

VALEDICTORY SPEECHES

Member for South Perth

MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth) [5.31 pm]: The voice of reason is standing now to bring some order to the chamber. To my family and friends up there, this is what it is like all the time—a very unruly place!

I have just found out, Mr Speaker, that I am competing with the third game of the State of Origin—the decider. I had friends texting me, saying, “Do you mind if we don’t watch your speech? We’ve got to watch the State of Origin. Can we watch it later?” I said, “Go for your life.” Queensland has scored the first try, if no-one knows.

The SPEAKER: And New South Wales the second.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: Thank you.

If anyone had suggested to me 20 years ago that one day I would be standing here after nearly 16 years in this place giving a valedictory speech, I would have laughed at them. My life was completely different back then. I was a journo at *The West Australian*, working long hours, with night shifts during the week, covering sports events on weekends, drinking a few beers after the sports events, and travelling regularly interstate and overseas to cover big sporting events. I had no time for politics. I really was not interested in politics. I had been a member of the Liberal Party back in the 1980s when we lived in Ascot. It was pretty tough out there in Belmont, being a member of the Liberal Party. I remember being at a branch meeting and they were looking for candidates to go to the state conference. I did not know what the state conference was. I said I would go. I turned up at the Sheraton hotel—I was a journo at *The West* and we were supposed to be apolitical—and there was this phalanx of reporters and cameras, stopping the delegates as they walked in. I had to quickly walk past and find another entrance to the conference.

I was always a Liberal. When I was a kid growing up in Hammy Hill, I remember listening to Bob Menzies. I was always pretty inquisitive, but I was taken by his oratory style. We only had a radio in the lounge room down in Hammy Hill. We did not have much money. We would listen to him. He would speak at the Perth Town Hall. Sometimes he would speak at the GPO during the day and at the Town Hall at night-time. We would sit around and listen to him on the radio. I was sort of impressed with him. My dad was a Labor man. I am probably one of the few Liberals to come out of Hammy Hill.

After the career I had, being a member of Parliament is the most rewarding thing I have ever done. I did a lot of rewarding things as a journo. I promoted good ideas, covered big events and tried to make the sports that I was covering better for the competitors and the fans. But the job we all do as members of Parliament is so fulfilling and rewarding when we can help people in our electorate. People think South Perth is a wealthy electorate but a lot of people in South Perth live in Homeswest homes. They battle and struggle. We try to help them whenever we can. That is rewarding for me.

How did I become the member for South Perth? I have not spoken about this much. One day in 2004, I got a phone call from a person who will remain anonymous. They said, “Would you be interested in running for South Perth for the Liberal Party?” I said, “Why do you ask?” They said, “They’re having big problems with their preselection.” It had become very untidy and the state director had to call in the police at the preselection. Bad behaviour does not just happen within Labor circles; it happens over on this side, too. People on the preselection panel were being coerced into how to vote and threatened and all that. They arranged for me to have a meeting with a couple of the Liberal heavyweights—one I knew and one I did not—at a cafe at Scarborough Beach on a Sunday morning. My wife came with me. They said “Listen, we know you’re a member of the party. We’re looking for someone who lives in South Perth. We’re having problems with the preselection. Would you be interested? If state council opened up the preselection again, would you put your name forward?” I discussed it with Karen. Karen knows much more about politics than I do. She had worked for Wilson “Ironbar” Tuckey. She encouraged me to give it a go. We had not long been back in Perth after I did five years in Melbourne—the best five years of my journalistic life. I was sports correspondent for *The West Australian*.

Incidentally, this was not the first time that I had been approached to throw my hat in the ring. Back in the 1990s, Wilson Tuckey and a fellow named Andrew Peacock, whom I am sure all members have heard of, spoke to me about standing for the federal seat of Swan, which was held by Kim Beazley. The margin was diminishing for Kim and he eventually went to another seat. They said I should run for Swan. I had lived in Belmont for 20 years, I had a reasonable profile in the media and I was well known in the racing industry. They thought I would be a good candidate. At the same time, my career at *The West* was moving forward. I had been moved over to cover AFL; I was originally a racing writer. They put me onto footy. They obviously identified that I knew something about the great game. I covered the Eagles’ two premierships—1992 and 1994. My journalistic career was going pretty well, so I declined.

When the opportunity for South Perth came up, the situation was different. I had been living in Como for about 12 years. I had returned from Melbourne, where I was basically my own boss, and went back to the old *West*, where

people I used to be senior to were calling the shots. My mail was getting sent back to Melbourne because they did not know I had come back. I thought that maybe it was not the place I wanted to be, so I took it up. My colleagues at *The West* could not believe that I was going into politics. When I left, they said, “You’re going into an early retirement.” Nothing could be further from the truth because politics is a busy job; it is a tough job.

I went into politics from a job where I had been sports editor. I covered two Olympic Games and 14 AFL grand finals; I voted on the Norm Smith Medal in 1993, won by Michael Long; and I covered more than a dozen Melbourne Cups, five Australian Open tennis tournaments, a couple of Grand Prix in Melbourne and numerous international golf tournaments. Why would I give up that life to go into politics? I sometimes ask myself that question.

My experience in politics, as I said, had been almost non-existent. The only university I had attended was the university of hard knocks. I went to John Curtin High School until I was 16 and then got a job at *The West* as a copy boy. I was interviewed for the job by the late Tom Burke, who had lost his job in federal politics. *The West Australian* had given him a job in what was then called the staff office. I reckon Tom would have seen this young bloke from Hammy Hill and said, “He’s caught two buses to get up here for this interview; why not give him the job?” I got a job as a copy boy, went to night school, and the next minute got leaving English and another subject and I got a cadetship in journalism. That was the start of it.

