

Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Mia Davies; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Dr Kim Hames; Mr David Templeman; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Shane Love; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Day

WILLIAM JOHN “BILL” MCNEE

Condolence Motion

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [2.01 pm]: I move —

That this house records its sincere regret at the death of Bill McNee and tenders its deep sympathy to his family who are in the gallery today.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Mr William “Bill” McNee served as the member for Mt Marshall from 1983 to 1986 and the member for Moore from 1989 to 2005. Bill McNee was born in Wyalkatchem on 28 April 1933 and attended primary schools in the local area before completing his schooling, aged 15, at Aquinas College. He farmed successively at Yorkrakine, Wyalkatchem and Koorda with his father and brothers from 1949. In 1964, Bill and Lesley McNee were married and last year they celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. In 1968 they established their own farm at Koorda where they resided for many years and raised their family of four children—his daughters Claire and Kathryn, who join us in the gallery today and who I would like to acknowledge, and his twin sons Paul and Mathew.

Having done his national service training in the early 1950s, Bill McNee became active in the local Farmers’ Union of Western Australia and was a member of the Wyalkatchem Hospital Board from 1963 to 1975, including eight years as its chairman. Between 1966 and 1981 he was a member of the Shire of Koorda council, serving as deputy president from 1970 to 1973, and as president from 1973 until 1979. He chaired the Koorda development committee from 1978 until 1981 and was active in supporting the Silver Chain and Lions Club in his community.

Bill McNee became active in the Liberal Party in 1953 and in September 1967 was endorsed to contest a by-election for the local seat of Mt Marshall. This was a stronghold of the Country Party, whose members had been returned unopposed for more than 20 years, and Bill was the first Liberal ever to contest the seat. He polled 1 000 votes, or 24.4 per cent. He again stood unsuccessfully at the 1980 election, with a similar result. However, in 1983 in a four-way contest with the National Country Party, the National Party and the Australian Labor Party, Bill McNee headed the count with 33 per cent of the vote and after preferences was elected by 900 votes, winning Mt Marshall for the Liberal Party. This was the only Liberal gain in the Legislative Assembly in an otherwise severe defeat for the party. In the 1986 election he increased his primary vote to 44 per cent, but was defeated by 540 votes after the distribution of preferences. When the seat of Mt Marshall was abolished, Bill McNee contested the seat of Moore at the 1989 election and polled 48.8 per cent against the National Party and the ALP. He won a final majority of 518 votes and was re-elected in 1993 and 1996 with absolute majorities. In the challenging 2001 election, Bill won his fourth and final term by 2 800 votes ahead of the One Nation Party. Bill McNee served as Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Minister for Water Resources and Local Government from 1993 to 1997, in the first term of the Court government. Between 1990 and 1993 he served as a shadow minister covering Transport, Fisheries and Water Resources, and in his final term, until 2004, was shadow Minister for Water Resources and Salinity.

Bill McNee was deeply respected by all as a fearless representative of rural communities. He was a passionate advocate for the bush who stood up for his constituency no matter what the issue. Those within the Liberal Party saw him as dogged campaigner who fought back after defeats to win five election victories in seats that the Liberal Party had once regarded as unwinnable or “tiger country”. Back in 1983, when Bill gave his inaugural speech, he advocated for the Australian farming industry as a world leader. He was a passionate Australian, who loved pointing out the fact that the Australian farmer fed on average 70 other people, compared with American farmers, who fed 59 people; Western European farmers, who fed 19 people; and the world average, which was only five people at the time.

Bill’s valedictory address in this place on 10 November 2004 says a lot about his character and his life. I quote briefly from that speech —

Over the years, the going has been tough and it has been good, but I say this: I have had an absolutely wonderful life and I do not have any regrets. If I were to rerun my life, I would not change many things. If my children get to my age and have had the sort of life that I have had, I will be highly delighted. I do not want to fall into that trap of saying I want things to be better for the kids than they have been for me. I have had a tremendous life and I have been greatly blessed by a lot of things.

Bill was also a devout and committed family man; he loved his family and spoke of them often. In this Parliament, he could be something of a firebrand; he did not ever shy away from a battle of words with the likes of HENDY COWAN and others, and at times he was seen to be not too fond of the National Party! He did work

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constructively with National Party members, and I noticed that out in country areas he was always good friends with them, but in here it was a different matter.

