

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

Special

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Leader of the House) [6.11 pm] — without notice: I move —

That the house at its rising adjourn until a date and time fixed by the Speaker.

We have come to the conclusion of another year of parliamentary sittings and, indeed, we have come to the end of the parliamentary sittings for this term of government. We are at the stage of the year when we say farewell to each other as far as Parliament is concerned, at least for the time being. In moving the motion, I will take the usual opportunity to make some comments and express some well-deserved thanks to reflect both on this past year and on the past four years of this government.

As far as government business in Parliament is concerned, we commenced sitting this year on Tuesday, 16 February. Today is the sixty-first sitting day of the year. It has included three days of budget estimates hearings and the recall of Parliament by proclamation to appoint Patrick Dodson to the Senate. On average, the house sat for about seven and a half hours each sitting day, although I am sure on many days it seemed like more than that! Some days have been shorter; some have certainly been much longer. Forty-four bills were introduced into this house this year. Of that number, 14 were received from the Legislative Council; 40 bills were government bills. I note that the government introduced approximately 164 bills in this house during the thirty-ninth Parliament. So far this year, 37 bills have received royal assent and eight are awaiting assent. There will be one or two more with the passage today of further bills. With the passage this week of quite a number of bills in the house, as well as various Assembly bills that are in the process of being considered in the Legislative Council, I expect the total number of bills to be passed this year will be more than 50 when the Council rises next week. By comparison, in 2015 the number of bills that received royal assent was 40; in 2014, that figure was 35; and in 2013, it was 25. We have made reasonable progress this year in comparison with 2013, which was of course an election year.

I have often made the comment, and I am sure many others have observed, that the measure of success is not taken by the number of bills introduced or passed, but by the significance of the legislation and the benefits they bring to the Western Australian community. Many bills could be briefly referred to, but some that I will mention include the Biodiversity Conservation Bill, which marks the most significant legislative achievement for the Western Australian environment in decades. The deficient 66-year-old Wildlife Conservation Act was replaced with modern legislation that provides major advancement on every measure of biodiversity protection for this state. The Misuse of Drugs Amendment (Search Powers) Bill will enhance the ability of police to disrupt the transport and supply of methamphetamine into and around Western Australia. Members from both sides of Parliament hear far too many stories about the enormously destructive effect that methamphetamine abuse is having in our state. It puts pressure on the justice system, it puts pressure on police and it puts pressure on hospital emergency departments. It causes enormous disruption and disadvantage to families. The Motor Vehicle (Catastrophic Injuries) Bill introduced a no-fault insurance scheme for people catastrophically injured in motor vehicle accidents. The Health Services Bill updated 89-year-old legislation to modernise the delivery and oversight of health services throughout the state by devolving decision-making to a more local level within a framework that provides clarity of roles and responsibilities. I acknowledge the former Minister for Health, who played a significant role in that.

We finished off the second of the aquatic resource management bills late this afternoon. They represent the first major overhaul of fisheries legislation in more than 20 years. They will provide an innovative, world-class legislative framework for ensuring the ecologically sustainable development of Western Australia's aquatic resources for many years to come. The Sentencing Legislation Amendment Bill will, among other matters, provide for serious offenders to be strictly supervised for two years after their sentences have finished. It will allow for GPS tracking and provide victims with a greater say at the sentencing stage, as well as at the potential release stage. I refer also to the Restraining Orders and Related Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Bill 2016, which also has just been completed in this chamber this afternoon. I thank the opposition for its cooperation in facilitating the passage of both the bills that I just referred to. The Public Health Bill has updated 105-year-old legislation, including outdated provisions such as the treatment and custody of lepers, to provide a modern, proactive and flexible risk-based framework to benefit the health and wellbeing of our community.

