

PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

“Acknowledgement of Country” Report — Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [12.28 pm]: I move —

That recommendations 1, 2, and 3 of the first report of the Procedure and Privileges Committee, “Acknowledgement of Country”, tabled on 21 November 2017, be agreed to.

Mr Speaker, it is important to acknowledge that these recommendations come to us from the Procedure and Privileges Committee, of which you are a member, along with the member for Maylands, the member for Pilbara, the member for Geraldton and the member for Roe. As members would be aware, the Procedure and Privileges Committee undertook to look at the process and make recommendations regarding an acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land on which we meet here today. I also acknowledge the former member for Kimberley, who is in the Speaker’s gallery today. Carol Martin is the first Indigenous woman elected to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly and any Parliament in Australia. I acknowledge that achievement by the former member for Kimberley. We have a number of Indigenous members in the Western Australian Parliament, including the current member for Kimberley and our Treasurer, the member for Victoria Park, in this chamber.

Members, this is an important time for us to acknowledge, as part of our standing orders, the traditional owners, the first people of this place. The Procedure and Privileges Committee has presented to us a report, and I will briefly go through the elements so that members are very clear on what is proposed. Members’ support for these recommendations is requested.

For members’ reference, the three Procedure and Privileges Committee recommendations are listed on the back of the notice paper. Members will note that recommendation 1 deals with the technical aspects of inserting the acknowledgment of country into the standing orders. To avoid mass disruption to the numbering of the existing standing orders, the Procedure and Privileges Committee has recommended the merging of standing orders 21 and 22 that deal respectively with the conduct of quorums during debate and divisions. This merger would create space for standing order 21 to deal specifically with an adjournment at the commencement of proceedings due to a lack of a quorum, which, in turn, would create space within existing standing order 20 for a reference to acknowledgment of country to be incorporated. Notwithstanding these minor adjustments—this is important—there will be no changes to the conduct of quorums. It is important that members are aware of that. The standing order relating to the conduct of quorums will remain unchanged.

Recommendation 2 contains the form of the acknowledgment of country that would read as follows —

The Legislative Assembly is honoured to be situated on the ancestral lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people. We acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional owners of the lands we represent and pay respect to their elders both past and present.

Recommendation 3 provides for the acknowledgment of country to commence on the first sitting day in 2018.

Those are the recommendations, members, from the Procedure and Privileges Committee report. It is, of course, up to this chamber to determine the support for these recommendations. If this motion, of course, passes, our standing orders will be amended forthwith. Off course, as I have mentioned, the first acknowledgment of country will take place on our first sitting day of 2018.

As Leader of the House, but particularly as member for Mandurah, I certainly encourage members to support the recommendations of the Procedure and Privileges Committee. I acknowledge that this Parliament, I think in 2015, unanimously supported, of course, amendments to the state’s Constitution, particularly after the tremendous work and advocacy of the member for Kimberley. I acknowledge that work. Parliament, I think, and certainly this chamber, has continued to work closely and sensitively with regard to issues of reconciliation and recognition of our First Australians. These recommendations are appropriate.

Members, just for information purposes, to compare what we are proposing with the situation in other Parliaments in Australia, I can highlight to members the following. In the House of Representatives, the acknowledgment of country appears and is given before prayers in the House of Representatives; in the Senate, it is after prayers. In the Tasmanian House of Assembly it is before prayers, in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly it is after prayers, and in the Australian Capital Territory it is before prayers or the reflection. It does vary, but the committee has recommended that we make that acknowledgment, and I certainly support and endorse that. Members, having moved this motion and spoken to it, I invite debate.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [12.34 pm]: Firstly, I indicate that I and the government are very supportive of the move put forward by the Procedure and Privileges Committee that the standing orders be