Bill was also very good to me when I first became a member of Parliament in 1990. He, David Wordsworth and Bill Stretch obviously assumed I knew nothing about country WA—they may have been right!—and they took some trouble to take me around country areas, introduce me to people and give me quiet little lectures on what country people were all about.

Not only was he a firebrand in this chamber, he was never short of a few words in Liberal Party meetings. I remember once, during the time when Richard Court was Premier, Richard gave a very fine and forward-looking speech in the party room about the development of the mining and petroleum industry, commodity trade and the like. That was all too much for Bill; we could see him seething at the back of the room until he jumped to his feet and said, “Richard, what about wheat? What about wool? They’re commodities!” Off he went, in full flight! I spoke to Richard at Bill’s funeral a week or so ago and reminded him of that, and he still had not forgotten it. He had to sit at the front of the party room and hear Bill in full flight for about 10 minutes on the importance of agriculture and asking why had Richard ignored that.

Bill was a great fellow and great parliamentarian and an absolutely passionate advocate for country and rural Western Australia, and will be sadly missed by all of us.

I convey my sympathies and those of Liberal members of Parliament to Lesley McNee; to their children Paul, Mathew, Claire and Kathryn; to his sister Carmel, who is also here today; his brothers Jim and Roger, who still farm in the area in which Bill farmed; and to their families. We also acknowledge his many friends and extended family, including his sister-in-law, former member of the Legislative Council Hon Barbara Scott.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [2.08 pm]: I join with government members in passing on my and the opposition’s condolences on the loss of Bill McNee. Bill McNee was a fine person and a good man. He was a respected member of this Parliament and someone who I liked a lot over the two terms in Parliament we shared.

Bill was born on 28 April 1933 in Wyalkatchem, WA, and married on 21 January 1965 to Lesley Barnett, who is here in the gallery today. He was educated at primary schools in Yorkrakine and Wyalkatchem, and at Aquinas College until the age of 15 when he departed school to become a full-time farmer. He represented the Liberal Party in Parliament for a number of years, which I will go into shortly. He was inaugural president of both the Wyalkatchem and Koorda branches of the Liberal Party.

He was first elected to Parliament on 19 February 1983, and he eventually retired from Parliament at the 2005 state election. His original electorate was Mt Marshall, from February 1983 until February 1986. And then from 1989 until February 2005, he represented the Moore electorate. Over his time in Parliament, he was a parliamentary secretary in Richard Court’s government in the 1990s. Prior to that, he was shadow Minister for Transport; Fisheries. In the early 1990s, he was the shadow Minister for Water Resources. Salinity was included in his portfolio responsibilities. He served on a range of government committees, notably, the Select Committee on Rural Hardship in 1984. He served on other committees, particularly those to do with agricultural and rural affairs.

He held a lot of positions in the broader community, particularly in the wheatbelt—to which he devoted his life and in particular, the Farmers Union. I think I read somewhere that he was a member of what was once known and perhaps still is known as WA Young Farmers. He was a very prominent member and supporter of that group.

In relation to his achievements outside Parliament, in 1986, Lesley and Bill and their four children were chosen as representatives to receive communion from the pope at a mass at Belmont Park. He met with John Paul II on the pope’s famous visit to Perth in 1986. Upon his retirement from Parliament, he received the papal cross, Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, from Pope John Paul II. He is one of two members of Parliament to have received such recognition. Bill and the late Phillip Pental received that acknowledgement from the pope.

Bill had the fairly rare honour of making, in effect, two inaugural speeches, one in 1983 and one in 1989. His first speech in 1983 was peppered with mentions of farming, country life, drought, wheat, the future of country towns and salinity. In his inaugural speech he said —

I am always assured that farmers get lots of things for nothing. I cannot find out what these things are, but I do understand that that is a criticism that we hear.

His inaugural speech was true to what he had devoted his career to—that is, the welfare, success and ongoing survival of regional and rural Western Australia, particularly those who live on the land. His valedictory speech

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in this house on 10 November 2004 was again full of mentions of farming life, the towns that he represented and the places he had visited throughout regional Western Australia. Over the course of his years in Parliament that was indeed a major theme of his speeches. I want to quote a few things that Bill said in his valedictory speech in this place, and the Premier picked a particularly good quote from that speech. Bill said a few interesting things in relation to his career —

For better or for worse, I was first endorsed for the seat of Mt Marshall in 1983. My runs for Parliament were more than Don Bradman ever made! That was my second crack at Parliament—it may have been the third. It does not matter. I was successful that time.

