

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

Special

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Leader of the House) [4.49 pm]: I move —

That the house at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 17 February 2015 at 2.00 pm.

It is usual at this stage of the year to make some reflections and provide a summary of the activities of the house over the calendar year since we commenced sitting on 18 February. Since that time we have had 66 sitting days, including three days of estimates hearings on the budget bills. Since we commenced sitting in February, 44 government bills have been introduced into the Assembly and nine received from the Council. Of those bills, 38 have now been passed by this house and 21 have passed through both houses and received royal assent. An additional six bills are awaiting royal assent.

A comment piece in *The West Australian* this morning reflected the fact that the number of bills passed this year has been lower than in previous years. That is the case, but the measure of success of an effective government is not the number of bills that have been passed through Parliament. That might be part of a measure of success, but it is by no means the only one. The government is committed to reducing the amount of red tape whenever possible, rather than introducing new legislation for the sake of it. It is important to reflect on the significant and reformative legislation that the government has introduced and has been successful in passing through Parliament this year. One that comes to mind is the Mental Health Bill, which was much anticipated and long awaited by the mental health sector and particularly by those who are committed to reform of the management of mental health in this state. It is a progressive and effective piece of legislation that promotes and protects the rights of people with severe mental illness, and also promotes access to treatment, care and support. It was very pleasing to see such a significant piece of legislation pass this house and the Legislative Council this year. The bill received royal assent on 3 November.

The Declared Places (Mentally Impaired Accused) Bill 2013 provides for the Disability Services Commission to operate the state's first declared place that will provide accommodation and support services for people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities who have been accused but not convicted of a crime. It will provide, for the first time, an appropriate alternative to custody in prison that is designed and staffed to provide a therapeutic environment, social support and life skills training, while providing the level of security required to ensure community safety. That bill is awaiting debate in the Legislative Council, but it has been a significant piece of reform in itself.

Some of the other bills that ensure more effective and efficient use of government resources and to facilitate machinery-of-government changes included the Workforce Reform Act 2014, which was assented to in May this year; the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Amendment Bill, which is still in the Legislative Council; the Alcohol and Drug Authority Amendment Bill 2014; the Ports Legislation Amendment Act 2014, which was assented to on 20 May; the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Amendment (Validation) Act 2014, which was assented to on 2 July; and the School Education Amendment Bill, which was assented to on 19 November.

Towards the latter part of the year we have also seen the passage of some significant police and road safety bills that provide greater protection and safety for our police officers and road users. They include the Mandatory Testing (Infectious Diseases) Act, which was assented to on 3 November, and the Criminal Investigation Amendment Bill 2014, which I am very pleased to note went through the Legislative Council on Tuesday and is awaiting assent. This morning I was at a police-related event, the Police Excellence Awards, and had a brief discussion about the Criminal Investigation Amendment Bill. There is certainly a very high level of satisfaction within WA Police that that bill has gone through because it will make its work in relation to dealing with arrested suspects much easier. The Road Traffic Amendment (Alcohol Interlocks and Other Matters) Bill is in the Council and the Road Traffic Legislation Amendment Bill passed through here yesterday.

As of yesterday, members of the opposition have placed 1 648 questions on notice. That was two more than last year. The opposition's record was pretty good last year but it exceeded itself this year. Of those, the government has responded to 1 661, so that is more than was asked!

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That is because you were tardy the year before!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: We are a very keen and enthusiastic government in responding to questions on notice. Obviously, there was some carryover from last calendar year. More than 1 005 questions without notice have been answered as of yesterday.

I acknowledge the contribution of all members of the house to the debate led by the Premier on the government side and the Leader of the Opposition on the opposition side. One new member has been elected this year, the member for Vasse, and we were pleased to hear her inaugural speech a couple of weeks ago. I thank you, Mr Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and the Acting Speakers, who play the important role of managing the debate and chairing the proceedings in here. I also thank the government Whip, the member for Carine. I am pleased to say that there has generally been a cooperative arrangement between the government and the opposition in the passage of legislation this year. I thank my counterpart in the opposition, the member for Midland, for her role in that respect, and the opposition Whip, the member for Mandurah, for facilitating those outcomes in the majority of cases.

I also take the opportunity to thank all members of staff of the Assembly and Parliament who make this chamber operate as smoothly as possible and ensure that the legislation we pass through here is validly debated and approved. They, of course, include the Clerk, Peter McHugh; Deputy Clerk, Kirsten Robinson; Clerk Assistants, Liz Kerr and Scott Nalder; Sergeant-at-Arms, Isla Macphail; and all the other staff of the Assembly, including Vanessa Beckingham, Rachel Wells, Talitha Engstroem, Denis Hippolyte, Patrick Cook, Lachlan Gregory, Anna Burchfield, Rob Purshouse, Anne Day and Jaclyn Berry. I acknowledge and thank all the other staff of the Assembly and, in particular, those who assist the committees and the parliamentary education presenters who play such an important role, particularly with the school students who visit here.

