

**PETER VERNON JONES, AM**

*Condolence Motion*

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier)** [12.01 pm] — without notice: I move —

That this house records its sincere regret at the death of Mr Peter Vernon Jones, AM, and tenders its deep sympathy to his family.

I acknowledge members of Peter's family who are in the gallery today for this important affirmation of someone who was a very significant figure in this Parliament in the time he was here, and in the community before and after his parliamentary career.

Peter Jones was elected as the member for Narrogin in 1974 and served his electorate and the state diligently until his retirement 12 years later in 1986. Peter was born in Launceston, Tasmania, in 1933, to parents Harold Vernon Jones, a headmaster, and Annie May Simmons. In Hagley, Tasmania, where he had taken up a life of farming, Peter married his wife, Toni, in 1960. Eight years later, Peter and his young family moved to Western Australia to pursue farming opportunities in an effort to secure their family's future. The Jones' settled in Narrogin, where they became successful wool, meat and grain growers. In 1974 Peter took the leap from being a successful farmer and board member of the WA Barley Marketing Board to running for the Legislative Assembly, and he won.

Looking back on his parliamentary career, Peter's achievements are many and enduring. His 12 years in Parliament were turbulent in that they included three splits in his own party, which saw him enter Parliament as a member of the Country Party and retire as a member of the Liberal Party. Peter was in government for nine of his 12 years in Parliament. Over those nine years he held 13 portfolios. It therefore makes sense that Peter was known as the "minister for everything". Peter made a great impression on the Premier of the day, Sir Charles Court, and this was reflected in the workload Sir Charles bestowed upon him. Peter's record reveals a man of great foresight. In the resources development portfolio he oversaw the completion of the North West Shelf gas project, without which WA's economy would not be as strong as it is now. The complexity of this challenge, especially during the downturn that followed the 1970s global oil crisis, cannot be underestimated. Peter also seems to have been one of the few people of his time to cast his eyes north and truly comprehend what China would become, and the importance of a healthy relationship between China and Western Australia. Peter led the first official WA mission to China in 1980, and helped establish technical missions between WA and China. His plan helped build the technical and academic capacities of a growing China. Western Australia continues to benefit greatly from the wise groundwork laid by Peter.

In his inaugural speech, Peter spoke passionately about the survival of rural communities and he accepted as part of his parliamentary mission the duty to ensure those communities did not fall too far behind. He also said that he did not want to be a "bird of passage". He wanted to have longevity and make a difference; he achieved both. He continued to contribute to Western Australia upon his retirement from Parliament in 1986. Peter became the inaugural chairman of the Water Corporation and was also appointed chairman of Defence Housing Australia by the Howard federal government, leading Australia's biggest landowner through a period of significant change. He also served on cultural and charitable boards, including the Perth International Arts Festival and the Diabetes Research Foundation of Western Australia. Peter's lifelong contributions were acknowledged in 2001, when he was named a member of the general division of the Order of Australia—an AM—for service to the WA Parliament, to the development and management of infrastructure services, and to the community through medical research and cultural and animal welfare organisations.

On 16 January this year, just shy of his eighty-fourth birthday, Peter Jones passed away. Alan Birchmore, AO, in his obituary to Peter, summed up Peter's public life very well. According to my notes, he said —

Peter accepted only the best for Western Australia and was successful in so many of his endeavours on our behalf.

Peter has left a quiet, strong and lasting legacy of substantial achievement. His most important legacy of course is that of his family: his wife, Toni; his children, Philippa, Andrew and Angus; his son-in-law and daughters-in-law; and his seven grandchildren, David, Louise, Max, Sam, Mia, Zachary and Felix. I offer my sincerest condolences to Peter's family and friends.

**DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition)** [12.06 pm]: Peter Vernon Jones was a Tasmanian who made an immense contribution to his adopted state of Western Australia. He served as both a National Country Party minister and a very senior office bearer of the Liberal Party of Australia. Peter was born in Launceston in January 1933, the son of a headmaster, and was educated at Launceston Grammar School. From 1950 until 1968 he farmed at Hagley, south west of Launceston, and nearby Westwood. After national service

training in 1952 he continued with the Citizen Military Forces and the Reserve of Officers until 1958, and was a councillor of the Royal National Agricultural and Pastoral Society of Tasmania. He married Toni Maslin in Hagley in January 1960.

Peter Jones brought his family to Western Australia in March 1968 and, until 1981, farmed wool, meat and coarse grains in Narrogin. He was a member of the Primary Industry Association and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, and in 1972 became a member of the WA Barley Marketing Board. From 1971 to 1975 he was a councillor at the Anglican Diocese of Bunbury. He joined the Country Party in 1973 and was chosen to contest the district of Narrogin on the retirement of the late Bill Manning. Coming from Tasmania, Peter was not interested in historic political animosities but simply wanted to serve the community.