...

It has been a privilege to represent country people because their word is their bond—absolutely. It has not mattered how far I was under, or whether something could not be done. If I was honest with them, they might growl at me, but they would not necessarily forget me. If I tried to be half smart, I would have paid the penalty.

Later in the speech, he said —

As a member of Parliament, I have had a great opportunity to represent the constituents in those wonderful areas. I deeply appreciate that and the opportunity that the Liberal Party has given me as its endorsed candidate. Recycling was not an in-word in those days. I was recycled and I can recommend it; it was a good opportunity.

In his final speech he also referred to and expressed his appreciation for his family.

Coming back to the recycling reference, Bill had the distinction, which is unusual, of winning his seat for a term and then losing it for a term and then picking up another seat and coming back into Parliament, hence his reference to having been recycled. He was defeated by the National Party member Mort Schell in 1986. Then, in 1989, he succeeded Bert Crane in the Moore electorate. Bill was not a person who had many dislikes or hatreds; in fact, he was a very gentle person, full of goodwill and bonhomie. In my experience, the only time he seriously expressed his dislike for anything or anyone was when he expressed his dislike for the National Party. For those of us on this side of the house, we were just people who passed through and did not really worry him in relation to his electorate. The National Party, of course, was the real enemy when it came to him holding his electorate.

My first experience of Bill was in 1997. I had been a member of this place for perhaps six months. During that period there had been massive rallies with hundreds of people in the gallery and huge amounts of noise, and the gallery was being cleared all the time. It was a period of great tumult and excitement. That had been going on regularly over those months. One day, I was sitting in the courtyard with a few colleagues having a cup of coffee and I heard all this consternation in the house. I could hear it through the chamber's windows. We all heard it out in the courtyard. I thought that there was another big rally with hundreds of people in the gallery screaming and yelling about an issue. We all came running in through the chamber doors to see what was going on, and it was Bill making a speech. He was so loud and so full of life that the whole chamber filled with members to listen to his address. He was extremely voluminous. I have never heard anyone speak as loudly or forcefully as Bill McNee. He had interesting expressions. When he did not like something, in particular, something that we had decided to do in government, he would describe it as "a rotting bag of old fish". He had all these expressions that might have been country expressions that he had picked up along the way. As I understand it, and the Premier actually told me this some years ago, at points in time, when Bill did not like something as minister for whatever he was, the Premier, as a minister, would receive a call, at maybe six in the morning, with Bill expressing his views down the phone quite loudly about whatever it was that he did not particularly appreciate that the government had done.

But as I said, he was a nice man, a gentle man, a friendly man. His city residence was in my electorate, quite close to where I live in Rockingham. On a few occasions, I drove him home from Parliament and very occasionally I would see him down on Palm Beach. I think he very much appreciated that part of the world, but his heart was always on the farm and in the wheatbelt. He was a very good representative of people from that part of the world.

In closing, I pass my regards to Lesley, Claire, Kathryn, Paul and Matthew. We commiserate with you in your loss, and hope that today's proceedings help you to understand how well respected Bill was in this place.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Water) [2.20 pm]: I rise on behalf of the Nationals to offer my condolences to Lesley, Paul, Matthew, Claire and Kathryn, and the extended family, on the passing of Bill McNee. Bill, who was born, educated and farmed in Yorkrakine, Wyalkatchem and Koorda, which is very close to my family home, was typical of many country people. We have heard from a number of people about his strong

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sense of civic duty in the roles that he took on as a member of that community before he became a member of Parliament. This is very typical of people who are passionate about their communities and want to make them work. Bill was a representative of many organisations in Koorda. He was deputy president and president of the shire and was involved with the Farmers' Union of WA, the young farmers section of the Western Australian Farmers Federation, and the Primary Industry Association—I think he was a member of the Koorda branch from 1964 to 1986. He was president of the Koorda development committee and a member of the Wyalkatchem hospital board of the Wyalkatchem and Koorda Districts Hospital, which serviced both those communities. He was a member of the Koorda Silver Chain committee and a member of the Lions Club. He would have worn all those hats and also gone about his business as a farmer, and no doubt there were many other organisations.