I won the preselection from a very big field. It included a couple of former members of Parliament who saw South Perth as a good seat. My campaign committee included Karen, my wife; my good friend Phil Bruce, who is here this evening; a work colleague, Barry Farmer, who used to be chief racing writer at *The West*, a good Liberal; and advertising guru Keith Ellis. Our treasurer was Liberal Party stalwart Ted Gray.

When we were planning our first fundraiser, Keith Ellis, the advertising guy, said, “Why don’t you have a fundraiser for a legend of South Perth in sport, and part proceeds will go to a junior sporting club in South Perth?” We had the first fundraiser, and it was so popular that we have had one every year since. We have inducted people like Lyn McClements, a gold medallist at the Olympics. She grew up in Manning. Many of the champion footballers grew up in Manning. Three hockey players grew up in Manning. Andrew Vlahov, who went to four Olympics, grew up in South Perth and went to Kensington Primary School. It was just a good local thing to do. I am really pleased that we have done that. I want to thank Phil Bruce and Steve Loxley. The great Allan “Chubby” Stiles is here. He won a Simpson Medal playing football for Western Australia. He is a good friend of mine. He still has not forgiven me, because in my first ever campaign I vowed to the people of South Perth that I would deliver underground power to the whole area. Chubby lives in part of Kensington that still has not got it, so he reckoned that he was going to run against me.

There was another time when Geoff Gallop retired. I got on well with Geoff Gallop. He was in an adjoining seat, Victoria Park. We were looking for a candidate. We know what happens in politics. We always say we can win the seat. I said, “Can we win it?”, and I was told, “Oh yes, we can win it.” So I said to Chubby Stiles, “Chubby, I’ve got something for you.” He said, “What’s that?” I said, “You played for Perth. You were at Lathlain Park. Everyone knows you. You’re in the movie industry. Why don’t you put your hand up and run for Vic Park?” He said, “I’ve got a better idea. Why don’t I run for South Perth and you run for Vic Park?”

Anyway, on 26 February 2005, I was elected to the thirty-seventh Parliament as only the fourth-ever member for South Perth. Members might wonder about that. South Perth did not become a district until 1950. Before that, South Perth was in the City of Canning, because back before 1950 it was bushland all the way out through Manning. In 1950, it became the seat of South Perth. I am the fourth-ever member for that seat and the second-longest serving.

I got through my first election. I was fairly new to the area, but I got a 52.87 per cent primary vote. In 2013, which was a different year, I increased that primary vote to 66.97 per cent. That was the highest primary vote of any Liberal member that year. I remember mentioning that in a speech, and the then Premier, who was sitting down the front, said that it was not a good career move to remind people that I got a better vote than they did, but I did.

Other members of the class of 2005 on this side of the chamber were Troy Buswell, who is very well known, John Castrilli, Murray Cowper, Dr Graham Jacobs, Tony Simpson, Gary Snook, Trevor Sprigg and Dr Steve Thomas. Sadly, I am the only one from that time who remains in this Parliament, although Dr Thomas has come back and is now in the upper house. I especially say sadly because in January 2008, I lost my very good friend and roommate here, Trevor Sprigg, to a heart attack. It was one of the saddest days of my life when I got a phone call from someone in the media saying that Trevor had died in Fremantle Hospital. Trevor and I were like minds. We both loved East Fremantle footy club. He had been a premierships player at that club. Both of us did not mind a bet on the horses. An old lady in South Perth said to me one day after I was elected, “Mr McGrath, they tell me you’re a punter.” I said, “I tell you what, Mary, it’s not illegal. Understand it’s not illegal.” It is funny how people think that about a person who is punter. I mean, it is a legal thing.

Trevor’s wife, Lyn, asked me to deliver a eulogy at the funeral at East Fremantle Oval. I guess some Labor members would have been there. After the eulogy, East Fremantle Football Club came to me and said, “Trevor was a co-patron. We’d like you to take over from him.” I am still a co-patron of the Mighty Sharks. We do not like South Fremantle that much, Minister for Transport.

When I came into this place, I made a commitment that I would do my best for the people of South Perth. But also, because of my journalistic background, I wanted to try to make the state a better place. I remember that as a journo in Melbourne, after footy matches at the MCG I would see kids run out on the ground and they would all be kicking the footy with their dads and their mates. At Subiaco Oval in Perth, they were not allowed on the ground. So I wrote a column and said what a disgrace that at the MCG, which is one of the great stadiums of the world, kids could go on the ground, but our kids in Perth could not do that. That was a no-brainer. It was not long before the West Australian Football Commission said that kids could go on the ground. I have always been inclined to want to make the world a better place, if I can, because that is what a lot of journalists do. We look at things and we write columns and thought pieces. I really believe that in my own small way, without having any decision-making responsibilities in government, I have made a difference in some areas.

I will talk about a couple of those things. My first portfolio was seniors; racing and gaming; liquor licensing. Some of my colleagues very unkindly suggested that that was a natural fit for me. I hope it was not seniors; I would prefer it to be racing and gaming. In my first ever shadow portfolio position, I shadowed the man who is now Premier, the member for Rockingham. I thought the member for Rockingham might be an easy target. I did not know much about him back then and he probably did not know much about me. I certainly did not know that he would be Premier one day. I thought he did not know much about racing, so I used to try to trick him with questions across the chamber, but I did not have much luck with that.