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 29 November 2017]

p6260c-6266a

Mr David Templeman; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Zak Kirkup;
Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Shane Love; Mr Ian Blayney

changed to allow for acknowledgment of country at beginning of each day's proceedings. This has been discussed for some time, and I am pleased to see—I hope the house agrees—that it will happen in time for the commencement of the sitting year in 2018. I think it would be an appropriate thing to have happen at that point in time. I thank members of the Procedure and Privileges Committee for their work in respect of this initiative. They have done some analysis of what occurs elsewhere around the country and in each Parliament and each house around Australia, and they have come up with what I think is a worthwhile position on this issue. It turns out, as the report indicates, that many members in their inaugural speeches this year acknowledged the traditional owners of land at the commencement of their speeches. Therefore, it is increasingly a practice that has become very conventional in speeches these days. In fact, it is almost rare for it not to occur these days. The commencement of Parliament, I think, is a worthwhile acknowledgment and another step towards reconciliation with the First Australians in that the lower and upper houses of Parliament acknowledge the First Australians—the Aboriginal Australians who have been in this country for up to 80 000 years. Considering this building has been here for 113 years, and to put that into perspective in that Aboriginal people have been here for up to 80 000 years, I think it is more than appropriate that we, after 113 years of occupying this building, acknowledge Aboriginal people and their rightful place as the First Australians and the first custodians of the land upon which we now live.

There was consultation with some Aboriginal elders on the suggested form of the wording, which is —

The Legislative Assembly is honoured to be situated on the ancestral lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people. We acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional owners of the lands we represent and pay respect to their elders both past and present.

Mr Speaker, it is simple, meaningful, kind and factual wording, and I am sure it will be an important acknowledgment on the three days a week for the 20 weeks a year that we sit for you to read those out to the house.

It is true that this occurs in each house of every Parliament around Australia these days, so it is no doubt time that it occurred in Western Australia. It is the case that there are different formats and words in each state, but each state has no doubt tailored the words to their own heritage and history, which is good—and Western Australia will no doubt do the same. I note that in the House of Representatives in Canberra, it takes place each sitting day before prayers, in the ACT it takes place each sitting period before the prayer or the reflection, and in other Parliaments it takes place either before or after prayers depending upon the Parliament. There are various formats. Personally, I think the proposition of the Procedure and Privileges Committee is the right one. It follows the House of Representatives, where it is the first thing said in the Parliament. Individual members will have their own views on that, but certainly my view is that the Procedure and Privileges Committee has probably struck the right balance. I do not think that particular issue is something that should be the subject of great argument or debate, personally. This committee has come up with a recommendation about that. It is a bipartisan committee so we should accept its recommendation. This change follows on from other initiatives in this place. In particular, I acknowledge the member for Kimberley, Josie Farrer, who brought forward the acknowledgement of Aboriginal people in the Constitution of this Parliament. I think she did that in 2014–15. It was a good thing to do and was subject to a committee of both houses, which looked at the wording she brought forward. After much debate, the committee decided that the words she had brought forward were the correct words. A lot of fuss was created about what the member for Kimberley brought forward and it turned out that she was right in the first place. It was good to provide an acknowledgement to Aboriginal people in the Constitution. This is another step on the way to this Parliament also acknowledging Aboriginal people at the start of each sitting day.

The Leader of the House mentioned that some very notable Aboriginal people have served in this Parliament. Ernie Bridge, who was the first Aboriginal minister in Australia, was a member of this Parliament. He passed away a few years ago. There is also the member for Kimberley; the former member for Kimberley, Carol Martin, who is at the back of the chamber; and, of course, the member for Victoria Park, the Treasurer. They have all made significant marks in this place. The former member for Kimberley was the first female Aboriginal member of Parliament in Australia. Ernie Bridge was the first Aboriginal minister of any Parliament in Australia. I suspect that the member for Victoria Park may be the first Indigenous Treasurer in Australia. Western Australia has led the way in a lot of things. It is a bit unusual that we are last in the pack of Parliaments acknowledging Aboriginal people, but it is good that we will do so, hopefully at the commencement of next year. I hope that this will be a debate without rancour and a discussion with good spiritedness. I think that we owe that to Aboriginal people. It is an act of generosity, recognition and decency to acknowledge Aboriginal people at the start of Parliament each day. It will not cost us anything or impose any great burden on taxpayers or anyone else in the state. It is an act of recognition and justice towards the First Australians. It is an act of reconciliation and another small step on the road to acknowledging our history, our past and the people who have been part of this country for tens of thousands of years.