As at lunchtime today, members of the opposition had placed 1 124 questions on notice and the government had responded to 1 103 and responded to 938 questions without notice. This brings the total for the thirty-ninth Parliament to approximately 5 923 questions on notice and 3 922 questions without notice. I acknowledge the role of the many members of the public service and staff in ministerial offices who work very hard to answer these questions. They can involve a great deal of time and effort.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: To respond to; not necessarily answer them.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We do our best to provide intelligent and meaningful answers. They do not necessarily provide the answers, I guess, on some occasions that the opposition would like. For questions on notice, but also questions without notice, I know that in many cases, a huge effort is required within the public service to put together the quite large amount of detail that is needed. I acknowledge all those members of the public service, as I said, in the general public sector and within our ministerial offices who put in such a large effort in that respect.

As the thirty-ninth Parliament is drawing to an end and the festive season is approaching, I thank the many people who have been involved in ensuring the machinery of this place runs smoothly. I acknowledge all members of the house who have made a contribution in one form or another on the government side, of course, led by Premier Colin Barnett, and on the opposition side by the Leader of the Opposition, Mark McGowan, and all members, as I said. We can disagree strongly with each other over various issues but the fact that we have Parliament and that it works smoothly is the pinnacle of the expression of democracy, apart from elections, and is a very significant aspect of our society. There has generally been a spirit of cooperation between both sides of Parliament. That does not happen all the time, of course, but that is the nature of Parliament and I acknowledge that that is most generally the case.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, all the Acting Speakers and the Whips, especially the member for Vasse, who has filled the role very proficiently since assuming the role this year. I must say that as government Whip she has been very proactive.

Mr C.J. Barnett: What a charming person she is.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: She has been very proactive in communicating with members of the government and, as I said, has filled the role very proficiently. I acknowledge also her predecessor, the member for Carine, who has passed on his extensive experience to her. I thank him also for his role as government Whip prior to his being elevated to the role of parliamentary secretary earlier this year. Both Whips have been assisted by Jeanette Bourke in the Whip's office, who is very important in assisting behind the scenes, of course.

I thank my opposite number as Leader of the House, the manager of opposition business, the member for Midland, for her spirit of cooperation, particularly in the last few weeks. I appreciate the facilitation of legislation going through that is in the community's interests. I acknowledge the role and work of the opposition Whip, the member for Mandurah, who is kept on his toes, I am sure, by his own members—probably less so by members on our side.

We very much value and rely on the knowledge, advice and assistance of all the staff of the Legislative Assembly led by the Clerk, Kirstin Robinson, who has fulfilled her first year in the role following the retirement last year of Peter McHugh, her predecessor. I am sure that everyone will agree it has been very much a seamless transition and I think everybody will support me in saying: Kirsten, you have handled the role with calmness and serenity; thank you.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Particularly when I adjourned the house at the end of last year and I tested you.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: As I observed on the equivalent day last year, Kirsten's abilities and skilfulness, and those of her colleagues, were very much put to the test, but things were put back on track with good advice.

I also thank Scott Nalder, Deputy Clerk; Clerk Assistants, Liz Kerr, who is no doubt listening, and Mathew Bates; the Sergeant-at-Arms, Isla Macphail, who is in the chamber at the moment I am pleased to say; and all the chamber staff, including Rachel Wells, Denis Hippolyte, Lachlan Gregory, Maddison Barnsby, Daniel Govus, Nikolas Carbone, Alison O'Shaughnessy, and Glen Whitting—I hope that covers everybody; Anne Day as executive assistant to the Clerk; Jackie Berry as executive assistant to the Speaker; and a very important person, the Speaker's steward, David Griffiths, who has done an expert job of looking after the Speaker's suite by providing afternoon tea in such a pleasant and charming manner and who has followed on from the much-loved Vince La-Galia, who is undergoing significant medical treatment at the moment, and we all send our very best wishes to Vince and we miss him in the Parliament here.

Thank you to all the staff of the committees' offices who have assisted the Assembly's standing committees to produce an amazing 27 reports during 2016. It was certainly a very big effort by all the staff who have ensured that those reports could be completed and presented, not always to the welcome response of government, but that is the role of committees and Parliament of course.