I take my hat off to the member for Rockingham—I have always believed this—because he was responsible for my first big challenge in this place when he brought in legislation to introduce small bars and allow liquor stores to trade on Sundays. He is the first person I knew of—maybe Herb Graham was the previous one when he brought in taverns in the 1980s—to take on the Australian Hotels Association, which is a very powerful group. I agreed with the legislation, but I had a problem. My party members had been lobbied very heavily by the AHA, which said that small bars will send clubs broke. It also wanted to hold onto the monopoly over Sunday trading for takeaway liquor. It was a difficult time for me, because I was not experienced in taking legislation through our party room. When we walk in, we do not know whether half a dozen members are waiting to blindside us or ambush us. That happens. The thing about this place is that we learn on the go. We have to make mistakes. I would have been a lot better member if I could have turned the clock back 16 years, but it does not happen that way. There is no rule book. We do not get tuition along the way, because all our fellow members are busy doing their own thing. That was a difficult time, but the deadlock was finally broken when Paul Omodei, our leader back then, made a captain's call to support the government's legislation. I have to say that I became a bit unpopular with the AHA. I notice the Premier now is boy number one with it! I do not know how he patched that one up with Bradley Woods. I have not seen too many pubs close because of that legislation.

The other thing I have always wanted to see is greater use of the Swan River. I had seen tourist and commuter ferries in Brisbane, and I was always pushing for that. I also came out with a suggestion that the Causeway should be lifted. It is a causeway. We can hardly walk under it. It is so low that only little flat-bottomed and low boats can get up the river. I thought: why not lift it to let bigger boats get into the upper reaches of the river? When I raised the idea, it made the papers and a bloke sent me a text saying, "Why don't you just lower the water?" But under the Barnett government, through the member for Bateman, who was then the Minister for Transport, I chaired a working group to look at creating more ferries. We came up with the suggestion to raise the causeway, but we also came up with a suggestion that I still believe is a no-brainer: run a fast ferry from the Raffles Hotel jetty to Elizabeth Quay. With all those towers in Applecross, people could walk down and jump onto a fast ferry rather than walk over the bridge and jump on a train that might be half full. That is one for the Minister for Transport, provided she does not become Treasurer. If she does become Treasurer, she has to hand over to whoever becomes Minister for Transport and tell them, "South Perth train station; okay? Keep it high on the list". I do not want to really lose her at this time, but I cannot stop progress.

I had another idea. One of my federal colleagues, who will remain nameless, said to me, "I can't get in the paper." I said that I get a good run in the *Southern Gazette* and *The West Australian* and he said that was because I come up with all these wacky ideas. I said, "Well, maybe you should come up with some wacky ideas." The tourism industry was going through a difficult time and it wanted the government of the day—I do not know which government it was; it might have been the Carpenter government or ours—to get a "holiday at home" campaign going. I said, "You've got all this road reserve on freeways and highways. It's owned by the government. What about putting up some billboards with 'Holiday in Broome' or 'Holiday in Busselton'?" It did not go down that well with members of the community who thought it would be a distraction, but I notice that there are now billboards on Forrest Highway and out at the Perth Airport, and there is one as you drive up the freeway here above the Channel Nine building. I do not get distracted by it. In Melbourne, there is a row of them going out to Tullamarine on the Tullamarine Freeway, and it is government land. It is easy. It does not cost anything, Premier.

In 2009, I was appointed chair of a joint standing committee to review the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Act. The member for Darling Range and the Speaker were also on that committee. It was a very high-powered committee!

Several members interjected.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: No, Mick Murray was not on it. He wanted to be on it, but he was not allowed to. They all want to get on committees with me; I do not know why!

I remember that the member for Darling Range did not know anything about betting, so the former member for Kalgoorlie, John Bowler, and I gave her a bit of tuition. We had had lunch at this hotel in Kalgoorlie. We took her into the betting place and told her all about it.

The committee found that the racing industry was in need of infrastructure. It needed a lot of money, because a lot of the infrastructure in the industry was tired and old and had to be replaced. We made a recommendation that the government should reduce the tax on wagering by a sufficient amount to set up an infrastructure fund. Members know what it is like trying to get Treasury to give back a bit of a tax that it has been getting for a long time—it did not happen. I was not happy with that so I gave a speech here and said that the only answer was to sell the TAB, because if we sold the TAB, whoever the successful bidder was, they always give money up-front. Part of that money could be used, which the government was planning, to set up an infrastructure fund. I had so much opposition. The National Party opposed it; the Labor Party opposed it; some of my colleagues opposed it, and they were crossing the floor; and my friends in racing were saying to me that I had sold out the industry that I love. They said, “What are you doing? The TAB is the goose that lays the golden egg.” But I knew that the climate was going to be bad, because more competition was coming from the big boys from overseas. We stuck firm. We tried to get it done but we ran out of time.

The 2017 election came—I think we lost that one—and surprise, surprise, the new government, the McGowan government, made an announcement that it was now going to sell the TAB. I felt so vindicated because at last I had got one right. I could have politicised it. I said to the media that this was the biggest backflip in the history of the Parliament of Western Australia. It was probably close, but, you know? However, as I have said in this chamber before, and the Attorney General has mentioned it a few times, in politics, there is nothing wrong with doing a backflip, provided you land on your feet; you do not want to stumble. But if you make a good landing, backflips are fine. I did not make it political. In fact, I supported the government because I knew it was best for the industry. I think I am one of the few opposition members who got mentioned in the official press release, with it thanking the member for South Perth for his support. I did not do it for the government; I did it for the racing industry because I felt it was right. My only worry, Treasurer, is that times have changed. I do not know what the TAB will be worth when we finish COVID-19 —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: If you had sold it when you first suggested it —

Mr J.E. McGRATH: If we had sold it when we first suggested it, it might have got \$700 million or \$800 million. I can only hold you guys to account for that.