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition) [12.42 pm]: On behalf of the Liberal Party, I say that we support the proposal in full. We had some debate amongst ourselves about whether the acknowledgement

Mr David Templeman; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Zak Kirkup;
Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Shane Love; Mr Ian Blayney

should start before or after prayers. There is a whole range of variability on that. The Procedure and Privileges Committee recommended that it come before prayers, which is consistent with the federal House of Representatives, and we accept that. There was some debate about the wording—I think the member for Dawesville will have a couple of statements about that—but we accept the wording. We accept the starting date of the first session of 2018 and, of course, we accept the principle. We commend the committee for pursuing this and working through it and looking at the comparisons and, indeed, the government for putting it forward. It is an important step in recognising the Aboriginal people of this nation—the First Nation people. It is an appropriate process to go through.

One of the biggest issues of contention in our group was whether the acknowledgement should come before or after prayers. My initial feeling was that it should come after prayers because prayers start the day. The argument is that prayers are part of the formal process of Parliament and the Westminster system and that this is a slightly different one. The way that the committee has struck it is the proper way that should be pursued. On behalf of the Liberal Party, I say that we support the motion in full. We support the need for it, the wording of it, the beginning of it and the principle of this acknowledgement of country and changes to standing orders.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the National Party) [12.44 pm]: It seems fitting to start this contribution by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and paying my respects to elders past and present. As the Procedure and Privileges Committee has observed, this acknowledgement that has been proposed is made by most, if not all, members of Parliament. As society as a whole moves towards a deeper and growing understanding of the relationship that we have with the traditional custodians of the land and our nation, it seems fitting that the Western Australian Parliament sets the best example for the behaviours that we want to see emulated across this state. The Nationals agree that the amendment and proposals put forward by the committee should be accepted as put. We congratulate the committee on the work that it has done. We see, as the committee has observed, that this is an important step in assisting the Legislative Assembly to become a more open, inclusive and respectful representative forum. That is absolutely what every member of this place would strive for—that is, to set that example both in their communities and in this place.

We must all continue to support these steps on the pathway to reconciliation. There is no better place than this to set that example. I suspect that every member of Parliament in this place has had the privilege of a detailed explanation. Some members probably do not need that explanation because it is part of their family, their history and their culture. For many of us it has come as part of a journey of understanding. Certainly, coming from the wheatbelt, it has been wonderful in this role for me to be able to understand and learn—certainly outside the schooling system that I had growing up—how important these acknowledgements are and the customs and processes that allow us to be more respectful towards a very important part of our history and the culture that is living today. I certainly make it a point to ensure that these acknowledgements are observed wherever I am in the state. I know that members of the National Party do that as well. It is with great pride that we take the next step as a Parliament and that we are a part of that as we introduce it as part of our daily processes in this house. The path to reconciliation has been a long journey. As the Premier said, we have amended the Constitution of this place to acknowledge our traditional custodians. We should continue to strive to make sure that we reflect every Western Australian in this place to the best of our abilities. The Nationals support this proposal and congratulate the committee on the work that it has done.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park — Treasurer) [12.47 pm]: I, too, rise delighted at the support of all members in this place for this amendment to our standing orders to acknowledge the traditional owners, the Whadjuk Noongar people. I note the comments of the Leader of the Opposition. Obviously, there was some debate about the location of the acknowledgement and whether it should be before or after prayers. I think that the Premier has already made the point that Parliaments around Australia do it either before or after. Each Parliament has made its own choice about that. I am pleased that we will make the acknowledgement prior to prayers. I note that WA seems to be the late mover on this. Every other Parliament in the nation moved to acknowledge traditional owners some years ago, and in many cases some time ago—in particular, Tasmania, Queensland and the House of Representatives. Indeed, there was some conversation prior to Parliament starting today about the wording. Like the location in the standing orders, the wording changes from Parliament to Parliament—from “traditional owners” or “traditional custodians” to “traditional people”. The Tasmanian and federal Parliament use both “peoples” and “custodians” in their acknowledgements. It is clear what we are doing here today. It is something that, by and large, is now uncontroversial.

