

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

Special

MR J.C. KOBELKE (Nollamara - Leader of the House) [8.06 pm]: I move -

That the House at its rising adjourn until a date and time to be fixed by the Speaker.

At this time of the year, it is customary to thank and acknowledge the many people who contribute to make Parliament, and this House in particular, operate effectively and efficiently, and to look at the year in review. Since we resumed in mid February this year, members of this House have debated some 60 government Bills covering a wide range of issues. I will briefly touch on some of the key Bills.

The legislative package to address the public liability issue included the Civil Liability Bill, the Insurance Commission of Western Australia Amendment Bill, the Home Building Contracts Amendment Bill and the Volunteers (Protection from Liability) Bill. Criminal investigation laws were passed to widen police powers to enter and search premises and to use surveillance devices. We introduced measures to enable the dismantling of heavily fortified premises. That package of measures was clearly aimed at organised gangs, particularly bikie gangs.

New DNA forensic sampling laws were finally passed into law this year. Amendments were made to the Environmental Protection Act to provide for the effective protection of native vegetation and clearing controls, which was very successfully handled by way of the legislative committee process of this House. I thank all members of that committee because it was the first episode I recall of the committee working effectively. It shows that when there is agreement from both sides on certain Bills, the committee process is an effective way to deal with the consideration in detail of the Bill. We also passed the Railway (Jandakot to Perth) Bill to establish the southern railway route. Clearly, that is one of the biggest infrastructure projects this State has seen. That was an important Bill that took many hours to debate.

The Government introduced the long-awaited new adoption laws. We introduced legislation to phase out workplace agreements and replace them with a fairer system for employers and employees based on a collective approach. Amendments were made to the Occupational Safety and Health Act to extend its operation to cover police officers. Amendments were made to the Police Act in order to clarify the circumstances in which police officers may be removed from office, which affords those officers an independent right of appeal to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

We also passed legislation to amend the Prisons Act to provide a mechanism to ban certain persons from entering a prison. The fire and emergency services legislation will put in place a much better and fairer funding system for emergency services. That matter has been on the agenda for 30 years. The Labor Government in the 1980s attempted it, the last Liberal Government attempted it and, finally, the Gallop Government has succeeded in passing that legislation through both Houses of Parliament. We passed legislation to enable and encourage whistleblowers to disclose wrongdoing or improper conduct. The student guilds legislation enables universities to establish and maintain student amenities and services. Criminal law amendments were also passed to abolish preliminary hearings and to reform the laws that relate to pre-trial disclosure.

The Conservation and Land Management Amendment Bill establishes the pre-eminence of the Conservation Commission of Western Australia as the body responsible for the preparation of management plans for the lands that have been vested on behalf of the State. Sentencing legislation amendment Bills were passed to instil truth in sentencing and to make the sentencing process easier to understand for members of the community and people who are directly involved in the criminal justice system. We passed legislation to merge the Grain Pool Pty Ltd with Cooperative Bulk Handling. Just this week we have dealt with amendments to provide an operational framework for nurse practitioners in Western Australia. Clearly, that is a legislative program of some importance. It was lengthy and involved a range of important matters.

In addition, following the horrific incident in Bali in October, with some regret, we debated the Terrorism (Commonwealth Powers) Bill. The heinous bomb attack on 12 October this year, which took so many innocent lives, affected all of us in many ways. However, that appalling event did not diminish the spirit of the Western Australian community. We have heard many stories of the heroism and work of tireless volunteers helping the injured, and of the extraordinary work by our doctors and hospital staff. The stories continue of devotion beyond the call of duty by our emergency services team, the armed forces and the police and emergency services personnel. As a community, we are all indebted to those heroes. Everybody has been touched in some way by the Bali tragedy, including members on both sides of this House. You have offered what support and assistance you could, Mr Speaker, and I thank you for your endeavours and contributions during that difficult period. The invitation to people to lay floral tributes on the steps of Parliament House was just one gesture that provided a focus for concern in the community.

So far this year, we have passed 43 Bills into law. I envisage that this number will rise over the next week or so as the Legislative Council continues its deliberations. For its part, the Legislative Assembly has sat for 70 days or 540 hours for the year. The House has sat past midnight on only five occasions since February. In addition, the Government has responded to around 1 130 questions on notice - 90 per cent of all Assembly questions asked. Around 900 questions have been asked and answered in the House this year.

I use this opportunity to sincerely thank all members - government, opposition and Independent - for their contributions, conduct and cooperation during the year. I particularly thank you, Mr Speaker. Your management, guidance, forbearance and fairness to all members have been crucial in the proper functioning of this place and have ensured that the House is held in the highest possible esteem.

I thank the Deputy Speaker, the member for Wanneroo, and the Acting Speakers, the members for Southern River, Bunbury, Greenough, Carine, Riverton, and Joondalup. Most of those members are new members; this is their first term. Their roles in the Chair have presented a real challenge, given that they have not had experience in the House before. We can be very proud of the way in which all those Acting Speakers and the Deputy Speaker have filled the job. It has been a learning curve. From time to time there have been disagreements with their calls; nonetheless, their contributions have been fantastic.

The government Whip, the member for Girrawheen, has been faced with a very challenging job in having to maintain government numbers in the Chamber. It is often difficult to herd members into the Chamber and even more difficult to keep them here. However, she has done that job exceptionally well. Her commitment to the House was seen this evening when caught in an awkward position. She felt so honoured by the presence of the Chair, that I saw a genuflection as she skipped past and made sure she avoided the path of the member speaking.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Amazing what a bit of crayfish can do to a girl!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Yes. I also thank the Leader of the Opposition and particularly the member for Hillarys, the opposition leader for House business. Even though, from time to time, we get testy with one another and say things that do not endear close friendships, their cooperation is very much respected and appreciated. I acknowledge the contribution and cooperation of the Leader and members of the National Party. From time to time I need to apologise, because with 57 members in the Chamber it is easy to talk to only the Liberal Opposition. I apologise for the occasions on which I have not spoken to the Leader of the National Party to make sure he was part of the picture. His support in the running of the House is very much appreciated. I also thank the four Independent members for their contributions throughout the year.

