

THOMAS HENRY JONES

Condolence Motion

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

That this house records its sincere regret at the death of Mr Thomas Henry Jones and tenders its deep sympathy to his family.

Tom Jones was elected as the member for Collie in March 1968 and served his electorate until his retirement from politics some 21 years later in February 1989. During this period, the people of Collie re-elected Tom six times. Tom was the son of Thomas Henry Jones, a railway guard, and Ellen Jane Thomas. He was born at West Midland Junction on 2 March 1924. In June of that year, the Jones family moved to Donnybrook, where Tom attended Donnybrook State School. Tom worked casually from the age of 10 while attending school. He represented Collie as a footballer, rower and cricketer. He left school at the age of 15 to work with the Donnybrook co-op. However, within the year he had joined the locomotive section of the Western Australian Government Railways in Collie to work as a call boy. This role required Tom to ensure that train crews showed up for their shifts and to notify them of additional or changed runs.

Tom graduated to other roles with the Government Railways prior to his resignation in June 1947 to take up a role with the Griffin coalmine in Collie. Initially, Tom was a “wheeler”, involved in moving coal, and later he worked at the coalface. It was during this time that Tom became a member of the Coal Miners’ Industrial Union of Workers of Western Australia. To begin with, he was a wheelers’ representative. Later he became the president of the Griffin branch of the union and, in 1951, the full-time general district secretary of the union. Collie was, and still is, a major coal-producing centre, and before being elected in 1968 to serve in this house, Tom worked to secure better conditions for workers in the coalmining industry. One of his last achievements before entering Parliament was to secure a 35-hour working week for coal workers.

Tom used his inaugural speech to highlight the heavy reliance of the state on electorates such as Collie to meet Western Australia’s agricultural, mining and timber needs, and the need to support regional communities by ensuring that living there was affordable and that there was the same access to all the amenities that city dwellers take for granted. These matters have no less relevance today than they did when Tom Jones gave that speech in this place. During his parliamentary career, Tom was an opposition spokesperson for police, transport and traffic safety from 1974 to 1977; for police and traffic, mines, and fuel and energy from 1977 to 1978; and for fuel and energy, and police and traffic from 1978 to 1981.

Following his retirement from politics, Tom continued his service to the Collie community as the chairman of the Collie Retired Miners’ Association and in a number of voluntary roles that he had assumed even before entering politics. Amongst these, he was the organiser of the annual Collie Cheerio Club’s pensioners’ Christmas party for an incredible 50 years, and for 20 years, the chairman of an organisation that carried out fundraising for the Collie branch of the Salvation Army.

Tom’s lifelong contributions were acknowledged on 26 January 1990 when he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the Western Australian Parliament, to the trade union movement and to the welfare of the elderly. His most important role, however, was that of husband, father, stepfather, father-in-law and pop. On behalf of the Liberal Party, I offer my sincere condolences to Tom’s family and his friends.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [2.05 pm]: I also rise to offer my condolences to the family of Mr Tom Jones, the former member for Collie, who passed away recently, and I acknowledge members of the family who are here in the gallery today for this important acknowledgement of someone who was a very significant figure in this Parliament in the time that he was here and who was also talked about. Certainly, when I first became a member of this place, he was referred to regularly as being one of the characters of the Parliament and someone who was well known as a very good speaker and advocate for his community. From 1924 to 2014, Tom lived to be 90 years of age. Although he was born in Midland Junction, we could fairly say that Collie was his home. He devoted his life’s work to the people, the community and the organisations of Collie. I think he was widely regarded as someone who always had the best interests of his town at heart and who certainly received very good support from the people of Collie for what he did for them in return.

Being born in 1924, it meant that he was five or so years of age when the Great Depression arrived in Australia, as indeed it did around the world. My perception is that Tom’s attitudes and his belief system, if you like, were formed by the experiences of the Depression and the experiences of working people in this country that came out of the Great Depression and what happened to communities and families and the poverty and difficulties that people suffered as a consequence of the Depression. Like many people of his era, Tom commenced work at the

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age of 15. These days that is very unusual, but in those days many people started work at the age of 15. In an age before large amounts of what we call modern technology or automation, the jobs were tough and difficult. The original role he performed was that of a call boy—a job I had not heard of before—who was someone who went around the streets of Collie of an evening, knocking on doors and waking up railway workers so that they would head off to work. He subsequently managed horses in the coalmines; he was a wheeler of horses. Of course, horses were used to transport the coal out of the mines, although the member for Collie–Preston might correct me on that; he was around at that time as well! Tom would transport the coal out of the mines using horses.