Bill McNee started in Parliament representing the electorate of Mt Marshall, which is the top part of the now electorate of Central Wheatbelt, and later Moore, which now encompasses the majority of the electorate of the member for Moore, Shane Love. As we have heard, Bill McNee was very persistent in his efforts in the state Parliament to represent the communities that he was so passionate about. I had picked out the same quote as the Leader of the Opposition from Bill McNee's valedictory speech, that for better or worse he had a number of runs and his runs for Parliament were more than Don Bradman had ever made! He obviously had a sense of humour, but behind that was someone who was tenacious in his efforts as a member of Parliament and to represent his communities. Both electorates were extensive. Members of Parliament who represent country electorates would understand—I know that he reflected on this in the Parliament and during his speeches—that it took him some three hours to drive from one end of his electorate to the other, depending on which area he was in. His electorate took in Dalwallinu, Dowerin, Kellerberrin, Koorda, Mt Marshall, Mukinbudin, Nungarin, Tammin, Trayning, Wyalkatchem, Cunderdin, Quairading, Wongan Hills, Westonia and Yilgarn. That is a big area. Bill McNee was well known throughout that area.

Water and salinity, the impact of drought, freight costs on rail and road, and rural housing were all issues that featured heavily in his speeches to this Parliament and also in the community. He fought to bring those issues to the attention of the government of the day through his roles in the Parliament, both in the Liberal Party and outside, as a member of the government's rural hardship committee, as the Parliamentary Secretary of State Assisting in Water Resources and Local Government, and as shadow Minister for Water Resources, Fisheries and Transport at various times.

Bill McNee was acutely aware of the privilege it was to represent the electorate. Again, the Leader of the Opposition picked out the same quote as I did. I would attest to this privilege. People in country WA have a very quick and swift way of calling a person out when they are not genuine with them, and he reflected on that in his valedictory speech. He said that if he was honest and forthright with people, even if they did not get the outcome that they wanted all the time, they appreciated him and would come back and support him. That was the ethos and philosophy that he brought to the role.

His wife, Lesley, kept the farm running. I am told this is because Bill did not feel he could accurately reflect and understand the issues that most of his constituents were going through without that experience on the ground. Any member of Parliament in country WA who has managed that and represented their constituents would understand the great support they need from their family to do that, particularly in a family farming business. I know this was much appreciated.

People knew where Bill stood without any question, and we have heard that reflected in the comments made by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. This was reflected by people wherever they were. It has been reflected to me by some of my constituents in a town meeting and in this house by members who served with him that Bill was very forthright in his views. My father, who was a member of Parliament for a short time at the same time as Bill, described him as a very forthright and robust advocate. Again, this was echoed a number of times as I was talking to people who knew him during his time as a member.

He was clearly very focused on delivering the best outcomes for the people he represented. He was a passionate advocate for farming. Despite the hard times that some of his constituents were going through—there were some difficult times in the agricultural sector during his time as a member of Parliament—he firmly believed it was a great thing to live in the country and it was a wonderful place to raise his children. In his valedictory speech he urged everyone to continue to promote living in the country despite some of the difficulties that our constituents face from time to time. I extend my deepest sympathy, on behalf of the Nationals, to Lesley and the family, and to those who worked and supported him during his time as a member of Parliament.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [2.24 pm]: When I heard of the passing of Bill McNee and I reflected on the time we shared together here in the Parliament—a period which I gather was about 10 years—the first words that came to mind were authentic, sincere and genuine—those kinds of words. In a world in which people are often

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cynical about politicians, I do not think anyone could have been cynical about Bill McNee. Bill was very much a conviction politician. I think everyone knew what he stood for and he was not shy about standing up for those values. The Leader of the Opposition has already referred to Bill being awarded the Papal Cross and the honour of him receiving communion from Pope John Paul II when he visited Perth. Most people in here knew about and have commented on his priorities of agriculture and farming, but the most important things to Bill were certainly his family, family values generally, the sanctity of human life and his own faith. He was, as I think everyone's comments have reflected, a very authentic politician. He was authentic in everything he said and did, whether it was robustly representing his constituents or talking about some of those matters that he held very dear, such as the sanctity of human life and his Catholic beliefs.

One of the highest Australian accolades we can give is to say that he was a good bloke. He was a genuine and good bloke. I have to say that, as a Labor member of Parliament, it may not surprise members opposite to learn—the Premier certainly got some advice from Bill—that in that era when I first came into the Parliament, people like Bill and indeed the late Barry Blaikie and others were not shy about giving advice to any new politicians. Bill, especially, given our shared faith, was often more than happy to sit down in the corridor, call me over and give me a little advice about what he had learnt since he had been in this place. I certainly appreciated that. He was a very knowledgeable fellow, very genuine and very decent.

