

ELECTION OF SENATOR

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): Members, this joint sitting has been called to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator Chris Evans, notification of which has been reported to this Parliament by His Excellency the Governor, Malcolm McCusker, AC, CVO, QC. I now call for nominations to fill the vacancy.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [11.01 am]: I propose that Susan Lines of 16A Cargill Street, Victoria Park, Western Australia, being a person who is eligible to be chosen pursuant to section 15 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia, as amended, be chosen to hold the vacant place in the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth created by the resignation of Senator Chris Evans.

I advise that I have Ms Lines' assurance that if chosen, she is willing to act.

Before proceeding, I wish to make a few brief comments to reflect on the service of Hon Chris Evans whose resignation from the Commonwealth Parliament has led to this joint sitting. Chris Evans was elected to the Senate in 1993 and emerged as a well-regarded and senior figure on the Labor side of politics serving as Leader of the Opposition in the Senate from 2004 to 2007, as well as holding shadow responsibilities for various portfolios. Following the election of the Labor government in 2007, Chris Evans was appointed as a minister and Leader of the Government in the Senate, positions he retained until earlier this year when he announced his resignation. He held a number of important ministerial responsibilities including immigration and citizenship; tertiary education and skills; job and workplace relations; and science and research.

Chris Evans' 20 years of service in the commonwealth Parliament is a fine achievement and I wish to acknowledge his contribution particularly in representing this state. I wish him well for the next stage of his career.

Mr President, in accordance with section 15 of the commonwealth Constitution, today we are nominating a person to fill the casual vacancy and represent Western Australia in the Senate. This is just the thirteenth time since World War II that a joint sitting of Parliament has been required for this purpose. Section 15, as amended in 1977, operates to preserve the proportional representation in the Senate that is determined by the electors. The Western Australian Parliament is required to nominate a person who as far as possible is a member of the same party as the outgoing senator. Accordingly, the Australian Labor Party has provided the nomination to fill this vacancy. I am pleased to provide the nomination of Susan Lines to this joint sitting of Parliament. As assistant national secretary of United Voice, and with many years as an official of United Voice in Western Australia, she is an experienced person for nomination to the Senate. I note her interest in early childhood education and care, and in aged care, and her work on behalf of workers in these important areas. Her background indicates that she is well qualified to make a worthy contribution as this state's representative in the Senate. I wish Sue every success as a senator for Western Australia.

The PRESIDENT: Is there a seconder for the motion?

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [11.03 am]: I second the motion. I join the Premier in wishing Sue Lines the best as a senator representing Western Australia. Before I say a few things about that, I also acknowledge Chris Evans, the former senator for Western Australia, who served this state for 20 years in the Australian Senate from 1993 until today. That is an enormous period of service in any Parliament and to have undertaken it in the national Parliament from Western Australia is a testament to his tenacity, work ethic and ability and drive to represent this state. I acknowledge the huge contribution Chris Evans has made to Western Australia, particularly as Leader of the Government in the Senate, and I hope he enjoys all those frequent flyer points I am sure he has accrued over that considerable period.

I will say a few words about Sue Lines, who will represent Western Australia in the Senate from this time forward. Sue was born in Perth. She attended Gosnells Primary School and Armadale Senior High School, and following on from that she attended Murdoch University where she undertook a Bachelor of Education. Sue's father, Jim Lines, is 90 years of age, and is in the gallery today. I want to acknowledge Sue's father, who arrived in Western Australia as a 12-year-old child migrant from London aboard a ship from Southampton. He was one of the boys at Fairbridge Farm. He left there at the age of 15 years and went to the work in the wheatbelt as a farm labourer. With the advent of World War II, he put his age up and joined the commandos, with whom he served overseas in the battles in New Guinea. Upon his return, he worked in various occupations, including as a baker and a builder. Sue's mother, Nancy, was a deputy principal of schools in Western Australia, but, as was the case with women in those days, when Sue's mother had children, she was forced to leave the workforce. Sue's mother passed away in the late 1970s.

As I said, Sue Lines has a Bachelor of Education. At a local level, Sue has served in the volunteer fire brigade and neighbourhood organisations and progress associations in the various suburbs in which she has lived. She has also held numerous junior sport coaching positions around the suburbs of Perth. In her working life, she has been a teacher in public and private schools in Western Australia. She has held community development positions and was successful in establishing community houses in the south eastern suburbs of Perth that are designed to assist new migrants, pensioners and young parents.

For the majority of her working life, Sue has worked for United Voice, formerly known as the miscellaneous workers' union, where she commenced as an organiser and rose to be the assistant secretary in Western Australia and the national assistant secretary. Her role there was to represent the interests of low-income workers, particularly those working in childcare or as teachers' aides, gardeners, cleaners, hospital workers and hospitality workers, all of whom do not earn a lot in the workplace but are essential for our society to operate effectively. They are very important people in our community. Sue represented them for a number of years through her work with United Voice and its predecessor in a range of junior and then senior positions. Sue has a passion for social justice, particularly assisting low-income workers and others in our community. She advises me that one of her other passions is for assisting the disadvantaged, particularly Aboriginals.

Sue joined the Australian Labor Party in 1983, and during her 30 years as a member of the party she has held various branch and electorate council positions throughout the organisation.

Present in the gallery today are her father, Jim, who I spoke about earlier, her daughter, Renae, her son, Mark, and her grandchildren, Aiden and Charlie. Today is Charlie's ninth birthday, so I do not know whether we timed this for his birthday, but they are here this morning—as is Sue's partner, Rory.

I wish Sue all the best. I know it is a big responsibility to be a senator for Western Australia. I hope she enjoys the next 20 years in the role, which will be a great contribution to the future of Western Australia.

The PRESIDENT: Do any other members wish to speak to the nomination?

Question put and passed.

The PRESIDENT: Members, I may have been a little premature because I have to ask: are there any further nominations? There being no other nominations, I declare Susan Lines of 16A Cargill Street, Victoria Park, Western Australia, elected to hold the place vacated by Senator Chris Evans. I advise that newly elected Senator Lines is present in the President's gallery. Congratulations.

[Applause.]

The Joint Sitting concluded at 11.10 am
