If schoolchildren or people who are interested in politics were to

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ask where they could read the rules on how the Government of Western Australia operates, they would find that it does not exist; no document sets that out. That is most undesirable and is relatively easy to fix. The United States and most places in the world have Constitutions that people can read and understand, and we should have that too.

I mentioned the issue of one vote, one value. I will not speak at any length on that, other than to say that it is constitutional reform that is unanswerable; everybody's votes should have equal value. We have put up with the converse of that. One vote, one value went against the interests of the Labor Party for a long time and is against the interests of the Liberal Party; indeed, the only party that benefits from it is the National Party. Only a relatively small group in Parliament benefits from it. The reason that situation has been tolerated is that it has not made a difference to the outcome of the election. One of the major functions of this House is to be an electoral college from which the Government can be derived. When the election is held, and if the results of the electoral college are different from what would have been the case had there been one vote, one value, I predict there will be overwhelming public pressure for reform and one vote, one value will be introduced. That is what happened in South Australia in the late 1960s, when Dunstan should have been, but was not, elected because of the system that prevailed then. The public pressure was such that the State had to amend its Constitution to realise the will of the people. That will happen here should the will of the people be frustrated by the lack of one vote, one value in the choice of which Government should be formed.

Another reform that should be introduced to the operation of the Parliament generally and its relationship with the Government is a reduction in the size of the Cabinet. The Leader of the Opposition has indicated that the incoming Labor Government will have a Cabinet of 12. That is a vast improvement on the current situation and a vast improvement on the situation that prevailed earlier. I was cabinet secretary for four years, and it is my view that Cabinet was probably twice as big as it needed to be. We could easily have micro-economic reform and reduce the size of Cabinet substantially, although there would have to be corollaries to that to make public administration practicable. The United States is governed by a Cabinet of fewer than 10 people, and there are 250 million Americans!

Mr Riebeling interjected.

Mr THOMAS: Possibly so; in that case, we could probably get by with even fewer. The point I am making is that for this Parliament to operate as a Parliament and for this House to operate as a House of Parliament, there should be a change in the ratio of ministers to members. While Cabinets have numbers of 15 or 17, the number of people who are not in Cabinet becomes an absurd imbalance in having Parliament exercise some sort of oversight over government. Most people on the government side who are not ministers want to be, so there is a tendency for the Government to want to transform the House into a cheer squad for the Government. Consequently, the proper scrutiny or supervision of the Government that the House should exercise is absent.

I applaud the decision of the Leader of the Opposition, whom I am confident will be Premier in a few months, to reduce the size of Cabinet, and I suggest that he could take it further. That means that fewer members of the House will be ministers. They will be people who have been elected and who have an interest in the Government of the State, and ways must be found for them to make a creative contribution. That requires leadership on the part of the Premier. I have no doubt - in fact, I know from conversations I have had with members opposite - that there is an almost invariable tendency for ministers to want to hold matters close to them and not delegate and not allow other members to share in the decision making and the parliamentary oversight of the public sector.

A member came to see me when I was cabinet secretary and asked whether he or she - I will not give any identifying information - could take responsibility, through a parliamentary secretary role, for a body that was responsible for film in Western Australia, in which the member had an interest. I put the proposition to the minister, but he said no, because he did not want to share that responsibility with someone else in Parliament. I suppose the minister felt threatened that somebody, who was not directly answerable to the minister as would be a public servant, would get in the way. That is wrong and that tendency must be overcome, if necessary, by leadership from the Premier. There are heaps of opportunities through parliamentary secretary positions, the operation of the committee system and so on for members to make a contribution to administration without necessarily having to be a minister.

The size of Cabinet should be reduced. I also agree with Laurie Marquet that there should not be any ministers in the Legislative Council. If the Legislative Council is the House of Review, members should not have that role. Career opportunities for members of the Legislative Council should be in parliamentary rather than executive positions. That would be encouraged if there were no ministers in the upper House. Those are the

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observations that I wished to make on the manner in which Parliament should be improved. I hope that the incoming Government will take the opportunity to review the Constitution. I note the member for Nollamara is here now - he too had a role in that process. That is a job that should be undertaken. Possibly the House could overcome politically controversial matters such as one vote, one value by putting those matters to one side and doing a sensible review of other parts of the Constitution.