According to one of the obituaries I read, he became interested in the union—in this country, coalmining has always been a very heavily unionised industry—because at one time there was an extremely difficult horse to manage whose name was Red, and the workforce went on strike when the management insisted that Red would remain on duty. Tom became involved in the union, and at the age of 26 became the secretary of the union, which was 11 years after he had started work.

Subsequently, at the 1968 state election, he was elected the member for Collie, and remained in this place as a member of Parliament for the next 21 years. I read his inaugural speech, and it is a very substantial document. From what I can deduce, on the first occasion that he made a speech in this house, it went for an hour. Normally, on the first occasion that a member speaks they are nervous and tentative and they do not speak for long. In Tom's case, his first speech went for an hour, so from that point forward I assume he attempted to outdo that record in subsequent addresses. But it was a very long and comprehensive speech. If there is one thing that I could determine was his principal issue, apart from Collie, it is the subject matter of coal. He spoke at length about the future of coal, the importance of coal and how coal is used in other countries and other jurisdictions. Coal was certainly central to his thinking and to his life. It reminds me of one of the stories I heard when I was first elected to this place. The then Leader of the National Party, Hendy Cowan, said to me on one occasion—when we were discussing how I would speak and the time I would speak for in this place—that when he arrived, there was a member by the name of Tom Jones who could speak forever, and that no matter what the subject matter was, it always came back to the important issue of coal! Tom, of course, recognised back then, as it is recognised today, that the future of Collie is very much intertwined with the future of coal in Western Australia.

Tom did a range of other things and was involved in a range of organisations in Collie. He was a life member of the Collie Coal Miners Industrial Union of Workers, the Collie Mine Workers' Institute, the Collie Agricultural Society, the Western Collieries Social Club and the Collie Football Club. Subsequent to his membership of Parliament, he was also involved with Silver Chain; he organised the annual pensioners' Christmas party in Collie, which by all repute was at one stage the biggest pensioners' Christmas party in Western Australia; and he was on the board of the Riverview Residence Village aged-care facility. He did a lot of work in creating that facility, and he remained on the board for many years after it was built and cared deeply about the facility and the people who lived there. He was also chairman of the state Parliamentary Labor Party. He is survived by people who are here today, in particular Rhonda, son-in-law Eric and five grandchildren. Indeed, other family members and friends are here today paying their respects, including Dr Hilda Turnbull, his successor as the member for Collie.

I know that Tom worked closely with Mick Murray, the member for Collie–Preston, and that Mick held him in the deepest of regards. Mick introduced me to him on a few occasions, and he was a true gentleman. He was someone who came through the era of the Great Depression when his experiences were formed during those hardships. He did not have much schooling, but he was certainly one of those self-taught people who, had he been born today, no doubt would have gone off to university and attained all sorts of qualifications. However, he did great things in his life, and his family, community and friends should be very proud of a life well lived.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Deputy Leader of the National Party) [2.13 pm]: I rise on behalf of my colleagues in the National Party to extend our condolences to the family and friends of Tom Jones, who had such a long and distinguished career in this place. His record, of which we have heard from previous speakers, really speaks for itself. His work was recognised when he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his services not only to Parliament, but also to the trade union movement and to the welfare of the elderly. I am told that he was the quintessential country politician, respected by all, who worked tirelessly with his parliamentary colleagues across the political divide.

He certainly had the respect of the Nationals' Dr Hilda Turnbull, who is in the Speaker's gallery today for this condolence motion. Hilda recalls how Tom Jones was to have been part of the renewal process under Brian Burke. He was convinced not to run in 1986 and was headed for retirement. However, such was his popularity that at the eleventh hour he was asked to don the harness again and he duly defeated Hilda, who had to wait another three years until Tom finally did hang up his political boots. Hilda also tells us that as part of his decision to re-enter the election race in 1986, Tom negotiated an outcome for Collie that was very dear to his heart, which was funding for the Collie community centre, which incorporated a police and community youth

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centre and a facility for the elderly. Not only therefore was Tom a winner at the election, but also his beloved Collie community. According to Hilda, Tom's sense of community obligation was enormous. He was a man of the people and an exemplar politician whose legacy will live on not only in the built form in Collie, but also in the hearts of his community. Tom was a close friend of Tom Perry, the then Country Party member of the Legislative Council, and together they achieved much for the sporting fraternity in Collie.