I thank and acknowledge the role of all the Education Office staff and the Parliamentary Services Department staff, led by Rob Hunter and Patricia Traegde, and I congratulate them on their appointments this year. The Parliamentary Services Department, of course, has an essential role in looking after the practical management of Parliament, including the Hansard services led by Laurie Mansell. Thank you to all the Hansard reporters, who are put under so much pressure by us sometimes in ensuring that what is presented in the written form is much more intelligible than in the spoken form.

Mr John Day; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker

I thank the Library and Information Services staff led by Judy Ballantyne. I have said before that I think the Parliamentary Library in this building is probably the best part of Parliament House, but, unfortunately, over the last four years, I have had little opportunity to visit as much as I would like, but it is a wonderful service.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Maybe next year.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We are not working on that, member for Midland.

I thank Catering Services staff led by Enno Schiff. All the catering staff, and those in the bar and dining room, look after our needs very obligingly I must say. Security is an increasingly important aspect of what is provided here in Parliament House, and I thank all the staff led by Tony Paterson. I thank all the Information Technology Services staff led by John Buchanan, the Finance staff led by Elma Ozich, the Human Resources staff led by Tina Hunter; and the Building Services staff, who provide the very important gardening, cleaning and reception services, and also look after the gymnasium.

Can I thank, personally, all the staff in my ministerial office who ensure that it is a very productive workplace. It is a harmonious workplace and is very responsive, we seek to ensure, to all members, whatever their party is in Parliament. It is led by chief of staff, Denise Mitchell. I would like to thank all those, including in my own ministerial office and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, who ensure that legislation is prepared and available. Staff are needed here and behind the scenes a little—they are just in the office next to the Premier's office. They ensure that government business is dealt with here in the most efficient and seamless manner possible. I would like to thank Thamis Kint, who is now, I am delighted to say, in my own office, and also Nick Hagley and Rebecca Nielson from the Cabinet Secretariat of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and all the policy and other administrative staff in my own office. I also thank all the staff within the Premier's office, who play such an important role and, of course, work exceptionally hard.

I hope that everyone will join me in celebrating the end of another productive year in this place and, in particular, farewelling those four members who we know are retiring: the members for Bunbury, Dawesville, Kalgoorlie and Wagin. We heard their valedictory speeches yesterday. They have all made very valuable contributions and had interesting parliamentary careers. I wish them well on their next adventures. From the government's point of view, we hope there are no forced retirements at the next election. We will be quite satisfied if the membership, apart from those four, stays pretty much as it is. Of course, it is up to the voters of Western Australia to express their views on that next March.

Finally, I wish everyone a very safe and happy Christmas and new year as we look forward to what will be a very exciting next four months or so. I look forward to being back here next year together with, as I said, as many as possible of the current members, apart from the four who are consciously retiring.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [6.27 pm]: I, too, wish to thank a number of people, including the Leader of the House, who I have enjoyed a cooperative relationship with over my time as manager of opposition business and also those who had that role before he did. I would also like to thank the Clerk, Kirsten Robinson, the whole team and all the staff of Parliament, including the chamber staff, catering, admin staff, gardeners, library, security, and basically all those who are always so courteous to us and so diligent in their work.

I would like to extend my thanks to you, Mr Speaker, and to the Deputy Speaker, who is retiring. I thank you for the job that you have done. I know it is testing and trying at times, but you have certainly taken on the challenge and I thank you for that. I also thank those people of both sides of the house who fill in the role of Speaker from time to time, who, I am sure, attempt to do their best too. I would like to particularly thank my colleagues on this side of the house. In my role as manager of opposition business, I call upon them to do a lot and most of them do it very willingly and sometimes even exceed what is asked of them. I have a great relationship with our Whip, the member for Mandurah. He does his job with more good humour than most. I also want to wish well those who are retiring: the members for Dawesville, Bunbury, Wagin and Kalgoorlie. At an election there are always a few extra involuntary retirements. I wish everyone in this house all the best for their future. We are, of course, hoping that some members do not have a future in this house and that maybe there are bigger, better and brighter things for them other than returning here. The time is up on the thirty-ninth Parliament. We are hoping that the time is up for this government and that we will have the opportunity to form government next year. As the Leader of the House pointed out, that is up to the community of Western Australia.