I pay honour to some of the members of this House with whom I have served and who have contributed to the Parliament and Government in this State. I will mention one or two who are, or were, in this House and who played an important role. The first, who unfortunately is not present, is the Deputy Premier, Mr Hendy Cowan. He is one of the most distinguished parliamentarians of this State. I cite his role in the electoral amendment debate of the late 1970s. The only members of the House who were here then, and who are here now, are the member for Eyre and the Deputy Premier. Members will be aware that following the election in which the current member for Kimberley was almost elected, the then Government introduced an electoral amendment Bill which sought to disenfranchise Aboriginal people. I was active in politics at that time, but was not a member of Parliament. I was in the gallery when the matter was debated. That State Government actually introduced legislation that was deliberately designed to disenfranchise Aboriginal people. That is as bad as it gets. It was Deep South of the United States type of stuff - the stuff that one believes happens in other places. The legislation was defeated because of people like Hendy Cowan, Matt Stephens, Tom Dadour and the then Speaker, Ian Thompson, who exercised his casting vote from the Chair to defeat that legislation. That was one of the great moments of this Parliament. Normally, because this House is elected by single-member constituencies, the Government has a majority and it is expected that legislation will be passed. It is an unusual event for government legislation to be defeated in the Legislative Assembly. However, on that occasion, community outrage was great and some principled people on the conservative side of Parliament did not support the Government as expected. That event is to the credit of those members and to the institution in general. I named those members from the conservative side of politics who played such an important role in defeating that legislation, but, of course, they only defeated it because the Labor Party was already voting against it. Credit should go to the member for Eyre and the other opposition members who were here at that time, who voted against that legislation. In my view, it was the finest hour in the history of this Parliament - at least of the times of which I am aware.

I reflected on the member for Eyre and the Deputy Premier who are the longest-serving members of this House. The Deputy Premier will continue to serve following the next election, subject to his electorate, while the member for Eyre is retiring. There is a good crop of members coming in. At the last election a good crop of new members was elected, in particular the members for Rockingham, Willagee and Thornlie. They are part of the infusion of talent that the Labor Party received at the last election. If it is to form Government, the Labor Party will have another 10 or so members coming into this House. It will be a different, but talented, team. In the past the Labor Party has had people like the member for Eyre here. He will be an enormous loss to this Parliament. He has areas of expertise and knowledge that no-one else in this House has - or indeed anyone in this Parliament. He will be a difficult act to replace. However, no-one is irreplaceable and I am sure that from within the group of people who are already here, and the group that will come after the next election, the Labor Party will put forward a good team.

This House can operate only with the consent of electors. I was elected in 1986 as the member for Welshpool, succeeding Colin Jamieson who was the member for 32 years. When I made my maiden speech I looked up the maiden speech that Colin Jamieson made 32 years before to find out what he had talked about. In his speech he said that there was a need to widen Albany Highway. He was a member of Parliament for 32 years, including a period as minister for roads, but Albany Highway was not widened during his time as a member. In my maiden speech I also mentioned the need to widen Albany Highway - of course, over the 32 years since Colin Jamieson first made the comment in the early 1950s, that need had become much greater. But I ceased to be the member for Welshpool and moved to Cockburn, and Albany Highway still had not been widened. I am pleased to note that it has since been widened, but the Labor Party cannot claim credit for that. I served as member for Welshpool for three years, but most of my time in Parliament has been as the member for Cockburn. I pay tribute to my predecessor, the member for Peel Norm Marlborough, who is here today, and his predecessors Clive Hughes and Don Taylor, who represented that area well for many years.

The redistribution that saw me go to the electorate of Cockburn separated Cockburn from Kwinana. It should have been done earlier in the communities' interests as they are, in some respects, distinct communities. Cockburn is an area where, for most of the time that I have been the member, there have not been any local issues. It is an area that has tended to vote Labor. People have not given it a lot of attention. Only in the past three or four years, with the proposed industrial developments, has it had controversial local issues. It is rare for

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the area to have a local issue, but it has issues there now. The matters are being debated and are the subject of legislation in this Parliament. I am sure that the Labor Party will continue to hold the area in the future, but it will have to address issues in a way that is quite different from what has been done in the past. I am sure it will. I am sure that a breadth of view will be achieved - it is something members of the Parliament should strive for, as opposed to the viewpoints of single-issue zealots. I believe the people of Cockburn will be well served.