I thank the other members of the parliamentary staff who are also important in the operations of the whole organisation here, led by Russell Bremner, the executive manager. I also thank all the Hansard staff, led by Laurie Mansell, and the Hansard reporters who do such a wonderful job of ensuring that whatever is said in here, regardless of whether it makes sense at the time, is intelligible and makes sense in the printed form.

Mr M. McGowan: We could cut out the middleman and get rid of us!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Indeed!

I thank the Department of the Premier and Cabinet staff who are involved in managing the government's business in the Assembly, including Nick Hagley and Rebecca Nielson, and my staff, including my chief of staff, Lorissa Kelly, and Denise Mitchell, who have also played a crucial role in managing government business, communicating with the Premier's office and other ministerial offices and ensuring that we can deal with the issues we need to as a government in here. Thank you to all the catering staff, led by Enno Schijf, and the library staff, led by Judy Ballantyne. I understand that the catering staff will be getting the customary crayfish ready now, so I am sure people are looking forward to that.

I trust the media will be respectful because I am about to thank members of the media and, in particular, the one who is sitting in the media gallery at the moment, Dan Emerson from *The West Australian*. All the members of the media play a very important role in reporting on and interpreting what happens in here. We all look forward to participating in the drinks that they are about to host for us. Members, do not go home too quickly. Remember that the media will host us and provide us with some hospitality in the courtyard.

Dr K.D. Hames: The tradition is, though, to take a bottle.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Good advice from the Deputy Premier!

I also thank all of the administration, building services, finance, human resources, information technology, security and other staff outside the main building, including, importantly, the gardeners and the cleaning staff.

In conclusion, I wish all members and staff of the Legislative Assembly and the Parliament, and their families, a very happy and safe Christmas and prosperous new year, which is now not very far away.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [5.00 pm]: I want to join with the Leader of the House in thanking all the staff who look after us so well during the year. I think his comments about the Hansard staff were particularly pertinent. They work under some very trying conditions from time to time, and I know that we do not make their job easy. However, as the Leader of the House has commented, Hansard generally does make most of us look good, because sometimes we do not speak as eloquently as we might, and Hansard seems to be able to make our speeches make much better sense than perhaps they did when they were first uttered! I particularly want to thank the Hansard staff.

We have more interaction with some staff than others, including, obviously, the Assembly staff who work with all of us, including you, Mr Speaker. We see them on a daily basis and we get very good support from our chamber staff. I particularly want to commend them. All parliamentary services staff, whether they be security, catering or library, do an excellent job in running the Parliament and helping us do our job, so I thank them all and wish them a very merry Christmas.

The Leader of the House commented on legislation, and I will make just one comment on that. I think we could get through more legislation more effectively and more quickly if the opposition was provided with proposals for legislation in a more timely fashion. As members will be aware, I have been here for some years, and I have dealt with a variety of ministers and portfolios. Whilst I am not making a reflection upon anyone in particular, in my role as manager of opposition business, I keep an eye on just about every piece of legislation that is brought in here and I talk to my colleagues about it. It seems to me that more and more new laws are being announced through the media and the detail of the legislation is not being provided to us in opposition. Sometimes it is provided to other individuals or groups in the community and, unfortunately, sometimes I have even had to get copies of legislation from some of those groups ahead of it being brought into this Parliament.

I do not think that is the way to go. Much of our legislation is actually agreed upon. I know that the perception of the community is that there is a lot of disagreement in Parliament and that the opposition opposes everything, but as members in this place know, that is not the case. Most of the legislation put forward by the government is actually supported by the opposition, and we sometimes have some lengthy debates on it. Another unfortunate reality is that ministers often come into the chamber unwilling to consider amendments to the legislation; they have the push-through attitude of putting up the brick wall and not considering any amendments. In those situations, we can potentially end up with poor legislation. Alternatively, it may be that the concerns that have been raised here in the Assembly are taken up in the Legislative Council or in a committee, if the bill has been referred to one, and the same issues that had been raised in this place are found to have been legitimate. Although I do not intend to go into this matter in detail, the Taxation Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 is one such bill. My colleagues in this place raised some very legitimate questions about the operation of that bill, and those questions have now been found by a committee of the upper house to be valid, which means that that bill was unable to pass through the Legislative Council this week and has not made its way back into the Assembly today. That is not the fault of the opposition; in fact, the opposition pointed out issues with this bill weeks and weeks ago, but it seems that the government's shutters were down; because the opposition had raised those concerns, the government was not prepared to take them on.