I want to put on record today that Lesley and his children, Paul, Matthew, Claire and Kathryn, can be very proud of his contribution in this place and the fact that he stood true to his values through thick and thin—it did not matter—and he fought for what he believed in and was absolutely sincere in everything that he did in this place.

DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Deputy Premier) [2.28 pm]: I would like to speak on behalf of recycled politicians, because I know of only two—Bill and me—and, interestingly enough, by the time I retire, I will have beaten Bill by one year. Bill McNee served 19 years in this place and I will have served 20. I first got to know Bill when I came to Parliament in 1993. I do not want to give government backbenchers any ideas, but Bill was an absolute inspiration to us because he would come into the party room and there would be eminent people, such as the Premier of the day and the current Premier, who was Deputy Premier, and senior ministers, and Billy would absolutely tear strips off them. As backbenchers, we loved it! We were pretty new and a bit unsure of where we were going and what we were doing, and Billy would get up and give them what for. He would not do it in just five minutes; he would take 25 minutes and make sure they knew exactly where they stood, what they were doing wrong and how they should be doing it better. It was wonderful! Even in later years, when I became a minister, if ever I was walking around the house and I heard Billy get up and start talking, I would come in here and sit down just so that I could listen to his speeches, because they were inspirational and he was so passionate about the issues that he held dear.

I became Minister for Water Resources in 1997 and, as mentioned before, Bill was my parliamentary secretary. Usually there is an expectation that parliamentary secretaries become involved in portfolio matters, but Billy was not all that interested in doing any of that. However, I was pretty interested in the farm water grants scheme, as was Billy, and he was happy to be helping extend pipelines to farms and taking over from where Ernie Bridge had left off. However, Billy just wanted to be in his electorate, and he had served many years in Parliament by then. He had an enormous electorate to cover and, as members have heard, he often spoke about the time it took to get across his electorate. He was passionate about getting back and meeting people in his electorate. He would say, “No, no, you're doing fine. You just keep doing what you're doing.” Billy was a great mate to everybody in this house, on both sides of the Parliament, except for the Nats! He was an amazing man to listen to. However, as an Old Guildfordian, I might not have held him in such high regard had I known he was an Old Aquinian. Can I say to the family, the funeral service was great and the crowning moment for me was taking that stalk of wheat and putting it on his casket. It was Billy to a tee. I thank the family and thank Lesley, especially.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [2.32 pm]: For those members on this side who were elected in 2001, Bill McNee was a great character and, in many ways, a little bit of an enigma. It was during the early years of the Gallop government when we had many late sittings of this Parliament—some that would go on into the early hours of the morning—that the backbenchers of the Labor government, then in government, would experience the Billy McNee-style of speech. The Premier mentioned the former member's firebrand style, and I think that is an accurate description. For members of the backbench of the Labor Party in the Gallop government, particularly during much of the contentious legislation that was being vigorously opposed by the Liberal and National party members, it was Bill who would entice us all into the chamber. As the Deputy Premier highlighted, whenever Bill McNee rose to speak in this place—from memory he was in the corner over where the member for Armadale now sits—we would all rush back into the chamber. In fact, members on the backbench of the Labor Party would come back into the chamber because they thoroughly enjoyed not only the passion that

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Bill McNee delivered in his speeches, but also some of the colourful language that he used to describe members of Country Labor. He was very colourful in his language and description of Country Labor Party members. I was going through some of his speeches earlier today and found some wonderful descriptions of Country Labor members. He, of course, was not necessarily a strong supporter of the Greens party either, which was made quite clear in a number of his speeches about those members of the Greens party. When Bill McNee was in absolute full flight, he was also very animated. From his seat, he would hitch up his pants, lean forward, and we knew then that we were in for a lambasting. He would love to do a sweeping pointing motion of all Labor backbenchers and call us all sorts of things, and we would love it. In fact, if any of us were courageous enough to interject, it would urge him on even more.

Of course, members would be well aware that, outside of this Parliament, whilst the theatrics of this place may have been great viewing for the very few people who may have been sitting in the public gallery, he was a gentleman and a fantastic person to speak to. He was very experienced. No-one could question his passion for rural and regional Western Australia, and he was a great character. I hope that communities within Western Australia continue to deliver people with the character of Bill McNee to this place, because this place needs more of those sorts of people.