The City of Cockburn includes all the electorate of Cockburn. During my time as the local member I have enjoyed good relations with the City of Cockburn. I want to pay tribute to the three mayors during my time as the local member. They were all good. They may not agree with that assessment of each other. Because of the nature of politics, they have been opponents and rivals at different times. I want to pay tribute to Don Miguel, Ray Lees and John Grljusich as mayors of Cockburn. In their own ways, they have all done a good job. I believe John Grljusich was very unfairly dealt with in an inquiry earlier this year. It is a tragedy. John had transformed the City of Cockburn in many ways. He modernised its image, management and operations. The way he has been treated is most unfortunate. I hope he is successfully able to re-enter local government.

I want to thank the people who have worked with me over the years. I say with, rather than for, as that is the nature of the relationship. Whatever members of Parliament do is, for the most part, a result of the fact that we have staff who are able to do the many things we do not have time to do. I have been very well served by my electorate staff and the staff I had when I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet. I would like to thank Carol Burns, whom I inherited from Colin Jamieson. She worked for me for a year before going to the staff of Ian Taylor. Other staff include Marcelle George, Ruth Kerr, Helena Ball and Pauline O'Connor. Helena and Pauline have served longest; about 12 years between them. I would not have been able to achieve what I have without their help. I am extremely grateful to them. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet I was well served by the political staff and the public servants attached to the office. I believe some of them, including Leslie Finch, are still there. Public servants and people who work in government generally are, for the most part, very competent. Members of Parliament owe them a debt of gratitude. I echo the sentiments of other speakers earlier today that the people who work for Parliament and those who work for the Assembly give a high standard of service. Without them the Parliament would not be able to work and function as well as it does.

I also want to thank my wife. It has been said that none of us could do what we do in this job without support from home. The support I have received from my wife over the past 15 years has made it possible to do what I have done.

[Applause]

MR WIESE (Wagin) [12.04 pm]: Like all members who are leaving the Parliament, I have mixed feelings. It has been a wonderful 14 years for me. I came in on a by-election after Campbell Nalder suffered an untimely death. I have seen a lot done in that time. It has been a tremendous privilege to be a member of the Parliament and part of the governing process. Nearly half the time I have spent in Parliament has been in Opposition. I have no regrets and I would do it all over again if I were given the chance.

Two nights ago I was driving home and listening to ABC radio. I heard a story on the radio that made me think about the Parliament. It was that Pamela Anderson had been given an award in the United States by a toothpaste manufacturer for having the most attractive smile. I thought that was interesting. It crossed my mind that the great majority of people would never have thought of Pamela Anderson as having an attractive smile. They probably looked at all her other attributes that are more eye-catching. It seemed to me to be analogous with the Parliament. The obvious parts of the parliamentary process are the things that get all the publicity; they are in the public eye. Debates, disputation and question time are parts of the parliamentary process that, in some ways, do not really represent what Parliament is about. They are the things that catch the public eye and are given public presentation. The reality is that the Parliament works extremely well and its real achievement is all its not-so-public aspects. The Parliament achieves an enormous amount and, on a great number of occasions, the Government and Opposition work together to ensure the passage of legislation. Amendments from backbenchers and the Opposition are incorporated into legislation when something has been overlooked or something worthwhile is brought up. That is the side of the parliamentary process that is a bit like Pamela Anderson's smile. It is the side that we never look at or put in the public eye.