That is where I will finish the brickbats. By and large, we have had a cooperative arrangement and I have enjoyed working with the Leader of the House. I think we have been able to work constructively in this house on the legislative program. However, as was pointed out in Dan Emerson's excellent article, the number of bills passed through this house this year and last year is down markedly on previous years. I said that I was going to finish with the brickbats, but some pieces of legislation really had not been properly thought through and properly consulted on, and much of the government's announced agenda was not introduced.

In conclusion, I want to thank you, Mr Speaker. I acknowledge that you also have a difficult role, and although sometimes we are critical—even though that is contrary to the standing orders!—you do your best under trying circumstances. Your role, I know, is not necessarily an easy one, and I certainly wish you well for the Christmas period also. Thank you.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Deputy Leader of the National Party) [5.05 pm]: I rise this evening on behalf of the National Party to add my thanks and appreciation to colleagues in this house, to the Premier as the leader of the government, to the Leader of the Opposition, to the staff in Parliament House, to the staff in this chamber and Hansard, and to everyone who makes it a pleasure to come to Parliament to work. We are truly lucky to work in this beautiful place, and we are always made to feel very welcome as we go about the business of this state, working alongside people with genuine good humour, because at times I fear that we are not always as gracious as we could be!

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Terry Redman as the leader of the National Party. I know that we spoke about this earlier, but I would like to put on record again and pass on our heartfelt condolences at the loss of his brother, Geoff. His is a very close-knit family who will be feeling his loss keenly as they go into this holiday period and, I fear, for some time into the future. I would just like to say that our thoughts are with him and his family at this time.

I would also like to spend a moment acknowledging our Tuck—our other Terry! Tuck, it has been an absolute privilege to serve alongside you as a minister in this state cabinet, as a member and as a friend. I think everyone would agree that you have acquitted your duties with integrity and good humour, and given 100 per cent. You have undoubtedly made an enormous difference to thousands of people in Western Australia. The big projects in this state that you have undertaken in your capacity as Minister for Sport and Recreation, such as the stadium, will be here for many years to come, but I know that you are equally, if not more, proud of the programs that are supportive of grassroots organisations—particularly kids' sport, which this house has been updated on regularly. We do on occasion laugh about that when it is raised in question time, but I can tell you, as someone who is out and about in my electorate and across the state, that it truly is making a difference and that a number of the initiatives that you have brought in through your portfolio have changed the lives of people, and we thank you

for it. You have an obvious love and passion for sport that is rivalled only by your love for your family, and that has shone through as you have taken on your role as minister.

On a personal note, members may not be aware that Tuck and I go back a long way. His family and my family used to go on holidays together, so I have known Tuck for many years; his daughters are about the same age as my sister and I. It is quite unusual, and I do not think anyone could have anticipated that we would end up sharing the front bench in this place, serving in cabinet and as members of the Nationals in Parliament together. It has been a real privilege and honour for me to share that with you. I know that I speak on behalf of all the Nationals when I wish you all the best. You have played an important role as a senior member of the Nationals, serving as the deputy to two leaders. Your counsel and your level head have always been appreciated. Your decision—based on family and on a desire to continue only if you could give 110 per cent, as well as a commitment to seeing succession planning for our party—is truly respected by all your colleagues, and we thank you very much. I know that your electorate will welcome you with open arms as you go back for the next two years. You have huge support out there. There would not be too many members who have the love and support of their electorate to the degree that Tuck has built over the years as a local member, and they will welcome him back to the fold; he can enjoy spending some time out there.

Mr C.J. Barnett: He'll probably put the pads back on!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes!

On behalf of the team, I place on record our thanks and appreciation. You have served the state with absolute distinction and integrity as a minister, and that is a hallmark of everything you have done in your life. I think the state of Western Australia owes you a debt of gratitude in your acquittal of that role.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, and those who have served as Presiding Officers in this place. As the previous speaker mentioned, we do not always get on, but you have always acquitted yourself with a fair hand and some good humour along the way.

With those few brief words, I wish everyone in this place a very restful and safe Christmas and new year, and we look forward to seeing you all in 2015.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [5.10 pm]: I would also like make a few remarks to acknowledge the parliamentary end of 2014. Of course, it is not the actual end; we all have dozens of events and activities and schools and all the rest of it to go to before the actual year concludes, but it is, I expect, the parliamentary end for the Legislative Assembly.

Of course, Christmas speeches are always delivered with a spirit of goodwill. As is traditional in this house, there is always a great spirit of goodwill between members of this place, and I am happy to participate in that spirit. I am just so upset that the member for Butler is not here to share it with us at this point. It is just so sad that on the last day of the year you were so tough with him that he is unable to be in here with us, and he is indeed devastated by your toughness with him!

The other point I always note—Christmas speeches are a bit earlier this year than usual—is that they are always placed at the same time as the journalists' drinks are held in the courtyard. I did a little survey amongst the journalists earlier today and discovered only one amongst all the journalists I spoke to knew that Christmas speeches occurred each year, Mr Speaker—indeed, he is actually in the gallery now, too! But one knew they were on. It is a great opportunity, I have now learned, during the time of Christmas speeches for governments to drop all the bad news. Something we could learn from this is that it is a great opportunity to drop all the bad news!

