

SHIRLEY HAYWARD — TRIBUTE

Statement by Member for Bunbury

MR D. T. PUNCH (Bunbury) [12.57 pm]: In the course of our working careers we meet people who are very special. Today I want to acknowledge Shirley Hayward, who passed away in February this year. Shirley was born on an Aboriginal reserve in Narrogin in 1941. Like many young Aboriginal people, Shirley was caught up in the controls and policies of the then Native Welfare Department and had to leave home at an early age. I do not want to dwell too much on these early times as I came to know Shirley much later, other than to say that her experiences resulted in a lifelong commitment to her community, to advancing and helping Aboriginal people and to the importance of family.

I met Shirley and her husband Norm when they were carers at the Kooloongaruna group home in Collie in the 1980s. I am not sure of the total number of children Shirley and Norm cared for but I know of at least 20. Children came into care for a number of reasons but Shirley was able to maintain their links with family, with culture and with pride in their Aboriginality. She was a fierce advocate for each child and a fierce advocate for each family, continually looking for ways to build links. When Shirley retired from caring, it really was not retirement. She and Norm remained a part of the lives of the many children they had cared for and made sure that a sense of belonging through being part of community, of culture and of home was always there.

Shirley was also passionate about the advancement of Aboriginal women. She established the Yorga Group, which brought a focus on Aboriginal culture, community and the relationship to land. Through Norman and Shirley, I began to understand the importance of culture, law, language and land, and I acknowledge Shirley for the amazing contribution she made to the Collie community.