I made the point in Parliament last week or the week before that some 80 per cent of Western Australia is now covered by native title, whether it be a native title determination or a native title application. Native title is very much a Western Australian policy issue and a Queensland policy issue more than for most states in the commonwealth. The idea now, the reality, of traditional owners or custodians is very well entrenched, uncontroversially, in the open dialogue about public policy development in Western Australia. I reflect on the

Mr David Templeman; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Zak Kirkup;
Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Shane Love; Mr Ian Blayney

short time of my lifetime and the hostile debates, from the Mabo decision through to the Native Title Act. I still remember the black hand ads at the time, I think by the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies, and how far we have come to now being the last Parliament in the nation to be acknowledging traditional owners. I am sure that in this chamber it will be incredibly uncontroversial and I dare say there is some surprise that this was not done years ago as in many other Parliaments. This has been long. As I think the Leader of the National Party alluded to, people have had their own journeys around their relationships with Aboriginal people, as have governments over the years, and governments will continue to learn about and adapt that relationship with Aboriginal people. Not long after I became Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I was provided with a lot of documents in the transition from the department being the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to the Department of Communities. There were a lot of historic documents that were held and have now been made available for members of the public to access. Presented to me was a file on my father. I previously had the file of my grandmother, but had not had that of my father. It was interesting going through it to compare how government engaged with Aboriginal people not that long ago—the control, hostility and belligerence that government had to the movement of Aboriginal people around Western Australia—to the Parliament now acknowledging the Whadjuk Noongar people in our standing orders as a daily event without any discourse, rancour or controversy. I think that is a wonderful outcome. I am delighted that, in light of the fact that I will be in this Parliament for but a minute of its lifetime, I happen to be here at the time standing orders are to be changed to acknowledge our traditional owners. I am pleased it is being done without the rancour of some of the debates on Aboriginal relationships in the past.

MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville) [12.51 pm]: I, too, stand to support the motion moved in the house today. Before I talk to my more substantive concerns, I wish to acknowledge the Procedure and Privileges Committee for the fantastic work it has done in bringing this to the house. I also stand with pride, as the member for Mandurah does in representing his jurisdiction, in representing the district of Dawesville, not only as a member of this place, but also as the son and grandson of an Aboriginal father and grandfather whose family has Aboriginal heritage going back to the turn of the twentieth century. I think it is very important that this place acknowledges the care for country that Aboriginal people have had that well predates this institution we are in today and to reflect on the tens of thousands of years during which Aboriginal people have cared for and shepherded this country. I think acknowledgement of country is a respectful gesture and I think it is important that we all mark our day with it, just as we do with prayers. I hope that through acknowledgement of country this place seeks to fulfil the promise we make every day in acknowledging Aboriginal people and that we do all that we can to support all Western Australians, both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal, to move towards meaningful reconciliation.