At the March 1974 state election, standing under the banner of the National Alliance, Peter Jones was opposed by the ALP and by the long-serving mayor of Narrogin standing for the Liberal Party. He secured an absolute majority of 123 votes out of 7 063, and subsequently had no trouble holding the seat of Narrogin for the National Country Party. He polled 79 per cent against the Liberal candidate in 1977, and 77 per cent against the ALP candidate in 1980, and had the rare distinction of winning Narrogin unopposed in 1983.

As a new member, Peter Jones was immediately elected as secretary of the Parliamentary National Country Party. Little more than a year later, in May 1975, after the NCP leader and deputy leader had resigned from cabinet and subsequently from their leadership positions, the late Dick Old was elected leader with Peter Jones as the new deputy leader. On 5 June the coalition was restored and he became the Minister for Housing; Conservation and the Environment; Fisheries and Wildlife.

Peter Jones made his mark as a capable minister and, after the 1977 election, was given the challenging portfolios of education; cultural affairs; recreation. In 1980 Sir Charles Court appointed him as Minister for Resource Development; Mines; Fuel and Energy. In addition, from 1980 to 1981 he held the portfolio of Industrial Development and Commerce. From February 1981 to 1982 he held the portfolios of Regional Administration and the North West; Tourism, with Barry MacKinnon as his assistant and successor in these portfolios in 1982. To say that Peter Jones was a key minister in the Court and O'Connor governments would be an understatement.

His work as a minister was energetic and consistent, and pragmatic rather than ideological. As Minister for Education, he sought to end compulsory student unionism and enabled the universities to receive income from student subscriptions in order to provide services. He ensured that necessary upgrades of schools occurred regardless of whether they were in politically sensitive electorates. He was the ideal Minister for Resources Development in the government led by Sir Charles Court. He interpreted, pursued and implemented the Premier's approach, travelling extensively and ensuring that developments were successful.

When Peter Jones was in opposition after the 1983 election, he was a busy shadow Minister for Economic Development and Technology, and Resources Development. He was also a strong critic of the approach taken by the Burke government to business and governance. He strongly opposed the legislation to establish the Western Australian Development Corporation, putting forward facts and arguments that were firmly and forcefully directed to the substance of the issue, but without either flamboyance or head kicking. He has been described as a man of his time, but gentler than many others, and as a man who would have been at home in Sir David Brand's government.

Peter Jones was not a "tribal" politician. He did not join the reunified National Party when it merged with the National Country Party of Australia (WA) in October 1984. Instead, in February 1985, he joined the Liberal Party, along with Dick Old and the late Bert Crane. At the 1986 election, he was defeated by the National Party candidate, the late Cambell Nalder, by 1 557 votes, polling 40.9 per cent of the vote after preferences.

After Peter Jones left Parliament, he commenced an active career in business. Between 1986 and 1988, he headed the Barrack House Group. He was subsequently a director of such companies as Ammtec Ltd, ARC Energy NL and Kailis Organic Olive Groves Ltd. He became actively involved in the Liberal Party organisation, and in April 1989 was chosen by the Liberal Party State Council to fill the position of state president after the incumbent president resigned before completing his term.

Peter Jones was a healing influence on a divided Liberal Party that had lost the 1989 election, despite polling the majority of the statewide vote. Peter was uninterested in power games and restored confidence in the party. He was re-elected unopposed as state president in both 1989 and 1990, and retired in 1991. His firm management necessitated the departure of two Liberal state directors, prior to the highly successful 1991 appointment of Geoff Paddick. From 1990, he served for six years as federal vice president of the Liberal Party, a crucial period that culminated in the return of the Liberal Party to federal government in 1996.

Peter Jones continued to serve the Western Australian public as foundation chair of the Water Corporation of Western Australia from January 1996 to 2002. He was chairman of Defence Housing Australia from 2003 to 2008. He was chairman of the Calloway Foundation for Music from 1995 to 2002. He chaired a steering committee for the development of security and custodial services for Western Australia. He was a fundraiser for diabetes research and for the West Australian Youth Orchestra. He played a major role in the establishment of the Australian Prospectors and Miners' Hall of Fame in Kalgoorlie. Peter Jones also undertook, at the request of the then Minister for Mines and Petroleum, Hon Norman Moore, a review of the mining approvals process, resulting in significant improvements. This was just one example of his practical, low-key problem solving in the governance of Western Australia.

Peter Jones' community service was recognised by his appointment in 2001 as a Member of the Order of Australia, and by a Centenary of Federation medal and the Chancellor's Medal of the University of Western Australia in 2003.

In Peter Jones' 12 years in the Western Australian Parliament, he made a notably constructive contribution to the development and public life of Western Australia, a contribution that continued and grew after his term in Parliament finished.

We express our condolences to Mrs Toni Jones, their daughter, Philippa, and their sons, Andrew and Angus, and to their families, which includes eight grandchildren. May he rest in peace.

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the National Party)** [12.13 pm]: On behalf of the National Party, I would like to make a contribution to this condolence motion for Hon Peter Jones, MLA, and express our sincere condolences to his wife of 50 years, Toni, their three children, their grandchildren, and their family, friends and colleagues.