I am pleased that this year is over. Every year is full of tumult and turmoil, and I am exceptionally pleased that 2015 will be a year without an election. I am sure that we are all pleased. Neither a state nor federal government election, that I can foresee, will occur in 2015, so we will have a clear parliamentary year without the inhibition or trouble of an election. In 2016 and 2017, of course, there will be one federal election and one state election.

This year I wanted to acknowledge a few members for what has occurred on my side of the house. I acknowledge the member for Victoria Park and the bereavement he and his family suffered with the loss of his father. I acknowledge the member for Collie—Preston for the good spirit and strong sense of fatherly responsibility with which he has conducted himself over the trouble his family has been enduring. On the other side of the house, I acknowledge the member for Scarborough. She is not here, but, naturally, next year when she returns, I will acknowledge her about the loss of her husband. I acknowledge the member for Jandakot; I understand his father is ill. Also, I acknowledge the Leader of the National Party who either today or yesterday lost his brother; I am sure that is very difficult for him. I also acknowledge the new member of the house, the member for Vasse, and hope that she enjoys her parliamentary career.

I also acknowledge the members of the press of this state. Increasingly, the press gallery, or the media in general, diminishes in size and people's jobs become less secure. Indeed, some lose their jobs. I acknowledge them for the difficulties they have been going through.

I also acknowledge and thank all members of the parliamentary staff of the house in whatever role they perform, including members of the chamber, but also the other staff members around the place who make this place function effectively—in the gardens, the kitchens and the clerical staff. I refer to all the people in the building who make it all function effectively.

I acknowledge members of the government and the Premier for their role in our parliamentary democracy. I also acknowledge members of my staff for all their work. Of course, opposition is difficult. As I have said recently—I am not entirely sure I am entirely accurate—but there are 12 staff in the opposition and 136 000 in the government, so it is somewhat unbalanced. I acknowledge my staff for the work they do. I also acknowledge all members of caucus, both lower house and upper house, for the excellent work they have been doing both in this place and in the broader community over the course of 2014.

I look forward to an interesting and dynamic 2015, and wish all members of Parliament and staff a safe Christmas period and, as always, a very safe period on our roads.

THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland): I would like to end by saying a few words myself. Most of it has been said already, but I must say that we are very fortunate to have such a dedicated staff in the Legislative Assembly who work in various offices and capacities. I work closely with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, Peter McHugh and Kirsten Robinson. I thank them for the advice and assistance they have given me over the last year. Also, Liz Kerr and Scott Nalder, the Clerk Assistants, and not to be forgotten our Sergeant-at-Arms, Isla Macphail. The input and hard work displayed by the Legislative Assembly's and associated office staff is quite extraordinary, and the Legislative Assembly really runs very smoothly.

I also want to thank all the staff in the Legislative Assembly office; the Legislative Assembly Committee Office staff; the two parliamentary historians, David Black and Harry Phillips; James Sollis and his staff in the education office; and Laurie Mansell and the Hansard staff. The Legislative Assembly continues to work very closely with the Parliamentary Services Department under Russell Bremner and Rob Hunter, and I thank them for all the hard work that they have put in over the year. As members know, we have had some big events like the fiftieth anniversary of the extension to Parliament House and Heritage Days, which were a huge success and helped open the Parliament up to the public.

Thanks and good wishes also go to Enno Schiff and the dining room staff who look after the members so very well and cater for many of the functions held at Parliament House, despite very difficult logistical difficulties due to a lack of adequate reception facilities.

I am sure all members will join me in wishing Vince La-Galia, who retired from Parliament after some 25 years of service, all the very best in his future endeavours. His professionalism and friendly disposition will be missed. His shoes have been filled by David Griffiths, who is doing a very good job in assisting me and also members in their afternoon teas. Also to my assistant, Jaclyn Berry, who is always bright and cheerful and ensures that the wheels of the admin of the Speaker's office keep turning.

I wish to thank the Deputy Speaker and the Acting Speakers—the members for Maylands, Mirrabooka, Morley, Southern River and Forrestfield—for their assistance in running the Parliament. I think they have all done a very good job, sometimes in difficult circumstances. I wish Minister Waldron all the best as he moves from the ministry to the backbench. As Speaker I have always been pleased when you have been asked a question, minister, as I knew that the interjections and comments directed to you would be mainly friendly and jocular in nature, which I am sure is as a result of the infectious pleasantness you always display around the building.

Lastly, I would like to wish all members and their families a merry Christmas and a prosperous and happy new year, and hope that you all come back well rested in the new year. Thank you very much.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.19 pm