I also note that there is no right way to acknowledge country. As the Treasurer suggested, there are variations right across jurisdictions. As part of that, I spent some time after the tabling of this report looking at what other agencies and organisations do in performing acknowledgements of country. I have an issue that I discussed with members opposite. I do not seek to push it in any amendment, but I just wish to note my concerns. I do not think there is any point pushing the matter. I think once this passes, there will have been a leap here today, but I think it is worth placing my concerns on the record. My concern is about the concept of ownership. I would be more supportive to changing the wording in the acknowledgement from “traditional owner” to “traditional custodian”. I think ownership is a very difficult concept for this place to confer on Aboriginal people. In my mind it is a European ideal. The word “ownership” that we seek to interpret in a more modern context refers to direct title, almost, or peerage of land. I think that is absolutely not reflective of the historic and ancient custody that Aboriginal people have had over Western Australia and Australia, as I said, for decades. Although the concept of traditional ownership might seek to address the complexities of the tens of thousands of years of land tenure, I think it falls short of the true nature and extent of the care that Aboriginal people had and continue to have for this country and what we all inherit today, which is a great place. As I said, I do not seek to push this too much by way of an amendment, but I wish to note that there is a significant preference for the idea of custody over ownership in a range of government agencies, organisations and, indeed, in acts of Parliament that this place has previously passed. Acknowledgements of country in the Department of Health; Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety; Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage; Department of Education; and WA Museum all refer to traditional custodians. The local governments of Albany, Armadale, Augusta, Margaret River, Cockburn, Wanneroo, Vincent and Rockingham all refer to the concept of custodians versus owners. Organisations such as the Cancer Council, Rio Tinto, Edith Cowan University, Woodside, Perth Airport and a GenerationOne do exactly the same. Indeed, as the Treasurer noted, the very historic bill of member for Kimberley—I look forward to her contribution—unanimously passed by both Houses of Parliament inserted in the Constitution Act 1889 the following —

And whereas the Parliament resolves to acknowledge the Aboriginal people as the First People of Western Australia and traditional custodians of the land ...

I think this place, this chamber, the Parliament of Western Australia, will be looked to by all those organisations, all those agencies and by communities right across our state to see what we do and they will likely replicate it.

Mr David Templeman; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Zak Kirkup;
Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Shane Love; Mr Ian Blayney

I think we need to be very conscious of what we are embarking on here today. I think it is important to get it right. I am not suggesting to any extent that what is happening here today is wrong. I am asserting my preference of one term over another, but I appreciate that it is good to be in a position of simply acknowledging Aboriginal people before Parliament starts every day. As such, I congratulate the committee for the work it has done in consulting with a number of elders from Perth and, no doubt, across the state. Although I would like a reflection of change towards custodianship, I think it is important in any case that this place agrees with the concept of ownership and I look forward to supporting the motion before the house.

MS J. FARRER (Kimberley) [12.57 pm]: I would like to speak on this acknowledgement to country. One of the first things I understood when I came to Parliament was that there was hardly any talk regarding the Aboriginal people of this country. I asked around whether there was any legislation that I could look at. One piece of legislation that came to me was the Constitution Act 1889 and what it stated in regard to Aboriginal people. I went to work on it to make sure that we had a place and recognition in this Parliament. Our people, over 70 000 years, have been the people who lived on this country that everyone calls Australia. Within Australia we have different language groups and geographic boundaries that outline which part of the country belong to the different language groups. Working with the bill to recognise Aboriginal people, I felt that there was something missing and I worked hard with other members to look at that. In 2015, we passed the amendment to the Constitution Act 1889 in recognition of Aboriginal people. That was one first step and I felt good inside about it—that at last I, as an Aboriginal person, was part of the rest of the Aboriginal people around Western Australia, and also around Australia. We were being recognised for who we were. It gave me a bit of peace.

We worked very hard on the Constitution and, as we all know, the Constitution Amendment (Recognition of Aboriginal People) Bill 2015 was passed by this Parliament in recognition of the Aboriginal people of Western Australia. The legislation was granted royal assent on 17 September 2015, and that told us that we were recognised as the first people, through reconciliation and a number of other things. We represent a lot of language groups of Aboriginal people across the state, and this Parliament has to acknowledge that we are here and that we are still living proof of a time before non-Aboriginal people came to this country. We do not argue with that; we have taken things along, even though there was hostility and all sorts of things have occurred, even during my life's journey. The way we were treated was terrible, but the amendments that were made to the Constitution gave me some peace. I wonder how many more of our young Aboriginal people have felt the same way. It was good when the legislation was passed; people talked about it everywhere—sometimes in good terms, sometimes probably in not so good terms, but it gave us some recognition. When I came to Parliament, I knew that this was not part of my traditional country; it is the country of the Whadjuk Noongar people.