It crossed my mind that there is another similarity between the Parliament and Pamela Anderson: It is the shell that contains the persona or, in this case, the building. As she ages, Pamela Anderson needs some maintenance and reconstruction to keep her structure and keep her body right so she is able to continue doing what we expect her to do. Some might say that she has had more maintenance, upkeep and rehabilitation than has this Parliament. I do not want get into that argument. There is a similarity between her and this building. This building is old and is ageing, and it needs some maintenance, upkeep and restructuring. It needs major work -

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as, no doubt, Pamela Anderson will at some stage in the future. It has been terrific to see some of the improvements and changes made to the building over the past six to eight years, as well as those occurring now under the guidance of the Speaker. Some very significant improvements and changes have been made to the building. We have got rid of nearly all those dreadful cubbyholes that filled the corridors. We have also upgraded some of the furniture, equipment and carpets. The real major structural changes this Parliament has desperately needed since I have been a member, and for a long time before that, have still not been tackled, and they must be tackled. Every time I go to a Parliament in another State I have seen how they have addressed the same problems that we have; that is, an old building that has an inadequate capacity for the requirements of this age. When I come back and look at this building I think it is time we spent some money on it. Parliament must bite the bullet and tackle the issues of rebuilding and putting in place better accommodation to meet the current needs of this Parliament and for the coming century. It is disgraceful that the committee officers and personnel work across the road in Hay Street. They should be a part of this Parliament. They should be readily accessible for members because they help us to do the work of Parliament. While we have a lack of facilities, they are not able to work as effectively as they could. It has been a disappointment to me because we considered and discussed upgrading Parliament when we came into government. It was to be one of our major projects in the second term; yet, we still have not tackled it. That is one of the few disappointments I have had during my time in this House.

I address some of the issues that have been addressed by all members in Parliament. Without the help of electorate staff and ministerial staff - during the time I was a minister - none of us would be able to perform our jobs. I pay tribute to my electorate officers and the ministerial staff I had during my time as Minister for Police. They do a fantastic job and have been an enormous support to me, as have the other electorate officers to their members, who could not do without them. I also pay tribute to those party supporters who have been part of the strength behind me at the branch, district council and state level. They do an enormous amount of work without any thanks, pay or recognition. They are, in many cases, the sources of and driving force behind some of the initiatives, changes and ideas that are brought into Parliament. Other members and I owe them a lot. It is not only the party people who have been an enormous help; the supporters with no party affiliations have also given my family and me a huge amount of support. Without naming them - I cannot compete with the member for Girrawheen - they are fantastic and we owe them much. I pay tribute to them for all the help they have given us.

I thank other ministers and especially their ministerial staff. Many problems are brought to members of Parliament and we endeavour to tackle all of them. We achieve a great deal of success in our efforts to help those people who come to us, and we do that with the help of ministerial staff. Whether in Opposition or Government, all those people have been a great support and help to me as a member of Parliament and, I am sure, to all other members. Again I thank them and the departmental people who get much criticism and not a great deal of praise. They do an enormous amount of work behind the scenes to help members of Parliament and ultimately to help our constituents who come to us looking for our assistance.

Like other speakers before me, the privilege of serving the Parliament and the people as a minister is something that I can never forget; it is fantastic. The Police portfolio had its moments. It is a challenging portfolio as many ministers before and since have found. I am sure that has always been the case. Even people from overseas who have served in the same position tell the same story. I suspect that the challenges of the portfolio do not change from one State to the other or from one country to the other. When I entered the Police portfolio, I was confronted with several problems facing the Police Service. Members will recall that it was the time of Eucla and Argyle, from which many issues arose. At that time, the Police Union (WA) was almost bereft of funds as a result of the legal costs it had previously incurred defending its members, which is its role. It had no repayments from the Crown for many of the costs it had incurred in rightfully and properly defending its members. I grappled with that problem for a couple of years. I am glad that the Government was able to provide assistance and recompense the union, which it rightfully deserved and expected.

The Police Service was suffering from the taint of corruption and allegations were made about it. Morale was desperately low, the working conditions and equipment were poor and there was a range of ongoing salary issues. No-one can overestimate the extent of the changes that have occurred since then and which commenced during the first four years that I was the Minister for Police. I did not do that on my own by any means. I was extremely lucky to be the minister at that time because I had enormous support from the Government and my cabinet colleagues. I especially pay tribute to the Premier for his help and support during my time as the minister. I appreciated it - probably even more so in hindsight because I was too busy with my nose down and my tail up working my heart out at the time. Without all that help, we could never have done what we did during that time.