One of my most difficult decisions was when my government decided to amalgamate the two councils of South Perth and Victoria Park. It was a very difficult time for me. My community did not want it and the people from Vic Park did not want it, because they were going to lose Burswood and Crown, which was a lot of rates—about \$4 million a year. I went on 7.30, which was probably another not very good career move, and said that the people of South Perth had been led up the garden path by my government. I could imagine the former Premier sitting at home in Cottesloe, with no air-conditioning, watching 7.30. To his credit, Colin said, “I don’t mind you talking about your electorate, John—that is fine—but I didn’t like some of the language you used in the interview.” I also went to Vic Park when there was a rally. I remember the now Treasurer was there and he had a T-shirt on saying “Save Burswood” or —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: “The battle for Burswood”!

Mr J.E. McGRATH: — “The battle for Burswood”. Kate Doust, the President of the upper house, was there too. I was the only Liberal there, and the media interviewed us afterwards, so it was on Sunday night television. There I was with two Labor members. I am always getting into trouble about things like that.

I think my finest achievement in this place was the stadium. One day, when I was sitting up there as government Whip, I gave a speech. The former Premier was down the front, and I said that the stadium should go to Burswood. My reason that it should go to Burswood was that it was a greenfields site, but I had a bit more information. I had a copy of the Stephenson report from 1955. Who would have a copy of the Stephenson report at home? Who? Only a bloke like Fred Cavanough, one of my workers who is here today. He keeps all those things. He brought it in to me. The Stephenson report from 1955 said that one day there will be need for a stadium to hold 80 000 to 100 000 people in Perth, and the best location is Burswood Island, which was infill and so on. It said that it should be the site of a sporting zone for all sorts of sports. The Premier liked it and said, “Why don’t we push that?”, and the rest is history. The stadium is an amazing project that everyone agrees is really outstanding.

In closing, I want to thank all the people who have worked for me. I want to thank my wife, who is a tower of strength. When I get home at night she says, “Where were you today? I didn’t see you in the chamber.” I say, “Why don’t you get a life!” She is always the font of knowledge and gives me good advice about politics, but I do not always listen.

My children, David and Erin, are great supporters of mine. I thank my long-serving staff members, Dawn Stratton, who is here, and Fred Cavanough. Dawn was my electorate officer for 12 years. I thank my current staff members, Pierra Sanders and Frank Wright, and all the staff I have had over the years. I have had some outstanding staff. I do not know why, but I think the member for South Perth's office is a breeding ground for outstanding people. I have had four university students who did law all go on to outstanding careers, including one as president of the Law Society of Western Australia and one as a member of the bar in New York. All these people have come out of my little office in South Perth, so maybe it is not a bad training ground. I thank all those people.

I want to thank the community of South Perth. South Perth people are good people. They do not complain much. South Perth people just get on and get things done themselves. They do not want you to do everything for them. I have had so much support from those people and it has been a real honour to serve them for 16 years.

I do not know where I am going after this. It will be a new chapter in my life. I have had two chapters now—one in journalism and one as an MP. Who knows what the third chapter will be?

I wish you all the best in all your endeavours in the future. Also, to my colleagues at the next election, good luck. Thank you.

[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: I wish to advise members that I have given permission for the member for Kimberley to deliver parts of her valedictory speech in her first language, Aboriginal Gidja. After the member makes her speech in Gidja, she will repeat that part of the speech in English so that it can be reported by Hansard. I have also given permission for one of her guests to play the didgeridoo in the public gallery while she speaks in her first language.

Member for Kimberley

MS J. FARRER (Kimberley) [6.01 pm]: First of all in my valedictory speech, I would like to thank my mother, Winjana, for instilling in me the knowledge and wisdom of her culture based on respect. I never knew who my father was, so I was raised by a single mum. In my inaugural speech when I first came to Parliament in 2013, I said that I stood here proudly elected, proudly black and proudly woman. That was almost eight years ago, and despite the many changes that have occurred throughout my journey in politics, I can still stand here today and say that I stand here proudly elected, proudly black and proudly woman.

On that day in 2013, I brought Gidja, which is my first language, and Kriol to Parliament for the first time. There have been so many achievements throughout my terms that I am very proud to have been a part of. No matter how big or small the achievement or amount involved, each is just as important as the other. Achievements are measured in ways other than money. There may have been things that I said and causes that I pushed that people did not want to hear or deal with, and I make no apology for that. If my achievements saved lives and made a difference to people's lives, I stand proud.

I would like to say that it is with sadness that I speak today, for me here on this old hill where this beautiful building known as the Parliament sits. When I first came here in 2013, I could feel the spirits of people who have lived and existed in and around this area for thousands of years.

[Didgeridoo played in public gallery.]

Ms J. FARRER: I would like now to speak in Gidja.

[Words spoken in Gidja language —

Gilingaan yurran-ga Parliament-ji rurt yurran kili.

Jarrak yarra kili ngen-ing-gka.