To Bill McNee's wife and family members who are here, this place was and has been a good and great place because of the service that Bill McNee gave to not only this place as a parliamentarian but also particularly to the community that he loved.

MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [2.35 pm]: The member for Mandurah said that Country Labor Party members were targeted by Bill McNee, and I was one of them. When I first came into this Parliament, I was very quiet, did not say much and was very unassuming! Members can thank Bill for that! One day I got up and started talking about Country Labor and what we were going to do in regional areas, and then a voice came from this side of the chamber, from a grey-haired guy, and it was not a quiet voice. I was sitting in the area where the member for Morley sits now, and it was as though the voice was next to me: "What would you know about the country, son! You wouldn't know the difference between a cow and a bull!" I happened to start to answer, and he said, "Sit down, son, you know nothing about nothing." Billy always had something to say every time we got up to speak. If I got up to talk about Country Labor, I would look across the chamber and he would have a big smile on his face, and I would know that I was going to get hammered. I might have got hammered in here, but when I went outside the chamber, he would say, "How did I go today, Watto? Did I get ya? Did I get ya?" He had passion for his constituents and the country, but he had something like white-line fever—he would come into the chamber and give me hell but he was completely different once we were outside the chamber. In those days, Mr Speaker, we had a better chance to talk across the chamber! I really miss him because he was a character. I have been in Parliament for 14 years now, and Bill was the best character, was passionate and an easy-going guy. We would always say to him when he got up and pulled up his pants, "We will buy you braces, Billy." But, no, he did not want them.

To the family, I hope they have some good memories from what has been said about him today. He was a perfect gentleman and a great guy and it is a shame he was not on our side of the house, but his contribution will always be remembered.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Preston) [2.37 pm]: I, too, briefly add my condolences to the family and acknowledge the passing of Billy McNee. As has been said a few times, and I will not labour the fact, he was a country character. Many of the sayings he came out with in this house went straight over the head of many a city person. We would look across and country members from either side would know what he was talking about—it was a bit like a country language—but other members would be looking around and wondering what in the hell it was all about. We would certainly talk outside the chamber; discuss the weather, how the crops were going and how different places had missed out on the rain. It is those subjects that bind country people, and it is still the case. However, as has been said, we do not have a character that comes near Billy McNee. As the member for Mandurah said, members would come into the house to listen to him, wind him up a bit and have great fun, but he never took that outside of this house. He always had time to say g'day to me and ask how my particular patch in the country was doing.

One of my great memories of Bill that I do not think ever got into *Hansard*, so I probably should not mention it, but I will, occurred during debate on gay issues and rights. From across the chamber Billy said, "And the sheep won't even be safe the way the Labor Party is going in this house!" That stuck with me and I am not sure whether it got into *Hansard*, but of course there was much laughter and yelling and screaming at Bill. He did his job and he did it to his best.

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I also remember the time that he fell off his shed. We had a laugh about that because he had retired from here at a great age and yet he was still trying to fix his shed. I think he broke both ankles as a result, but when we heard about that we thought that was typical of Bill—he would do it all himself, do it his way and then he broke his bloody ankle!

I have very fond memories. I express my condolences to the family. Bill was a great bloke, he will be sorely missed and we hope that we get a few more characters like him in this house in the future.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [2.39 pm]: Today I rise to pass on my condolences to Lesley and the McNee family. Like the speakers who have just risen to their feet, I, too, was one of the class of 2001 who came in here and experienced Bill McNee. As the member for Mandurah has just said, Bill sat up the back, where the member for Armadale is now sitting, next to Arthur Marshall. As members know, they looked like the grey-haired twins up the back, causing trouble. I certainly was not as grey as I am now when I came in here, but I do remember looking at them and thinking, “How old are those two guys up the back there? How long have they been in here?” But that soon wore off when they started speaking, and particularly when Bill started. We have talked about how animated Bill could get in here, and about the late-night sittings. We did have quite a lot of late-night sittings in the first term of the Gallop government. On one particular occasion, the night was wearing on, and we had finished one bill and had moved onto the next bill. It was the second reading debate, and the Speaker had asked the member for Moore to continue on from where he had left off. At this stage, the member for Moore was slightly dozing away, as we would at probably eleven or half past eleven at night, so the Speaker said more loudly, “Member for Moore!”, and Billy sprung to his feet and said, “Socialists!”