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Very early in my time as the Minister for Police I confronted the tragic death of Stephen Knight. What followed was a learning experience about the Police Service and how it operates and functions which I will never forget. It was an insight into the psyche and culture of the Police Service. At the time, I was moved not only by the death but also the ceremonial police funeral which followed; it had an enormous effect on me and I will never forget it or what it revealed of the Police Service. I will never forget the strength of Marie Knight and her young family. The experience gave me an enormous insight into the service. In that time I also saw the terrific support and work done by Police Legacy to assist the Knight family and the other families of police officers who had lost a family member either in doing their job as a member of the Police Service or in their everyday lives. The organisation does a fantastic job.

The police organisation was an extremely difficult organisation to work with on many occasions. It is a self-contained and closed structure. It has a culture of its own, which no-one should forget or ignore. That culture is part of the strength of the service, but it is also a great weakness, preventing police officers from coming forward and giving evidence against their colleagues, even when they are sure those colleagues are way out of line or even corrupt. I was able to work with both the hierarchy and the grassroots of the Police Service in bringing about some major changes in the organisation.

The Delta program was initiated when Brian Bull was Commissioner of Police, but Bob Falconer and his senior command colleagues really drove the program and made it work. The Delta program turned the Police Service from what it was into what it is today, and it is still having a significant effect. The Delta program brought about the building and equipment programs. The equipment program caused some problems, because the Police Service thinks it alone knows how to spend money, and believes that the Government should not interfere. I was able to direct some of that funding into equipment, which had to be useable by the officer on the beat. The Delta program also brought about the enormous recruitment and training program. When I became Minister for Police the average age of police graduates coming onto the beat was about 20 years. Most had joined the service as cadets, aged between 16 and 18 years, then went through 13 weeks of training. By the time they assumed normal duties, they had spent two to three years in the force, working in police stations alongside veteran police, learning all the bad habits. The last group that I graduated had an average age of 26. Nine or 10 had tertiary qualifications and all had been in the work force. That in itself led to enormous changes in the type of personnel coming into the service, and needs to continue.

Some of the less obvious parts of the Delta program were the organisational changes taking place. The commissioned officers' retirement program was significant, as was merit-based promotion, and the changes to the salary regime. The emphasis on training was greatly increased, and the professional standard portfolio was established. That brings me to the issue of how the Police Service deals with its own officers who transgress or who are corrupt. It is a difficult problem for any police service. It is very difficult for the police hierarchy, and I can say from experience that it is also difficult for the minister of the day. During my time, nearly 40 police officers were removed, all under section 8 of the Police Act. It will be a tragedy if the ability of the commissioner to remove police under section 8 is removed.

Bob Falconer's appointment was controversial at the time. He was the first Commissioner of Police to be appointed from outside Western Australia. When I first met Bob Falconer and his wife Sylvia, after the selection process, he had a very serious back problem and was due to have surgery the following week. Two or three weeks later I travelled to Melbourne to go through a briefing process with Bob Falconer, and to hand him the results of a major scoping survey, which was the beginning of the Delta proposal. During the discussion, over an afternoon, Bob Falconer was on his back on the lounge room floor, as he was recovering from his recent surgery. Had I known then what I know now, perhaps I would have taken a bit more advantage of the position he was in that day! I know some will disagree with me, but I found Bob Falconer a great person to work with. We did not always agree, but he was a very positive, forceful person, and he was the person for the times, and drove a change process through the organisation that lesser men may not have been able to do.