Ngayaan jarrak ngen-aan lirrgaan kirrem-pe warringarrem-pe.

Gardiyam-pe Maanpem-pirri kapi jarrem-pe yaag-ga-ngarrem-pe tek rangka lirrgan.]

In English, I said —

Now, today, we, us, as members of Parliament, sitting, we are together all.

I speak and we shall be together here in this place.

Myself, I, talk and I do find myself here to try and educate and teach so that people can know and understand all of us together.

Gardiyam-pe means the white people and *Maanpem-pirri* means the Aboriginal people, *kapi jarrem-pe* means whoever else and *yaag-ga-ngarrem-pe* means including others, and *tek* means to look and see, *rangka* means to listen and *lirrgaan* means to teach and educate.

One of my achievements was getting bipartisan agreement for First Nation Western Australians to be recognised as the first Western Australians in our state's Constitution. I am proud that I led the change to ensure that the Aboriginal flag flies proudly here at Parliament and that our chamber opens proceedings each day with an acknowledgement of country.

In 2016, following the tragic deaths of 13 young Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, I instigated a parliamentary inquiry into Aboriginal youth suicide, which resulted in "Learnings from the Message Stick: The Report of the Inquiry into Aboriginal Youth Suicide in Remote Areas". This report led to the state government's commitment to Aboriginal youth wellbeing, a new framework to improve the outlook and resilience of young Aboriginal Western Australians in the Kimberley and across WA.

I also happened to achieve changes to domestic violence laws and helped with the legislation. I also ensured that there was \$19.3 million to upgrade Broome Senior High School, \$9.2 million to establish a comprehensive alcohol and other drug youth centre in the Kimberley, and \$9.7 million to upgrade boating facilities at Entrance Point and Town Beach. Some of my other achievements include getting significant funding to address crime and youth justice issues in the Kimberley, including \$900 000 to deliver the Kimberley juvenile justice strategy to find alternatives to detention and services aimed at diversion; \$43.6 million for the improvement of Gibb River Road; \$1 million for the much-needed Kimberley mobile dialysis unit; \$2 million for a new police and citizens centre in Kununurra; and two remote pools, which I am very proud of, because one is in Balgo, where there is no river, and those kids have to wait until the next rain comes along so that they can have bit of wetness, and the other one is in Kalumburu. I think that was the highlight of my achievements.

The year 2020, with the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, was a very challenging year not only for Western Australia, but also worldwide. Remote Aboriginal communities and the Kimberley were the first places to be isolated from the rest of the state. Being a member of the highest risk sector of the community, I was unable to attend Parliament or travel outside Halls Creek. Despite adverse comments in the local media, I am extremely proud of what was achieved by not only me, but also my office in dealing with a very concerned large and remote electorate, many distressed constituents who were unable to work and were separated from loved ones, and an extremely heavy workload in extremely difficult circumstances. I would like to thank those in the Premier's office for their regular updates, assistance and information during this time; and ministers, backbenchers and the Speaker of the house, "Watson"—who may be related to a few of my grandkids who have the same surname! It is just incredible what you find out.

There are many people I would like to acknowledge and thank for their incredible support, advice and friendship throughout my time in Parliament. Some of these are my new friends in Parliament from the last four years in government.

I give a big thankyou to Chris Bailey for doing a portrait of me that hangs in Parliament.

In government, I would like to thank my secretary, Lesley, who is here today and who made things a lot easier when times were in turmoil. I am so thankful for your support. My other staff member, Kamaia, worked tirelessly, even though she was having a new member added to her family. On 3 November, she gave birth to a boy, whom I was given the privilege of giving an Aboriginal name from my language. I named him Good-jaal, which translates to firefly, because of the time his mum spent, even after hours, still doing work for me in my office. Thank you both. Congratulations to Kevin, the proud father. I offer my appreciation for being able to name his child. I also offer my appreciation to my granddaughter Siobhann Wilinmiya for being here today; I am sorry I could not have my family here today. My husband, Mario, could not be here; he is a scared person and would not fly on the plane! But he is here in spirit.

I also thank Robyn Clarke, Claire, Mina and most employees in this place. I thank security for making sure that I get home safely after late sittings, and I would also like to thank the chefs who made kangaroo available on the menu for me! I thank Anthony and Lee for giving me hot chocolate during the cold winters. I thank my husband for being there for me, and my children and grandchildren. I thank the friends I have worked with here, no matter which party you belong to—each and every one of you. The committees I have worked with have been wonderful.

I will leave Parliament knowing that I made a difference, especially on an issue I am passionate about, suicide.

[Didgeridoo played in public gallery.]

Ms J. FARRER: I will now recite in Gidja some of the Lord's Prayer.

[*Words spoken in Gidja language —*

*Ngaapuny Laarna yurru tek perna yurrenga
Gilingaan ngeringka rurt yarran Parliament
Ngarak perna lirrgaan yurren-ga*

Mengkawurk-purru Waangakem-pe
Wilaangen pinarrik-kirrem-pe]

What I said there in Gidja is part of the Lord's Prayer —

Our Father, up above in heaven
Look down, see us all here in this house
Today we are sitting here; we are in Parliament
Make do to educate, teach and learn—all of us together
Make good for them and all our children as they come before us
And to make them understand

That is the prayer to God.

So, *Waaranja*—enough of that. Amen.

[Applause.]