Several members interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: “Socialists! That’s what you are! You’re all a bunch of socialists, and look at the state of the country!” “Socialists” was a word that he used quite a lot. How he could get from being fast asleep to painting us all as socialists, I do not know. I do not know what he was dreaming about at the time, because everyone on our side of the chamber went, “What?”, in complete shock at his contribution to that debate.

I also remember, obviously, his role in the Moora Hospital brick campaign, if people remember that. Certainly the former member for Victoria Park, Geoff Gallop, the then Premier of Western Australia, would remember the Moora brick campaign, but probably not with a great deal of fondness, because every time he appeared on television someone would be standing behind him with a brick, right in the line of sight of the TV camera, and quite often we would see Billy in the back pulling the strings for the Moora Hospital campaign. That was very successful, too, and of course Moora ended up with a new hospital out of it.

The other thing is when poor old Bill was fixing his silos, member for Collie–Preston. I had a long discussion with him about the injuries that he had, because, if members remember, he was hobbling around on crutches in this place for a fair while. Apparently the ladder simply slid away from him down the side of the silos and he just went from the top to the bottom and landed on his feet, crushing both ankles as he hit the ground. That brought me to the same question that the member for Collie–Preston asked him, “What were you doing up the top of your silos at your age?”, because I think he was 70 when he had that shocking injury. I was reminded by a colleague here that Labor had a whip-round and sent him a nice basket of goodies and a get-well card when he had that shocking accident, and he said to one of my colleagues, “Well, thanks very much for that. That was great. It’s a damn sight more than I got from my own colleagues!”

Several members interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That says a lot about the camaraderie in this place.

The Premier and the Leader of the Opposition also talked about Bill’s love for the National Party. I remember being a young parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Agriculture and taking the agriculture bills, which of course I knew nothing about whatsoever, through the house.

Several members interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I know a little bit more now!

One of the bills that we were dealing with, if members remember, was the deregulation of the Grain Pool of WA. This bill brought the debate with the Nationals to absolute paroxysms of anger, made worse by the current member for Pilbara, the member for Warren–Blackwood and the member for Wagin winding Bill up even more about the deregulation of the grain trade. At this stage, I was sitting there trying to do a bill, and the Liberal members were sitting where the member for Armadale is now sitting, and the Nationals were sitting over here, and I thought there was going to be a fight, the anger between them was so palpable. But that was Bill. That was how enthusiastic and passionate he was about the agricultural industry and about farming in

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Western Australia. He was a great local member, and he was a significant contributor to the debate in this house, and he will be sorely missed by all of us.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.45 pm]: I wish to mark the passing of a former member for the seat of Moore, as we have heard, the seat that I am now privileged to represent, ironically enough for the National Party. William John McNee, known as Bill, was of course a farmer who represented his community first of all on the Shire of Koorda council for 15 years, of which for six years he was the president of that council. He entered Parliament for the first time, not as the member for Moore but in 1983 as the member for Mt Marshall, having defeated the incumbent. The first foray was relatively short-lived with his election loss in 1986. In 1989, the seat of Mt Marshall was abolished and Bill contested the seat of Moore, which he won at that election. He went on to represent the seat of Moore until 2005, along the way winning the next three elections. His passion for farming, for the people on the land and for the people in the small towns who depended on agriculture was apparent throughout his time in Parliament, including in his first speech in this place, in which he plainly laid out the needs of his electorate of Mt Marshall at that stage and the rural industry that was its mainstay.

As we have heard, Bill held many parliamentary positions, including parliamentary secretary and shadow minister. As one of his constituents for the 16 years that he represented the electorate of Moore, I am aware of the respect that he earned in the community in that time, and I recall his good service as a local member; and, yes, I include in that his loud and passionate contributions at public meetings, where he would leap up and explain in the boldest of terms how he was going to represent the community.

My contribution today has been brief, but, in all sincerity, in conclusion I would like to extend my condolences—I am sure on behalf of many constituents of the electorate of Moore—to the family of the late Bill McNee, to his wife, Lesley, his daughters, Claire and Kathryn, who are here today, to his other family members here, and to his sons, Paul and Matthew, and wish them all the very best.

MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin) [2.47 pm]: I will be brief, but, in being brief, that does not lessen my huge admiration and respect for Bill McNee. Like everyone before me has said, he was just a great bloke, a really terrific bloke, and, no, he did not particularly love us Nats. As a new member of Parliament, and like the other group who came in here in 2001, I remember distinctly feeling pretty overawed when I first came in here, but Bill McNee was one of those guys who just had a chat to us and gave us encouragement and talked to us about what we were doing, and I really did appreciate that encouragement and help. As I think back, I realise over time how much I actually learnt from Bill McNee, and yet I was a Nat and he was a Lib, and he was vociferous about us. The one thing about Bill was that his absolute passion for and his total commitment to country Western Australia I think actually inspired me in my early years in this Parliament. I remember, not so much any stories, but being outside during late night sittings having a coffee or a red wine or whatever we might have been having, and as soon as Bill got up to speak, as has been said before, everyone would vacate the outside area, and come in here, and it was great to listen to him. He was entertaining and he certainly emanated great feelings of sincerity and passion with which he spoke. That is something I have never forgotten. I pass on my condolences and thoughts to Lesley and Bill's family.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [2.49 pm]: I had great pleasure and, indeed, the privilege of serving my first 12 years in this chamber with Bill McNee. I have to say that it was a privilege. Bill was a wonderful person to work with. I had only been in the country for five years when I first came into this Parliament. I was a new boy and had a lot to learn and Bill was a bit of a mentor to me; he was a great teacher. During our first eight years, we had the benefit of being in government; we were on this side of the house. Although Billy entered into debates, the one he was most vocal on when we were on this side of the house was the abortion debate. I was very proud to join Bill and the member for Midland and various other members in voting against that bill because of our Christian beliefs and the value of life we hold very dear.

Things changed when we moved to the other side of the house. In those days, there were not three rows of chairs on each side of the house; there were only two rows of great big plush chairs. As members have quite rightly said, Bill's chair used to be where the member for Armadale sits now. During some of the years that we were on the other side of the house, I was the manager of business for the opposition. It was my job to try to get some of my members to speak on various motions. It was never a problem to get Bill to speak, and I loved it when Bill spoke. I knew that when Bill got up and spoke, he would speak with great passion. He was a passionate speaker. I accept that he was not too keen on the Nationals. He was not too keen on the Labor members either—not the members themselves, but the party and members' ideologies. He was a great Liberal and a great country member for the Liberal Party. He always spoke up for country people, for farmers and for people who lived in regional areas. I remember meeting Bill in various country areas, and he was always a great, if you like, tour guide. He would take us to various places and introduce us to people. He was a wonderful character. Not many characters come through

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this Parliament who have the personality and character of someone like Bill. As I said, Bill was a committed Christian and a super person who really gave his best to everyone. Sure, he would deliver passionate speeches and attack members of the Labor Party when they were on this side of the house. I used to love it. I would wind him up and say, “Come on, Bill—give them another go”, and he would get up and give them another go. There was probably no other speaker on that side of the house in our party who would deliver a speech quite like Bill used to. The member for Mandurah is nodding his head. It is quite true; he was a great orator. I tried to emulate him in some ways but I never came up to his standard, as I am sure many members will agree—and that is fine. He was a good member of Parliament and a good friend to everyone who came through this chamber. He never had any personal dislikes of anyone, whether they were National or Labor members. To him they were all human beings and members of Parliament doing their job, as we were. That was Bill’s philosophy. Sure, he did not agree with the National Party when it stood against our Liberal members, but he loathed Labor Party members even more because they were the main enemy, as Bill made quite clear on many, many occasions.

To Lesley and the family, and to all the extended family and to Barbara—I saw Barbara there—I pass on my condolences. Unfortunately, I was not in the country when Bill’s funeral took place; otherwise, I would have loved to be there to pay my respects. But I do pay my respects today and wish the family all the very best in the future. Bill was a great man, a great politician and super Christian.

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Leader of the House) [2.53 pm]: As one of the members whose period here overlapped Bill McNee’s for 12 years, I very briefly place on the record my condolences in relation to Bill’s passing and extend those condolences in particular to Lesley and Bill’s wider family. Much has been said here this afternoon, all of it very apt. He was certainly a very entertaining member of Parliament, and clearly well respected in his electorate having been re-elected on a number of occasions. He certainly made a substantial contribution to the Parliament here and to the agricultural community in Western Australia.

The SPEAKER: I ask members to pass this motion by standing and observing a minute’s silence.

Question passed; members standing.