I mention also one other person - Les Ayton, who was appointed as Bob Falconer's deputy. There are mixed feelings about Les Ayton both within and outside the Police Service. He was seen as an idealist and a zealot, and sometimes very hard to get along with. I got on very well with Les Ayton, and I have a tremendous amount of respect for him. Tensions between him and Falconer led to Ayton's resignation. I was disappointed that he left, but it was time for him to leave, given the situation that existed at the time. Les Ayton was a very strong, dedicated fighter for integrity in the Police Service. He hated corrupt police officers, and did everything he could to get them out of the organisation. He did that job, and served the State very well. I doubt that Les and I would be on the best of speaking terms right now, but I want to place on record my respect for him. I also worked with some terrific officers in the police senior executive, such as Bruce Brennan, Bob Kucera, John

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Standing, to name just a few. I still have many friends in the Police Service, and have great respect for the job they do. I was touched very recently at a valedictory dinner for me at Narrogin, when Mike Dean, the president of the Police Union, and Chris Cassidy turned up and, totally off the schedule and without any notice, presented me with a plaque from the Police Union. They made some very gracious comments in making that presentation, and I express my sincere thanks for their very positive relationship during my time as minister

I have spent most of my time talking about the Police Service, but I will make a brief mention of the Emergency Services section of my portfolio. That area also had huge problems when I came into the job. There was a huge gulf between the hierarchy of the organisation, the firemen, the union, and the volunteers. The organisation was split from top to bottom. There were nearly as many dramas in the fire service as there were in the Police Service, although somehow it did not get the public and media exposure that the Police Service did. The fire brigades section of the portfolio went through a huge process of change during my four years there. There were huge changes in equipment, equipment upgrades and better death insurance for permanent and volunteer firefighters. We pioneered and put in place the collocation process that is still going on. It has been a successful initiative and will continue into the future. One of the matters of which I am most proud relates to the fact that when I went into the portfolio, not one piece of major equipment was manufactured in Western Australia. I had to fight with the fire brigades hierarchy to get tender documents to a Western Australian firm that was interested in tendering for the manufacture of a piece of fire brigade equipment. I am pleased to say that the majority of equipment is now manufactured in Western Australia. Some of it is manufactured in regional areas like Narrogin and Collie. An industry in Western Australia has grown as a result of the changes made in that area, and I get a great deal of satisfaction from that.

By the time I left the Emergency Services portfolio, we were near the end of the process of bringing together all the organisations involved in this area. There had been a total lack of confidence in and communication between the volunteers and the permanent officers in all sections of the organisations. We brought the permanent fire brigades, volunteer fire brigades, the whole of the bushfire organisation and the State Emergency Service under one umbrella - the Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia. That was nearing completion when I left, but was achieved afterwards. It was a great achievement for this State.

The other matter I comment on quickly is the gun debate. After the Port Arthur tragedy, all police ministers came together to try to initiate the regime that John Howard announced, without any consultation with anybody, virtually immediately after that tragedy. Western Australia was in a terrific position, because most of the things that needed to be done had been in place in this State for many years. In the second or third of those meetings between the police ministers and John Howard, Western Australia presented a proposal for the re-manufacture of all semiautomatic shotguns. Our proposal demonstrated that all semiautomatic shotguns could be re-manufactured to the equivalent of single or double-barrel shotguns and could be retained in the hands of the existing firearms owners. John Howard rejected that proposal totally out of hand, virtually without listening to it, on the basis that it was his political judgment that the people of Australia would not accept that sort of change. I was disgusted with that. It was a dreadful mistake. I estimate it could have saved the Australian community between \$100m and \$150m, because those firearms could have been re-manufactured, and there would have been no need for the buyback scheme to apply to them. It could also have resulted in the firearms organisations being onside with the Government, instead of being totally opposed to its initiatives. That firearms debate led to the start of the One Nation organisation. If that issue had been handled differently, perhaps the political spectrum in Australia would be different today.

I owe an enormous amount to my family, and especially my wife, Chris. She is a fantastic person. She has been a fantastic support behind me in this position. She is a wonderful person. She has a gift for listening to people and of relating to everybody. She was an enormous asset to me; she did the job far better than I did. Without her I could never have done the job, and I want to publicly record my enormous thanks to her for the person she is and for the fantastic job she has done over my 14 years in this place. I also say an enormous thank you to my family - to my boys Mike, Tim and Anthony for the terrific support they have given me over the years.

[Applause.]

MR MINSON (Greenough) [12.35 pm]: When I first came into this House I thought that in my final speech I would get up and say all sorts of things. That time has come. I made some notes, but they look like an unconnected series of events. However, I will tackle the issues.