Member for Victoria Park

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park — Treasurer) [6.13 pm]: It may have taken me a couple of attempts, but, yes, I am definitely leaving the Western Australian Parliament! To even say that is, for me, a little surreal, as I am voluntarily leaving a job that I genuinely love. I will never again have a job as diverse, stimulating or exciting as being a member of Parliament and minister. But I also know that although I will miss everything, I do not think I will regret my decision. To adopt a saying from a different scenario: It's not you; it's me!

I want to begin by acknowledging the sheer privilege it has been to be a member of this place. Colleagues, all of us are so fortunate to be given the rare privilege, by our parties and our electorates, to be afforded the responsibility of representing them in our state Parliament. I will start by thanking the people of my community of Victoria Park. They have been good enough, on four occasions, to send me here to represent them as the sixth member for Victoria Park. We all love our communities, and it has been wonderful to have been a key part of an inner-city area like mine, that has undergone incredible change over the last 20 years. I thank the community in which I have lived for more than 30 years for giving me this privilege.

To the organisation that brought me to the dance and gave me the opportunity to be its standard-bearer in Victoria Park, the WA Labor Party, thank you. I came to Labor not from the union movement, but from a family of Labor people. My mother came from the coalmining region of New South Wales, and watched her mother mutter curses whenever the TV screen was filled with the face of either John Howard or Kerry Packer! My late father was a member of the stolen generation and a lifelong Aboriginal activist. Of interest, my mother has, over the years, drifted further to the left, as my father drifted further to the right; this ensured that I sat firmly in the centre of Australian politics.

To my local Victoria Park WA Labor branch, thank you for your continuous support. The members of our party are just wonderful. They donate their time, money and effort towards ensuring that Labor governments are formed. They fundraise, letterbox, doorknock and advise, and I will never be able to return the favour.

To the unions, it is fair to say that I have had, over the years, a somewhat fractious relationship with some of our union movement, but I hope that they have never doubted my belief in their importance. They always keep us focused on working Western Australians, and I also want to say that the unions have always stood, firm and proud, at every key point since the 1940s with the Aboriginal rights movement. Although I may have irritated some in my role as Treasurer, I like to think that we always found common ground in my role as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

To my electorate staff: as every member of Parliament knows, we are only as good and effective as our electorate office, particularly when you enter the ministry and time in the electorate is at a premium. To the late Rose Sheridan, who worked for Geoff Gallop before me and who, to be honest, taught me how to be an effective local representative: your memory is not lost on us.

To Alison Cook: I employed Alison as a young girl when I was elected, and I have watched her grow into the confident leader she now is. I thank you.

To Adelaide Kidson, who pretty much walked in off the street from Merredin to eventually join me in my ministerial office: like Alison, you have become a confident leader, and I suspect your journey in politics still has some way to travel.

To Sarah McBride, who gets my incessant texts and demands at all hours of the night: I thank you for your patience and commitment. Your journey also continues.

In respect of my ministerial office, it is always dangerous to start listing individual people, so can I say how wonderful it is to be a minister in WA and to be served by outstanding, committed public servants. Although I will now name

some, I do not want to diminish the work of so many people who have ensured that I have not completely embarrassed myself during my time as a minister.

To the Under Treasurer, Michael Barnes, and the executive and public servants at Treasury: your advice and commitment to the public good serves our state so well. I am incredibly proud of the work we have done together, and I thank you for your extraordinary efforts, particularly over the past 12 months.

I also acknowledge Jodie Cant in the Department of Finance, Kaylene Gulich at Treasury Corporation and Kate Alderton in Aboriginal affairs. You have all been quite outstanding, and I thank you for your huge efforts on behalf of our state.

To my chief of staff, Roger Martin: it is a funny old relationship between a minister and a chief of staff; sometimes adviser, sometimes wife, sometimes friend and the person sent forward to tell the minister when his great idea is, in fact, an expensive dud. You have been fantastic. It has been quite a ride, and I thank you for leaving a small start-up to join my office immediately before it became a successful, large start-up where everyone made significant amounts of money! Thank you.

To Robyn Taylor—Riordan when I first became a minister—my executive officer and executive officer to many ministers before me, and I suspect a few more to come: I thank you for your loyalty and professional brilliance. The public sector has many rules and regulations, many of them are not obvious, nor do they make any sense. Robyn, you ensured that I did not walk an obvious path into scandal, embarrassment and resignation.

To my advisers—there have been many—I thank you all so much. You have all worked so hard to make me a better minister and to ensure the success of the government. Your work and efforts are never taken for granted and will always be remembered. I thank you.

To the parliamentary staff: our arcane rules are known only by you. I thank you for your support and advice. There is one group I want to thank in particular who were invaluable in my opposition years and who continued to provide support, and that is the librarians of the Parliamentary Library. You are the soothsayers who seem to have the knowledge that I seek before I ask the question. My mother is a librarian, and I thank you for not following her example in correcting the grammar in my email requests.

To the cabinet: I think we have been a brilliant cabinet. We have been united, disciplined and clear-eyed in our task. It has been an honour working with you all. Government is wonderful—it really is!—but it is in opposition that we earn our stripes in policy development and forge relationships. You have all been just fantastic. If I can, I will mention a couple in particular. The Attorney General —

The SPEAKER: You woke him up!

Mr B.S. WYATT: He is awake now!