A lot of hard work was put into this welcome to country by the Procedure and Privileges Committee, and I feel the committee fought very hard and long for this. It is a very good step forward for all of us in Parliament. I believe the Legislative Assembly is honoured—that is, all of us here today—to be situated on the ancestral lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people; I know I am. We acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional owners of this land. We respect and pay respect to their elders, both past and present. “Traditional owners” is a term that white people have put in to tell us that the Aboriginal people belong to this land. Words like “custodians” paint a different picture. My understanding of the term “custodian” is that custodians are the keepers, and we are that, but we were also the traditional owners before anybody else came to this country. I think that is what we really need to recognise. We cannot go back and say, “You’ve been the custodians of this land for the last 70 000 years”; we are the people who come from this country. Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR K.M. O'DONNELL (Kalgoorlie) [1.03 pm]: As shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I fully support this motion. Welcome to country is a ceremony performed by Indigenous Australian elders to welcome visitors to their traditional lands. It can be in varying forms, including singing, dancing, smoke ceremonies or speeches. The format and duration of the ceremony is at the discretion of the ceremony provider. An acknowledgement of country is a way that the wider community can demonstrate respect for Aboriginal protocols and can be performed by any individual, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. It involves visitors acknowledging the original Indigenous owners of the land and their long and continuing relationship with their country. It can be formal or informal and there are no set protocols or wording.

Welcome to country is an ancient Indigenous tradition that was practised when one Indigenous community sought permission to enter or cross another's land and be offered safe passage and protection. The visitor was required to acknowledge, adhere to and respect the rules of the country being entered. Contemporary welcome to country ceremonies are claimed to have begun approximately 41 years ago with a performance at the Perth International Arts Festival involving Western Australians Richard Walley and Ernie Dingo, and the Middar Aboriginal Theatre, in 1976. This first ceremony was required when visiting Pacific dancers insisted on being officially welcomed

Mr David Templeman; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Zak Kirkup;
Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Shane Love; Mr Ian Blayney

onto the country they were visiting. Walley and Dingo sought permission from local Noongar elders and the welcome to country was delivered.

Following this event a new tradition began, with others in Australia asking for a welcome to country, including Tourism Northern Territory and Tourism Australia, and then at the 1979 Miss Universe competition in Perth, which was broadcast around the world. These early events made the public aware of the cultural protocol.

A new precedent was set in 2008 when Australia's federal Parliament was officially opened with a traditional welcome to country led by Matilda House; this became a standard feature thereafter. These days welcomes to country are used at the openings of meetings, launches, special events and functions. Similar customs are found in other countries. In Kalgoorlie–Boulder we are privileged to have a couple of Aboriginal elders whom I will name: Aubrey Lynch and Trevor Donaldson. They actually make the welcomes to country a big highlight of these events. People go to functions for specific reasons, but by the end of them people are still talking about the welcome to country. Aubrey talks about his trials and tribulations as a young fellow growing up, and then Trevor Donaldson will talk about his great-grandfather, King Billy. It is people like this who help educate the wider community. I commend people like them for promoting their culture, and I commend this motion.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands — Deputy Speaker) [1.06 pm]: I will be brief. I think most of the things that have been said in the house today show the significance that all members attach to this acknowledgement of country. I am particularly thankful that the members for Kimberley and Dawesville, and the Treasurer, have endorsed this acknowledgement.