I have not read over my maiden speech, but I recall mentioning the issues of rural health, roads and the narrow base of industry in the area I represent. In a sober way I tried to make a judgment about whether anything had changed. I can say that there are some positives. Kalbarri and Dongara have the only two purpose-built multipurpose health centres in Western Australia. If they are not the only two, they were the first two. I was

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pleased to see them operating in my area. I understand that planning is under way for a new mid west regional hospital in Geraldton, and that will not be before time. A lot has been done in the area of roads, and transport is considerably better in the region.

The sad part, from my point of view, because I had a particular interest in this, is that not a lot has changed in respect of secondary industry. The problem with the area I represent is that it is heavily based on farming and fishing. That is terrific, except they are traditional occupations that are virtually closed industries. It is difficult to see much increase in employment in either fishing or agriculture, because we have run out of land, and machinery is getting larger and more efficient. If anything, fewer people will be employed in those areas.

Some members who have been in this place long enough will remember that I invited them to come to Geraldton and visit a sand patch about 20 or 30 kilometres north of Geraldton where I said there should be a greenfield industrial site. It was my dream that a deepwater port and the Oakajee industrial site would be built there. It was not my idea, but one that had been mooted in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and one I felt was desperately needed. We are much closer to achieving that. Unfortunately, I have not seen the commencement of such an industry. I sincerely hope that Kingstream Steel Ltd will be able to commence its steel mill there soon, and that the Government will take a long-term view of Oakajee and put in place permanently all the approvals that are required. This nonsense of giving approvals for two years for projects that will take many years to get up is silly. If an area is judged suitable for industry, deepwater ports and the like, it should be a matter of course, to enable proper planning, to mark the planning zone on a map, so that everybody knows the land use for the area, even if it takes 20 years to happen. In looking back at the reasons I came into this place, I can say that things have changed, and they have improved in some areas. However, it is my great regret that, largely due to the economic downturn in Asia a few years ago, we have not seen the two or three large industries that everything will hang off get started at Oakajee.

While I am talking about Oakajee, I will say that I am almost passionate about seeing the industrial base in Western Australia broadened. It seems to me that there could not be a better time than right now to do it. This State has all the raw materials and expertise, and the value of the dollar makes it extremely favourable for people to come in from outside, finance an industry, set it up and export from it to areas where the currency values are much higher. We have a reformed labour market. Since I was a child, it has been said that the strength of the union movement and the sometimes pig-headed approach to industrial relations of both unions and management meant that it was not a good idea to go to Australia to set up an industry because eventually one would be held to ransom. Australia is politically stable. I do not mean that Governments do not change; rather, we have managed to find a way to change Governments in an orderly fashion, without shooting each other. All those matters lead to the conclusion that if we really get aggressive about it, particularly given the current economic climate, meaningful industry can get started in this country, particularly in Western Australia. It is my view that it would not be too long before our dollar value will start to creep up.

In talking about those matters, I should say that there is a very unfortunate side effect of the WA Inc years; that is, Governments across Australia are now almost fearful of helping an industry for fear of being accused of making some sort of deal with the private sector. Most of our industries of note would not exist if government had not contributed in some way or another. The best way for government to contribute is to put in infrastructure. I shudder to think where Western Australia would be now if the public had not funded the Fremantle port and the Kalgoorlie pipeline. All the things that have hung off those two developments alone -

Mr Pental: It is the good side of public debt.

Mr MINSON: Of course. Both of those projects were completed before federation. When one looks at the fiddling with the finances since federation, one will probably see why Governments are a bit loath to commit to those sorts of projects. However, if we aggressively go about creating infrastructure - I am referring particularly to roads, ports, airline access, power and water - industry will follow. There is no question about it. However, we are living in a dream world if we expect an industry to come over the hill and spend \$1b establishing itself and, on top of that, spend another \$1b putting in power stations, ports, roads and so on, because I do not know of any other country that expects that to happen. I commend the Minister for Resources Development particularly for the work he is doing in that area. There are opportunities for Western Australia, especially since the value of the dollar has fallen. Now is the time to become very aggressive. Every other aspect of our commercial life has been reformed. Our dollar has been floated. If anything, the currency is slightly low. Our labour market has been reformed, as I said. This country is stable politically, and it is a nice place to live. It is the sort of place to which all people from the western world would like to come to live.