We shared an office for eight and a half years and, despite that, we became firm friends. You have been a standout Attorney General and a loyal, although sometimes eccentric, friend. I thank you. To the Minister for Transport: a firm friendship was formed in opposition and, dare I say it, in the strategic brilliance of the debt monster. It has been a pleasure to watch you in government roll out our signature policy in Metronet and despite the inevitable tensions between a Treasurer and a big spending minister, you have been a wonderful friend, adviser and colleague. To the Premier: it has been an honour—it really has—serving in your government. Your journey from Leader of the Opposition to a Premier of determination, fairness and humour has been a pleasure to watch and be a part of. I thank you for your support and the chance to serve in your government. To my family: I am in a house of females. The only other male is my galah and we often feel more bonded than you might realise. My girls, Matilda and Georgina, have only ever known me as a member of Parliament. I have only been able to do this job with their support and love. I thank you and I apologise for the many late nights and an often grumpy Dad. Vivianne, I thank you so much. This has only been possible because you raised my children and fed my galah. To my sister, Kate, who, just before I got to my feet, sent me a text demanding that she be acknowledged—I acknowledge you!

With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I will opine on a few issues. The best job in government is Treasurer. I have loved the central agency and the ability to stick my nose into any area. However, I note now, with a hairy eyeball towards some of you, and this is a note to whoever may follow in my footsteps as Treasurer, on budget day, the Minister for Tourism gets to announce cruises—well, he used to announce things like cruises—and other wonderful things for the tourism sector; the Minister for Transport gets to announce new roads and rail; the Minister for Education and Training gets to announce new schools; and the Premier gets to announce whatever exciting thing happens to be in the budget. But as Treasurer, I got the wages policy! I thank you all for taking the lollies in our four budgets.

To a certain extent, we are required to respond to the circumstances in which we find ourselves and then we play them. The repair of the finances has been my task, and I am relieved and proud that we have done that. I was determined to ensure that the Treasurer after me has a balance sheet that is better able to respond to the challenges that our globe presents us. Cabinet was determined to do this and our success is obvious. One of the reasons that

we have been able to do this is, of course, the reform of the way our GST is distributed. This has been a massive overdue reform for Western Australia. But I say this to Parliament and all members, and I wrote this before today: at some point, this battle will have to be taken up again. Other states are envious and hostile, in particular at the bureaucratic level, of our success in this reform. They will continue to advocate into the ears of consecutive governments in other states. At some point, the battle will again be joined. It is upon us all to remain highly alert to this and, in the interests of our citizens, defend this hard-won reform. I also thank the Treasurers of other states. I have worked with them all over the last four years through the board of Treasury and the CFFR, the Council on Federal Financial Relations, to deal with issues of national significance. It has been a pleasure working with you all.

I wish to make some comments on Western Australia's and Australia's relationship with China and what I believe has been the rise of unhelpful public commentary directed towards our most important trading partner. China is by no means a perfect nation, but few nations are. *The Economist* magazine's democracy index has just 4.5 per cent of the world's population living in 20 fully-functioning democracies such as our own. As one of the globe's great trading nations, it is ridiculous to suggest that we should maintain strong relationships with only those countries that share our values. If we add what *The Economist* categorises as flawed democracies, it leaves more than half the world's population living in 92 countries without democratic governments. When Gough Whitlam became the first Australian Prime Minister to visit China in 1973, that nation had substantially the same political system that it has today. Every Prime Minister since Whitlam has recognised the importance of nurturing that relationship and establishing a bond between our two nations, which has brought enormous benefit to both countries. Australian governments have also been adept at tackling our differences, whether this be in human rights or territorial disputes. We have maintained a frank but respectful relationship. It is only in recent times that some commentators, and some elected representatives, have decided that we need to spend less time nurturing this relationship and more time attacking our major trading partner for not sharing our values. Much of the anxiety appears based on Chinese investment in Australia. Indeed, Chinese investment is growing in Australia. Last year, it totalled \$78 billion, but this represents just two per cent of the \$3.84 trillion in foreign investment in Australia and it is dwarfed by the United States at almost 26 per cent and the United Kingdom at almost 18 per cent. Even the Netherlands is a larger investor in Australia, but there is no national conversation about the Dutch buying up our national assets.

I am a great supporter of a rules-based trading system. The global economy has benefited greatly from the principles that were put in place after World War II and refined through a variety of international agreements over the past 70 years. But in the same way that I can choose from which cafe to buy my coffee, many of Australia's trading partners make choices about where they buy their barley, wine, meat and other commodities. If my local cafe owner were unfriendly or abusive, I would probably go to the cafe down the road. I desperately hope that we can take our relationship with China back to what it once was—a respectful one that supports strong trade benefits, but one in which we can tackle our differences through thoughtful diplomacy. Hundreds of thousands of Australian jobs, many of them here in our electorates in Western Australia, are at stake if we do not manage this relationship properly.

I would like to make a few remarks about my role as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I came to this portfolio after having it in opposition for a number of years and, to be honest, and perhaps unsurprisingly, it has become my first love. It is dynamic and frustrating and influenced by the diabolical history of Aboriginal and government relations, but it deals with the most interesting, caring, vulnerable and resilient people in our community, those who have nurtured our country for millennia. I was fully appreciative of how challenging the portfolio would be. There is no other area of government business and public policy like Aboriginal affairs. The ministerial role is steeped in history. The legacy of violent dispossession, colonisation, labour exploitation, forced removal, the institutionalisation of children and so much more lands at the feet and on the desk of the person who takes on the position of Aboriginal affairs minister. Make no mistake, the echoes of the role of the old Chief Protector still haunt this position. I was not the first Aboriginal person to take this job. Ernie Bridge held the position from 1986 to 1989, but that was a different time in history. He took on that role in the aftermath of the land rights debate and before the Mabo decision.