As deputy chair of the committee, and having been in this place for nearly 10 years, I think this is the fastest turnaround from report to adoption that I have ever been privileged to be part of. Again, I think that shows how significant this is. I want to thank the Chair of the Procedure and Privileges Committee, Peter Watson, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Without his passion for reform this might have taken a bit longer. I am the deputy chair, but my colleagues the members for Geraldton, Pilbara and Roe all worked hard to get this report into this place. It also would not have happened without Dr Isla Macphail, our principal research officer, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Kirsten Robinson, and the Deputy Clerk, Scott Nalder. Each of them have contributed and did the hard research yards for this acknowledgement of country. Finally, I would like to thank Dr Robert Isaacs and Sandra Harben, who were both consulted to get the words right for the acknowledgement of country.

Before I sit down, I want to remind members that this is a government that seeks to look for the twenty-first century that this Parliament should start to move towards. It is well-nigh time that we brought reform to our procedures and standing orders to make this a modern Parliament. To that end, members will have found on their chairs today a members' survey. I ask members to have a quick look at it; it is really just a trend survey that will help us to put together the next reforms that we bring into this house next year. I thank very much the member for Kimberley and everyone else who has worked so hard on this.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore) [1.09 pm]: I want to raise one interesting point about this acknowledgement that I think is very important. As the Leader of the Nationals has said, we as a party are very pleased that this has come forward, and I thank our member for Roe for his work in particular. I believe that the committee made a point of showing each of the parties the wording so that everyone had an opportunity to comment. One thing I would like to say briefly—I do not think it has been mentioned in the debate—is that although the first sentence certainly recognises the Whadjuk people as the owners of the lands on which we meet, I think it is very important that the second sentence acknowledges the people of our own electorates. It states —

We acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional owners of the lands we represent ...

For me, that is a very important aspect and it means that we are recognising not only the Whadjuk people, but also, in my case, all the people from the Nanda up in the north west to the Ballardong in the south east of my electorate and the many different Aboriginal peoples within that area. I am pleased that we are recognising not only the Whadjuk people, but also all the people whom each of us, especially country and regional representatives, are proud to represent. I congratulate the Procedure and Privileges Committee for not only the welcome to country, but also the acknowledgement of the Aboriginal people right across the state in each of our individual electorates.

MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton) [1.11 pm]: I would like to acknowledge in the Speaker's gallery the former member for Kimberley, Carol Martin, who is a constituent of mine.

It is good to see Western Australia come into line with other Australian Parliaments. As the member for Moore said, I find the wording very acceptable because it not only acknowledges the location of our house, but also is worded to encompass all the people we represent. I often consider how these matters have been handled in Australia compared with the way they were dealt with in New Zealand where, of course, there was a single community for the British to negotiate with and the result was the Treaty of Waitangi, which we celebrate every

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 29 November 2017]

p6260c-6266a

Mr David Templeman; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Zak Kirkup;
Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Kyran O'Donnell; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Shane Love; Mr Ian Blayney

year in Geraldton. The first stanza of the New Zealand national anthem is in Maori and the second stanza is in English, and we always sing it at our military services. Of course, in Australia we had 300 languages and 800 dialects, and my region of the midwest had seven languages, so it was not possible for the British to recognise a structure to negotiate with and to decide, out of all those languages, which one to accept as the national language. Of course, it could not.

I acknowledge the concerns of the member for Dawesville and I wish he had brought them to me earlier. I have no Aboriginal blood, but I have two great-nephews who have an Aboriginal father. My great-grandfather spoke three Aboriginal languages, which he learnt as a child at Tibbradden station near Geraldton and used in his working life as a teamster throughout the Murchison. These simple words may not change the world but, like the change we made to the Constitution in the last Parliament, they will probably help us to live and work together better.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [1.13 pm] — in reply: In closing the debate, I thank all members for their contributions to the debate today. I expect that when this motion is passed, on Tuesday, 13 February 2018 the Legislative Assembly will indeed acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people and also acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional owners of the land we represent and pay respect to their elders, both past and present. I commend the changes to the house.

Question put and passed.