We will certainly be doing our best, as I believe we have over the last four years, to make our case. We have taken the challenges up to the government and argued case by case and portfolio by portfolio. We have supported some legislation that is certainly in the community's interest, as most legislation brought before this house is irrespective of who is in government. I certainly thank our leader, Mark McGowan, for the leadership he has shown to our team on our side of the house, and I hope he is successful in becoming the next Premier of Western Australia.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party—minister! Potential leader, sorry!

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Deputy Leader of the National Party) [6.31 pm]: Thank you, Mr Speaker!

I, too, rise on behalf of the National Party today to note the enormous privilege that we all have in this house to play a part in the centre of democracy in Western Australia. I would like to acknowledge the very dedicated and highly competent staff in the chamber led by Kirsten Robinson, but everyone who supports and makes this chamber work well. I also acknowledge the staff of Parliament House. The adjournment speeches yesterday noted the fact that we all appreciate the work that the staff of this house do to make us feel comfortable. We spend a great deal of time here. They are courteous; we are difficult at times to deal with. It has never been said that a member of Parliament does not have an ego and this is a roomful of egos on any set day, and the staff all do it with good grace and are very pleasant. Thank you to everyone who goes above and beyond, including Basil, who helped me pull my telephone from out underneath the front seat of my car the other day, after I had been scrambling around for some time. That is just the nature of the very lovely staff who work at Parliament House.

I wish to talk about my National Party colleagues—leader, Brendon Grylls, and my ministerial colleague, Terry Redman. I have had the privilege of being deputy to both of these incredible regional champions, and I am always very proud to sit aside my parliamentary colleagues, all of whom are local champions. Every member knows the challenge of balancing parliamentary duties with their family and electoral commitments. As country members of Parliament there is sometimes an added challenge, and we spend a great deal of time in each other's company. From my perspective, it is always done with good humour and seems almost like a second family.

On a personal note, I would like to extend my thanks to the ministerial staff of the ministerial offices of our three ministers. They spend a huge amount of time ensuring that they are providing support to us in our duties, and their effort and dedication should be noted on behalf of the people of Western Australia. I cannot go past electorate officers, as well. Yesterday, we heard the retiring members talk of the role that they play in our electorates. They are enormously valuable people in our communities and I extend sincere thanks to not only our team, but also everyone who takes on that role because it is an enormous job.

I wish to speak now of particularly Terry “Tuck” Waldron and Wendy Duncan, our retiring members, but also of John Castrilli and Kim Hames. Terry and Wendy—all those members—have contributed significantly to Western Australia. They are beloved by their electorate and will be sorely missed. I have no doubt that both Terry and Wendy will continue to make an enormous contribution to their communities in whatever pursuit they pick up. I am proud of all our members of Parliament, all of whom have been local champions and passionate about regional Western Australia, and that is what we have been tasked to do in this place.

To our parliamentary colleagues from the Liberal Party, Premier Colin Barnett—our alliance partners—thank you very much for working with us. We do not always agree, but I think part of what we do is about making sure that we have strong and robust discussions about how best to take this great state forward. It has always been a privilege to serve as part of the government, and we thank you for all the effort, discussions, conversations and debates over the past year. It has certainly been a huge privilege.

To the opposition and our colleagues in this house, I extend our great thanks. We all have our differences. However, when I meet people in the street who ask me what I do, I am always quick to say that no matter which party we are from, we are all as members of this place passionate representatives and work on behalf of our constituents.

We are about to enter election mode. I wish every member of Parliament who is continuing on the very best of luck. Everyone will be working incredibly hard. I hope the members of all political parties will run a campaign that inspires and unites this great state. There will, no doubt, be some very contentious moments as we progress, and we would expect that when we are seeking to be at the biggest decision-making table in the state. I wish every member the greatest of luck as they go about their job of representing their constituents and forming government.