Hon Peter Jones was a former farmer from Wagin who successfully became the member for Narrogin and a minister of the Crown. Hon Peter Jones started his term in Parliament as a member of the Country Party and completed his term as a member of the Liberal Party. It is clear that Peter Jones was a versatile and capable state member of Parliament and minister. He served in Parliament between 1974 and 1986. He held 13 ministerial portfolios, as has been said by the previous two speakers. Those ministries included housing; education; regional administration; resources development; and mines, fuel and energy. He was colloquially known as "The Minister for Everything".

It is clear from reading various reflections on Peter that he made a significant contribution to Western Australia during a turbulent time for the National Party and the Country Party. Reflections on these times are canvassed in the book *Blood Nose Politics: A Centenary History of the Western Australian National Party*, and in the reflections of his colleagues at the time. The comments that have been made by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition are an accurate reflection of Peter Jones. Peter Jones was driven not by ideology but by a wish to follow policy and pursue the best interests of the communities that he represented.

One of Peter Jones' greatest achievements was his involvement in the resources sector. His skills as a negotiator, policymaker, economic visionary and administrator were central to the biggest growth phases of the state's natural resource development, particularly in facilitating the development of the North West Shelf gas project.

Peter Jones also laid the foundations for Western Australia's strong relationship with China. He recognised in the late 1970s and early 1980s that China was a nation of great economic significance but lacked the resources to reach its ambitions. He helped bolster Western Australia's economic profile and relationship with China by initially providing the opportunity for Chinese visitors to learn to efficiently develop resources projects in remote places. It was clear that his vision and foresight in establishing these technical missions, working closely with Sir Charles Court, laid the groundwork for China to become Western Australia's most important trading partner and for China's economic successes over the last three decades.

As has also been mentioned, beyond Peter Jones' role in this place, he was the inaugural chairman of the Water Corporation of Western Australia and held that position for seven years. He also held numerous community roles and continued to invest in making the community a better place in which to live.

I conclude by acknowledging Peter as a former member and minister of this place. He was committed to improving the lives of all Western Australians, and he has left a significant legacy.

**MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands)** [12.16 pm]: I rise briefly to pass on my condolences to Peter Jones' wife, Toni, and their family, and to recognise his service. Most of what can be said about Peter has been said by those members who have spoken on this condolence motion. However, I will recount one story that Peter told me. This story highlights the management style of former Premier Sir Charles Court. Peter told me that on one occasion, when serving in one of his 13 ministerial portfolios, he was on his way to Albany in the government jet. In those days, it probably was not a jet; it probably was a turboprop. The pilot passed the message to him that

Sir Charles Court wanted to see him, and even though Peter was halfway to Albany on the plane, the plane was turned around and Peter came back to Perth. That shows that Premier Sir Charles Court was a fairly strong Premier, and I guess that was a reflection of the times.

The other comment I would make about Peter Jones is that he was very much a hands-on person. Peter was the inaugural chairman of the Water Corporation of Western Australia. The chief executive officer at the time was Dr Jim Gill. I think at that time the Minister for Water Resources was Dr Kim Hames. I recall having a conversation with the then CEO, in which he expressed how appreciative he was of having a hands-on chairman who helped him to run the Water Corporation. These days, chairmen are a bit more at arm's length.

I would like to add my condolences to the Jones family and recognise the service that Peter Jones has given to Western Australia.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [12.18 pm]: I, too, would like to make a brief contribution to the condolence motion for Hon Peter Jones, MLA. I would also like to express my sincere condolences to Peter's family and friends, and to the Nationals and the Liberal Party for the loss of their former member.

In 1973, Peter Jones commenced his political career as a member of the Country Party. He continued on to become the Deputy Leader of the National Country Party as the member for Narrogin. In 1985, Peter represented the Liberal Party and became president of the Western Australian division of the Liberal Party four years later. He spent his last six years before retiring in 1996 as federal vice president of the Liberal Party.

Peter was a quiet achiever. Although Premier Sir Charles Court will always be remembered for his economic achievements, Peter was right there, working tirelessly in the background, building the foundation for Western Australia's economic transformation.

Although Peter achieved great heights as a state member of Parliament and minister, he was no self-promoter, always believing he could achieve more by working quietly in boardrooms and government offices. On talking recently to Bob Wiese, a former member for Wagin and Narrogin, and Pat Harding, long-time radio commentator, both confirmed to me that Peter Jones was very well respected as a local member, a quiet achiever and a gentleman.

After his retirement from politics, he continued making a great contribution, being the founding chairman of the Water Corporation, as the member for Nedlands mentioned, from January 1995 until 2002—and chairing many other boards and associations. Peter's success as a member of state Parliament was recognised and honoured in the form of a Member of the Order of Australia in 2001, the Chancellor's Medal from the University of Western Australia in 2003, and the Centenary of Federation Medal in 2003.

I will conclude by saying that Peter was a committed and dedicated state member of Parliament. His contributions to the resource sector, laying the foundations for Western Australia's great relationship with China, and to Western Australia in general, will be one of his greatest, lasting legacies.

Question passed; members and officers standing as a mark of respect.