In 2017, I embraced the job as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs because I have seen the way that Aboriginal people with tens of thousands of years of history and wisdom behind them are now embraced by non-Aboriginal people. I have seen the potential for agreement-making, whereby miners and other land users sit down with Aboriginal people to negotiate agreements that transcend commercial deals. Genuine relationships become enduring and life-changing for all. I have seen tens of thousands of Western Australians seek a connection with the oldest living culture on the planet through participating in art, theatre, music, tourism and wandering the stunning landscape of our state through an Aboriginal lens. My overriding approach to this portfolio has been to harness this goodwill.

Resetting the relationship between First Nation people and the Western Australian state is not something that can be achieved in one term of government, but what has been achieved since I took on the role in March 2017 with the full support of the Premier and my cabinet colleagues is building a framework for structural change in the future—positive change that cannot be undone.

As I laid out in my NAIDOC address last week, I have been guided in this portfolio by four overarching principles: recognition of traditional ownership and cultural connection, addressing past injustices, commitment to partnerships

and political bipartisanship. These are principles to which it appears all political parties are now committed. Past political divisions that made Aboriginal affairs such a difficult portfolio in WA now appear to be a distant memory, and I am very heartened by that.

One of the first things I did in this portfolio was to welcome the Federal Court judgement to determine exclusive possession native title rights for the Yindjibarndi people in the west Pilbara and instruct the government's solicitors not to appeal, a decision later vindicated by the High Court. A couple of weeks ago, I visited the Gibson Desert with my colleague Hon Stephen Dawson, Minister for Environment, to celebrate the recognition of traditional ownership of the renamed Pila Nature Reserve. These two recognitions bookend four extraordinary years of native title recognition in Western Australia. Native title is a Western Australian story. More than three-quarters of our vast landscape is recognised native title. The native title system is the foundation of Western Australia's relationship with traditional owners, and for this I want to thank the commitment and unbelievable work ethic of Debbie Fletcher, native title extraordinaire and the engine room of native title agreement-making in Western Australia.

The native title system is also the key to the proposed Aboriginal cultural heritage bill. It pains me that I will not see this bill passed into law as I consider it to be the most important reform of the Aboriginal affairs portfolio for some time, but I am confident that we have produced a bill that can be introduced into the Parliament next year. I have been enormously pleased with the constructive approach taken by Aboriginal people and the resources industry through all consultation phases and I am confident that the effort undertaken to reach broad consensus on these reforms will allow the best possible chance for a bill to be supported by the forty-first Parliament.

This year has seen extraordinary events that have transformed the position of Aboriginal people in WA. The government's rapid response to the spread of COVID-19 in partnership with Aboriginal people in locking down remote communities kept Aboriginal people 100 per cent safe in those communities. It means that we will look upon those remote communities completely differently. For the past two decades, our state's remote communities have had to justify their existence, yet these are the communities that both the state and the commonwealth government said were the safest places to be when the panic over the pandemic took hold. For this, I thank the Aboriginal medical services across Western Australia. They stood up in the most difficult of circumstances.

Obviously, the destruction of the Juukan Gorge rock shelters earlier this year has also contributed to, in my view, a seismic shift in the way that Aboriginal heritage is viewed. Six months ago, nobody except the PKKP Aboriginal Corporation traditional owners knew of the existence of these caves; now it seems the whole world knows about them in collective grief over their loss. Juukan reinforces why Western Australia's Aboriginal heritage protection system needs to be overhauled. It also highlights how powerful the Aboriginal position is when it comes to protecting heritage. I sense that this power is not totally appreciated by many Aboriginal people and their supporters, some of whom hang on to the old rhetoric of demanding an enshrined veto over development. It is a power that Aboriginal people already have. Sometimes moral authority and public opinion are far more effective than written law.

One other comment I want to make about the Aboriginal affairs portfolio is its combination with the lands portfolio. I have held the lands portfolio since 2018. It is the first time in the history of Western Australia that the portfolios of Aboriginal affairs and lands have been held by the same minister. These portfolios go together perfectly because the long-term development agenda for Aboriginal people is dependent on land reform. In a state without a dedicated land rights act, we can do so much through working with the commonwealth Native Title Act and the WA Land Administration Act. I could give numerous examples of where this works, such as Yawuru in Broome, Miriuwung Gajerrong in the Ord River Valley, Yamatji in the midwest, Esperance Noongars in the south west, and remote communities. The list is endless.

The lands portfolio also gives the minister an opportunity to rename some of the state's landmarks so that they more appropriately recognise Aboriginal people and their traditional culture. A few months ago, working with the Ngarinyin and Bunuba traditional owners of the central Kimberley, the government announced that their wonderful mountain ranges will forever be known as Wunaamin Miliwundi and no longer named after a Belgian tyrant who never set foot on Western Australian lands. That announcement was met with massive public approval, which highlights the goodwill in our state for recognising Aboriginal culture. I thank the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia for its advice and support over the last four years. It has been spectacular in its support for me as minister.

Colleagues, that is it. I have loved my time here. I love the Parliament, the debate, the camaraderie and the opportunity to serve in government. Only those who have had the rare privilege to serve as a member of Parliament really know its delights, pressures, challenges and rewards. I thank you all for the journey we have shared. I wish my caucus colleagues all the very best for the upcoming election. To my friends in opposition, I wish you well but not success. I do not know what comes next, but I am excited about the opportunity. Thank you.

[Applause.]