Mr Colin Barnett; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Cunningham; Mr Pandal; Mr Cunningham; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Richard Court; Mr Ernest Bridge; Mr Julian Grill; Mr Bill Thomas; Mr Fred Riebeling; Mr Bob Wiese; Mr Kevin Minson

We have an opportunity to poach industry. The very successful agricultural machinery manufacturers at the moment are to be found mostly in North America. However, the sad fact is that Australian farmers will not be able to afford to buy any of their equipment shortly because, despite the fact that the falling dollar means they get more for their produce, it is a double whammy when they buy fertiliser and machinery. If the Government becomes proactive and talks to companies like John Deere Ltd and Massey-Ferguson (Australia) Ltd, it can begin to poach secondary industry from other countries. I have spoken with industry representatives overseas. They have a preference to come to Australia rather than go to Asia. Traditionally, they have gone to Asia because there they get help from Governments. However, they are operating in a foreign environment, and their executives do not necessarily want to live there. They have to finance their children's education outside of those countries. Opportunities exist in this country.

My experiences since coming to this place have been interesting. After I had been here for a short time, I remember Bob Pike asked me how I was settling in. I said that it was great. I told him that I gave a very hesitant maiden speech, with a quavering voice, and everybody listened intently and applauded at the end of it. I thought that was pretty good. The next time I got to my feet I nearly got ripped to bits, and I had not even opened my mouth. I said to Hon Bob Pike that every time I got to my feet, three or four people were in the Chamber, and after a couple of minutes they walked out. I said that it was not just me because it happened to everybody. He said, "Young man, what is this place called?" I said, "It is called Parliament." He said, "That means a place for speaking. If it was meant to be a place for listening, it would have been called something else." I think that explains many of the things that happen in this place.

Another thing I found was that as soon as I became a member of Parliament, people somehow expected me to have been dealt a double portion of the wisdom of the great monarch Solomon. Suddenly, I became a new species and was supposed to be able to do superhuman things, and the people wanted to call me to account if I was not able to deliver. I talked to Hon Clive Griffiths about this matter, and I said that I regretted that members of Parliament were held in low esteem - that was many years ago and things have not improved. Hon Clive Griffiths said something that was very insightful; that is, that Parliament is supposed to be a mirror of society, and society is made up of all sorts of people. He said, "If you look at Parliament, it is a mirror of society, and what is happening is that society is looking into the mirror and it does not like what it sees." Perhaps that also explains some of the things that happen here.

In my time in this place I have been up near the top, down near the bottom and back in the middle. I have enjoyed the process. I admit that I have had two major problems. One is that I am a bit slow on the uptake. Although I usually work something out correctly in the end, everybody else has moved on and does not notice. Another thing is that I am extremely naïve - I admit that. In fact, I confess to the House that I am so naïve that I became deputy leader and was then kicked out before I even knew who Noel Crichton-Browne was. Therefore, members will see that not too many people here are more naïve than I am.

When I came into this place, I must admit that I expected all the members on the other side of the House to have a pair of horns that stuck out and a spiky tail, and I was sure that either in the boot of their car or in their office they had one of those little sharp pitchforks. I thought they hid it pretty well because I could not see it. As time went by, I realised that some members had those attributes. However, I was also naïve enough to think that all those on this side of the House did not have those attributes. After a little while I realised that quite a few members on this side share those attributes.

One thing that has disappointed me, particularly on the part of members of the media - this has spilled out into the wider society - is the continual ascribing of ill intent to members of Parliament. In my time here, regardless of who has horns and pitchforks, most members have tried to do the right thing most of the time. We make some terrible mistakes, and occasionally the odd person does the wrong thing for the wrong reason. If society continues to tear down its leaders, we will reap a terrible reward. That is beginning now. Some of those under 25 years of age have no respect for the Parliament or the people in it. Part of that is our fault and part is the fault of other people.

I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later stage of the sitting.

[Leave granted for speech to be continued at a later stage.]

Debate thus adjourned.

[Continued on page 3865.]