Again, on behalf of my colleagues in the National Party, to the family and friends of a man who achieved much in his 21 years in the Parliament of Western Australia, I offer my sincere condolences.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [2.14 pm]: Before I start, may I also welcome the former member for Collie Dr Hilda Turnbull, who is paying her respects here today.

Mr Speaker, it is with a tinge of sadness but with many great memories that I rise to speak to the Tom Jones condolence motion. As has previously been said and I will repeat, Tom was born in Midland on 2 March 1924. He was the middle child and only son of Tom and Ellen Jones. His four sisters were named Blodwyn, Gwen, Myrtle and Doreen. In his first year, Tom's family moved to Donnybrook where his father worked on the railways. Tom and his sisters attended Donnybrook Primary School and, like all families around that time of the Depression, Tom did whatever odd jobs were available to help his family put food on the table. At aged 15 years, Tom followed in his father's footsteps and joined the railways and was based in Collie as a callboy; it was his job to ride his bike to the homes of rail workers to rouse them from sleep in time for their shifts. Despite his natural talent for this—Tom had a huge, booming voice—Tom moved on to a cleaning role at the railways followed then by a fireman's role shovelling coal into the trains' boilers.

It was the industrial unrest present in the railways in the mid-1940s that sparked Tom's interest in the union movement and the Australian Labor Party. Tom later began working as a miner at Griffin Coal Mining Co and soon began his union links as a wheelers' representative. He was later the president of the Griffin union branch and was appointed district secretary in 1951. He held this position for 17 years. Tom also joined the Australian Labor Party in 1951 and, like so many other things he was involved in, he soon took a leadership role and was the president of the Collie branch of the ALP from 1954 for many years.

On 23 February 1968, Tom was elected the member for Collie in Western Australia's Legislative Assembly and served the people of the electorate for nearly 21 years, retiring on 4 February 1989. Tom represented the people of the electorate well, and to this day people around Bunbury, Collie, Donnybrook and the hinterland tell stories about how Tom was able to help them in many ways. He certainly had the best interests of the coalmining industry at heart, especially at a time when oil was considered a more viable energy source in Western Australia. His strategy of stockpiling coal out the back of Muja power station to keep supplies scarce and prices high kept job opportunities open for the men in Collie. I think at one stage there were two million tonnes of coal compressed and hidden in the bush out behind Collie! Tom's philosophy was very simple: we will use it one day. And we did!

That was the effort Tom put in to make sure people kept their jobs. Tom and the unions worked for better pay and conditions for those working in the coalfields around Collie, especially those in the underground mines where he achieved a first for Australia: a 35-hour working week. This historic win for workers sent shockwaves through the conservative side of industrial relations, but it was in the era of shovels, axes, scoops and hand borers that retrieved the coal from underground when injuries were many, and Tom understood how hard that work was.

Tom was well known for his loud, booming voice. A microphone was never needed when Tom was addressing a crowd. Whether he was talking at a union meeting, compering the annual Cheerio Club's Christmas lunch or speaking in state Parliament, Tom always got his message across loudly and clearly. When he first became the member for Collie, Tom caused a few problems for the audio and technical people at Parliament House. His loud voice boomed across the chamber and caused quite a bit of feedback through the microphones. He was politely asked to tone it down a little when he rose to speak. Someone was heard to ask, "Why is he shouting at us?" The answer by some wizened colleague was that he was broadcasting directly back to his constituents in Collie!

Tom's legacy is well known. For years he was part of the parliamentary bowls tournaments that are held around Australia on an annual basis. Just last year I was at one of these events and people were asking after him and remembering Tom fondly. They again recalled the many good times Tom and his wife, Win, created by providing entertainment. They told me that Tom's rendition of "Collie is a Coal Town" was special.