To everyone, have a safe and happy Christmas. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [6.35 pm]: I will speak just briefly. This is a good opportunity, actually, to say some nice things. As all members know, often niceness is not one of the things that we associate with being a member of this place. This is a time to reflect on all the work that people have done, particularly in this place. I want to start by thanking the staff in the chamber, particularly Kirsten Robinson, and the staff throughout the building, particularly the ones we interact with the most—in the dining room and the members' bar—and the kitchen staff, and also the Hansard staff, for their kind support for members of Parliament. I also want to thank the outside staff, who we do not talk to as much as we should, for the good work that they do in often very hot and difficult conditions. While we are in this lovely air-conditioned chamber, they are out in the heat, making this parliamentary precinct a beautiful place for Perth.

I acknowledge all the retiring members. Unfortunately, I had to leave halfway through the member for Kalgoorlie's speech last night, but I thought the first part of her speech was very good. I also acknowledge the speeches of the other three retiring members. I thought they were all very good, passionate, funny and interesting reflections on their parliamentary life. I congratulate each and every one of the four retiring members for their contribution last night. I thought it showed a great deal of quality. I was a bit concerned about the handballing ability of the member for Wagin. I think the Premier might have been right—the member for Wagin is not good at handballing, and he demonstrated that last night. I am not from a football background but I am pretty sure I could handball better than the member for Wagin did last night.

I also thank all my colleagues, the members of the State Parliamentary Labor Party, for the work they have done over the past four years—indeed, the last eight years—of opposition. It is difficult at times to be in opposition. The spoils of opposition are not great and the reward for effort is often not there. The joy of public life is being able to do things, and the capacity to do things in opposition is not there. However, the striving and straining to form government and to put forward good ideas for the future of the state is worthwhile in itself. I thank all my colleagues for doing that and for the work they have done throughout the last eight years. I wish each and every one of my colleagues all the best on being re-elected at the next election. In fact, every single one of my colleagues will be standing again, both lower and upper house members. I wish them all the best in the lead-up to the next election. Fight hard and do your best.

I acknowledge the members of the State Parliamentary Liberal Party and the State Parliamentary National Party on their work for their constituents and their work in Parliament. On these occasions it is time to show a bit of good spirit toward members of the government. So, well done. I have good relationships with some—not all—members of the government. I wish you all the best over this Christmas period.

I worked out today that I am coming up to my sixth election and have had 20 years in Parliament. The sad thing about this time in Parliament, which is towards the end of the year, is that some people will not be here after next March. Some people have worked all their lives to get here and strived to get here, but there is a lot of unfairness in political life and sometimes all the work they do is not rewarded. Sometimes, for reasons beyond their control, they no longer have a parliamentary career; it ends and they have to go off and find something else to do with their life. It is a very debilitating and disturbing experience for many people. They say that every political career ends in tears, which I think, from my experience, is largely true.

Mr J.H.D. Day: If you stay there long enough!

Mr M. McGOWAN: If you stay there for a short time, it is absolutely true! There is probably a middle course that gives people a better prospect of it not being true. They say that every political career ends in tears, which is a truism, but it is unfortunate because when they finish their parliamentary careers, members often feel unhappy with what they achieved. They think to themselves: I could have done this and I could have done that. Why did I not get this position or that position? That goes through the minds of not every member of Parliament I have ever known who has left, but most of them. They always seem to forget that just being here in the first place and getting elected to Parliament is a great honour. Members should treasure that they represented the people and were able to speak in this place. They had their voices heard and actually achieved and did things in one way or another as members of Parliament. For those people who are not here in March next year—I suspect there will be a few—it is important to remember that just being here in the first place was a significant achievement and they should never underplay the fact that they were here in the first place.

To the Premier, my opposite number, best wishes in the contest to come. I am sure he will make a speech saying the same to me!

Mrs G.J. Godfrey interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: None of the press is listening, so we can talk honestly! They are all out there drinking at the moment. Best wishes in the contest to come, Premier. I think the next three and a half months will be very demanding on the both of us.