Of the many great legacies Tom left Collie, a couple stand out, particularly relating to the senior citizens of Collie. While serving on the Silver Chain committee, he noticed the need for an aged-care facility in Collie. In late 1964, a group was formed to work together from which the Riverview Residence Collie Inc committee was inaugurated on 25 February 1965. Tom was the foundation chairman and continued in that position for the next 38 years. In 1965, the group set about raising money for the ambitious project. They held chook raffles,

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cake stalls, wood raffles, dances and a variety of other events to raise money. People may remember the coalminers' stump days, when coalminers lined up to pick up their pay packets. In those days, coalminers were paid in cash. The miners would open up their pay packets and look for loose change to buy raffle tickets from the members of the Riverview residence group, who were always waiting for the workers on their way out. This was a fortnightly event for many years and it raised many thousands of dollars. By 1969, Tom and his band of workers had acquired land in crown trust near Collie Senior High School and had raised enough money for W. Palmer and Co to start construction. On 30 May 1970, Mrs Ivy Davies, the wife of the late D.K. Davies, foundation president of Silver Chain in Collie and one of the key drivers of the Riverview residence group, officially opened Riverview frail aged home for the people of Collie. The term "frail aged" was a bit of a misnomer, as many of the residents did their own washing, some cooking and drove about in their own cars. The driving became a contentious issue for Tom to have to deal with, as covered parking was required. Look out if anyone ever parked in the wrong parking bay! Certainly, Tom had to adjudicate many arguments over parking. Riverview provided hostel-type accommodation for 41 people. Tom soon recognised the need for independent-living units and there are now 20 independent-living units on the Riverview site. The first 10 units were opened by Mrs Tots Turley, the foundation secretary of Riverview, on 26 October 1974. This was soon followed by another 10 independent-living units. Tom was the chairman of the Riverview committee when the wheels were put in motion to build a brand-new 64-bed aged-care facility in Collie. In 2007, Tom became a resident of his beloved Riverview facility and then moved on to be an inaugural resident of ValleyView Residence, which was officially opened by Steve Davies and me on 17 October 2009.

Another of Tom's great loves was the Collie Cheerio Club, formed in 1954 by local car salesman Charlie Willey. Tom was the inaugural compere of the Christmas lunch. The first party was held in the Amusu Hall for about 200 people. Soon after, Charlie left town and Tom became the Cheerio Club's organiser and compere for the next 50 years, providing entertainment and lunch for thousands over that time. It was very much a family affair. Tom's brother-in-law Ron Butcher formed the initial band and he was soon joined by his sister and Tom's wife, Win. Together with various other band members, they went on to provide entertainment for nearly 40 years. Tom's other brother-in-law, Les Butcher, was also involved in the club, organising seating arrangements and decorations for the Christmas party for many years. The Collie Cheerio Club celebrated its sixtieth diamond jubilee party last December. Unfortunately, Tom could not attend due to ill health. Tom Jones missed only that and one other Christmas party since they began in 1954.

Tom's organisational skills were demonstrated when, prior to the Australian Football League, he organised Victorian Football League teams such as Essendon and Collingwood to play in Collie. That was a remarkable achievement, because the Western Australian Football League had tried very hard to get teams across to Western Australia. Somehow, Tom, with his booming voice, I assume, and wrangling, was able to raise the finances for those teams to come over. That presented a great opportunity for country people to watch VFL football.

On a personal note, Tom gave me great advice when I was elected. It was simple and it has worked, and it went like this, "Talk to people, listen to them and support them no matter what." I received a compliment through an interjection across the chamber when a member said that I talk about coal nearly as much as Tom Jones did. I think the word "nearly" means that I have got a long, long way to go. It was certainly a compliment to me to be mentioned in the same breath as talking about coal for as long as Tom did.

Thomas Henry Jones was a man integral to the development and history of Collie. He supported his town well and his strong belief that energy from coal would always be cheaper than oil has been duly rewarded. His family, who are proudly here today, know how strong his links to Collie were. His legacy will not be forgotten. On behalf of the people of Collie, I say thank you, Tom Jones. You achieved so much for our community in your 90 years of life and your efforts will be appreciated for many, many more years to come.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [2.26 pm]: I rise to comment on the condolence motion for Thomas Henry Jones. I do so mainly because I know that my parents—my deceased father, Andrea, and mother, Mimma—would like me to speak on this. I was born in Collie and remember Tom Jones from when I was a young schoolchild. I was quite young when Tom Jones was elected to Parliament in 1968, but I remember lining up at the tuckshop at St Brigid's Convent School and the sister in charge saying that the new member, Tom Jones, was a good man and that we should be very happy that he was the new member for Collie. Even though I was rather young and not overly interested in politics, I always took an interest in this man called Tom Jones who had a very distinctive hairstyle—or lack of hairstyle! I met him a couple of times. Although he had a booming voice, I was never afraid of him and found him to be a very friendly individual who was always prepared to talk to young people.