Can I touch on one thing? It has been a big year. It has been a big four years. One thing that was not mentioned—it is probably something that we do not like to talk about—was that over the course of this year, each of us in a position of leaders of their party in this place was challenged. Two of us survived and one did not. We went through an interesting set of challenges, which were, again, demanding and interesting. I think mine was probably the most unusual—unconventional, if you like—of the three challenges, but it certainly focused my mind on whether or not I wanted to do the job and what I wanted to do. For that reason, if nothing else, I think in my case the experience was certainly worthwhile. For the member for Warren-Blackwood, who lost his position, I am sure it was very difficult for him. The Premier and I both survived an interesting set of events over the course of about five or six days. In both our cases, in some ways, the challenges came out of nowhere.

I think, if we are looking at the purely political aspect of the year as opposed to the legislative aspects, they were probably the most politically interesting events.

In closing, I thank my staff in particular—they are probably out there having a drink at the moment—for all the work they have done throughout the year. In absolutely closing, I thank my own family—my wife and children—for their support throughout the year. I am very much an absent father much of the time, about which I often feel some guilt. However, when I do get to spend time with my wife, Sarah, and my children, Samuel, Alexander and Amelia, I try to make it quality time. Families in this business often endure a lot. On behalf of all members of Parliament, particularly those who have significant roles in the government or the opposition, or regional MPs who spend a lot of time away, I thank all the families of members of Parliament across Western Australia for their support and forbearance on behalf of their family members in this place.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [6.45 pm]: To all parliamentary staff and members of Parliament, I simply wish you, those you love and those who love you a very happy Christmas and a safe new year. I guess it's game on! Thank you.

THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland): Thank you very much. I will just close off if I may. Every time I have to say a few words, which is not often, I find out I have been gazumped. Today I was gazumped by the Leader of the House, who mentioned everybody by name. Thank you to Kirsten Robinson, who does a great job as the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. Every morning I come into my office and I always say to her, “Kirsten, what international incident do we face today?” She normally says to me, “Nothing, Mr Speaker”, which is lucky. Kirsten also has a very nice way about her and tells me what to do in the nicest possible terms, so thank you for running the department so efficiently. Also thank you to the Deputy Clerk, the Clerk Assistant and the Sergeant-at-Arms, Isla Macphail. People do not realise the amount of work that these people do in the backgrounds, the myriad committees that we serve on, which are all necessary make the Parliament operate very smoothly. I also wish to thank all the chamber staff who ensure that this Parliament operates par excellence. The Legislative Assembly works very closely with the Parliamentary Services Department under the guidance of Rob Hunter. We are also very lucky that the President and I have a very collaborative relationship. We have been able to make many improvements to the Parliament, which make it better for not only the members, but also the people who come to visit here. The Leader of the House has mentioned all the various departments. I would like to personally thank Jackie Berry and David Griffiths, who work very closely with me. Thanks also go to the Deputy Speaker, Wendy Duncan, who has been a great support to me. We wish you all the best with the new challenges that you will face. I do not think that you are on the scrap heap, as somebody suggested last night when they sent you a card. It has been a pleasure working with you and you will find new challenges and you will rise to those new challenges. It is a pity because I thought you would have made a very good minister, but as the Leader of the Opposition said, very often things do not happen the way that you want them to happen in Parliament, so good luck to you. I extend my thanks to the Acting Speakers: Janine Freeman, the member for Mirrabooka; the member for Maylands; the member for Morley; the member for Southern River; the member for Forrestfield; and our great reserve, Ian Blayney, the member for Geraldton, who was always available to stand in when we were short, and sometimes we were about three short. I think we have done as good a job as we can as Speaker and Acting Speakers. I have certainly enjoyed the role. It has been a great privilege to have been given this role by the government for four years. I really have enjoyed it and there were very few instances when things became really unpleasant, which is the main thing. The main job of the Speaker is to keep the ball rolling so that we can all try to get as much work done as possible. As has been said by previous speakers, good luck to everybody in the election. We never know which way the ball will roll. Sometimes, as the Leader of the Opposition said, circumstances are out of your control and you can only do your best. It has been a great honour for me to have been the Speaker and I wish you and your families a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year. Hopefully you will have a good rest over the break. Thank you very much.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.48 pm