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As other members have said, Tom Jones was a champion for Collie. He was one of the greatest advocates for the town that Collie has ever known. The Leader of the Opposition talked about Tom Jones's inaugural speech in this place on 20 August 1968, which is quite opportune because that is my birthday. When making an inaugural speech members try not to be too political, but I will give a quote from Tom Jones's inaugural speech that I am sure country members will agree with —

People living in the city enjoy amenities that are not available to the people who live in country districts, so here is an opportunity for the Government to give some incentive to the people who reside in the south-west by making power available at a cheaper rate. After all, the power is generated some 10 miles from Collie, and yet we have the spectacle of those people and industry paying more for electrical power than do the people who live in the metropolitan area.

Hon Doug Wenn made a speech in the other place on 5 November 1996, which I think is relevant. He said —

Much as I would love to continue to talk about events in Bunbury, I turn now to Collie—another place in which I had the opportunity to play a part. Tom Jones was a hard act to follow in Collie, because he had been the local member for 10 years.

Of course, he served 21 years in the end. Hon Doug Wenn's speech continues —

I do not think there was anything that Tom Jones had not done for Collie. He lived and breathed Collie; and he lived and breathed the coal industry, from which he came. He was the secretary of the miners' union before being elected to Parliament. He also lived and breathed the union movement.

He had a great fellowship with a former Governor of this State who was then the legal adviser to the union. Tom Jones must be recognised as one of the greatest people who has ever represented the Collie electorate. Even following the boundary changes, he was recognised widely in the electorate. It can be said that Tom Jones was one of the best politicians this State has ever seen. He worked hard for the community and his electorate. It was a sad loss for the people of Collie when Tom Jones decided to retire, because he knew how to talk to and negotiate with people. If Tom Jones had been a member of Parliament on the day the decision was made, we would now have a 600 megawatt power station in Collie.

Tom Jones will always be remembered as the member for Collie, because when one talks to people these days he is still thought of as the member for Collie, and that will remain the case for many years.

I moved from Collie at the end of 1971 and whenever there was a state election I always took an interest in who was going to be the member for Collie. It became a matter of nature that Tom Jones would be re-elected; I thought he would be the member for Collie forever. I must say that my early leanings to Labor were shot when the seat was taken by the National Party, but one has to remember that there was a major boundary change and the electorate of Collie took in a larger rural area. I will always associate Tom Jones with Collie. He was "Mr Collie", and on behalf of my parents, myself and all former people who have lived in Collie, I commend this great man to this place and offer my condolences to his family.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [2.30 pm]: Hon Thomas Henry Jones' status in the Labor Party and in the electorate of Collie is certainly legendary. I had the good fortune of meeting Tom Jones on a number of occasions and it was clear that he was the epitome of everything that a local member of Parliament should be—someone who was exceptionally personable; someone who was involved in every aspect of his community's life; and someone who was just a genuine and really lovely person. I enjoyed chatting to him on a few occasions. He was an organiser extraordinaire. There was no-one he did not know; no-one he did not seem to get along with; nothing that he could not organise or do. In fact, on one of the later occasions that I met him he was involved in organising the entertainment for the inter-parliamentary bowls carnival held in Perth in the 1990s. He related well to people of all ages and from all walks of life and he organised some young people in the entertainment for the bowls carnival held in Perth in the 1990s. Tom organised it all and did it exceptionally well.

Tom Jones is someone on whom a lot of members of Parliament could model themselves, especially in terms of his outlook on life, his representation of his electorate of Collie, and representing those who most need the representation of their member of Parliament. I pass on my condolences to Tom's family, his children and his grandchildren, and all those who follow can be rightly proud of the contribution of their father and grandfather to this Parliament and to the community of Collie.

The SPEAKER: I request that members all rise and support this motion by observing a minute's silence.

Question passed; members standing.