I make special mention of ministers and government backbenchers. This is my fourth term and I have been part of a number of caucuses due to by-elections and defections throughout that period. We have a fantastically united team. It might be seen as self-serving to say that the calibre of people on the team is outstanding, but time will show that in both the ministry and the back bench we have an outstanding team on this side. That does not mean that there is unity. There have been fantastic teams from all political persuasions. It is easy for people to run their own agenda. However, we have found our members are united in a common cause. That has been a fantastic achievement. The discipline has been good, although I downgrade that a bit because a couple of members spoke too long today. I thank members for the discipline they have shown to enable us to proceed with business.

I express our appreciation to the Clerks, Mr Peter McHugh, John Mandy, Nigel Lake and Andrew Young. This House simply could not function without them. The assistance and guidance they give us directly and personally is fantastic, and we thank them for that.

I thank the chamber staff, Victor, Tony, Kathy, Keith, Peter and Gemma, for all the help they give to us, and for the papers that are almost impossible to get but which somehow they find. Their support is fantastic.

I also thank Nick Hagley and his team, Peter and Rebecca, from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. They have served various Governments with distinction. Without their work in making sure papers and advice are available to ensure that things flow smoothly, we would certainly get into trouble far more often. I thank them for their help.

Hansard reporters do a terrific job, often in very trying circumstances, such as those we have experienced this evening. There is sometimes a great deal of noise, but they still get the debate down. They do an incredible job. They also do not get recognition for the times they improve our speeches. I have certainly had speeches that have read much better than I spoke them. I thank them for that. There have also been times when they have got it wrong - just the slip of a word or a transposition has left someone saying something that was not intended, and the result was very funny; they produce the odd joke for us. We are very thankful for their efforts.

We thank parliamentary services officers Russell Bremner, Vince Pacecca, Ken Craig and Peter Pascoe for their support.

The switchboard operators, Cathy, Marilyn and Rosalie, do a very special job. They recognise most members' voices when we ring through. They do that bit extra to try to track down people to make contacts, and always respect the confidence of members. I give a special thank you to them.

To Judy Ballantyne and all the library staff, the parliamentary education officers, Enno Schijf, Andrew Gardos and all the dining room, bar and catering services staff, and all the gardeners, cleaners and Parliament House staff who contribute to the operation of this place, we thank you for your contribution to the Parliament of Western Australia.

I also thank the members of the media who have reported both favourably and unfavourably upon the dealings of the House. We all have our own judgments on that. Even when they report unfavourably, they fall into two categories; when they report unfavourably on us individually, we take them to task, but if they report unfavourably on our opponents, we do not think that is such a bad thing. They have a job to do. They are crucial to the functioning of a democracy, and we thank them for their contribution.

Having got through all my thank yous, at this point I alert members that there may be a chance that the House may need to return before Christmas to sit for a day or part of a day to consider messages from the Legislative Council when that House has completed its business. Clearly, members have very busy diaries, particularly at this time of the year. I do not have any direct information from the other place on whether it will sit for one week or two, so I cannot give any indication to members of this House of when we may need to return. As soon as I am given some indication of when that will be, all members will be notified. Of course, the need for this House to come back is contingent on amendments. If no amendments are required to urgent or serious legislation, we will not need to come back. However, if any of the major pieces of legislation on which there is a time line are amended, we will need to return for that short sitting. Members will be notified of that as soon as possible.

Finally, I wish all members, staff and their families and loved ones a very happy and safe Christmas and a prosperous 2003.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys) [8.18 pm]: I endorse the comments of the Leader of the House. I will save my messages of goodwill to members and staff for a moment, because I would prefer to get to the good stuff - the Christmassy stuff - after I have made a couple of criticisms. The Leader of the House has told us what a wonderful job the Government has done - how many Bills it has introduced, how many Bills that have been passed, and the number of questions that have been answered. Members on this side of the House have a problem with the number of questions that are being answered. At the moment, 260 questions on notice are waiting for answers. Seventy-three questions are outstanding where the 90 days to answer will expire prior to the end of this year - 31 December - 31 of which will expire next week, and 43 of which, which is more than half, are questions of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

As the member for Kingsley has remarked very often in this House, the Attorney General still has the best record for answering questions in a timely fashion. I say a word of thanks to the Attorney General as well because, in all honesty, of all the ministers, the Attorney General is the most efficient minister when answering questions. Members on this side of the House appreciate that. I want to personally thank the Attorney General, because I put a question on notice just yesterday - he was aware of it going in - and he said to me that he would do his utmost to get the answer to me before Christmas. I believe him and I think he will. If he can, he will. I know that he will get it to me as soon as possible.

There is no reason that ministers cannot answer those questions in a timely fashion. It is unreasonable to be required to wait until we come back in late February to get the answers to questions that we submitted some months ago. I ask the Leader of the House, through you, Mr Speaker, to talk to his ministerial colleagues and to urge them to provide members on this side of the House with those answers as soon as possible.

When in opposition, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure carried on about ministers not answering questions, and she cast all sorts of aspersions on ministers if questions remained unanswered for any length of time. She also made long and loud noises about decisions of the then Minister for Planning and about how things would change when she was a minister. Things have changed. The minister does not make any decisions. Even planning appeals that have been recommended by investigating staff - nothing contentious - still sit on the minister's desk awaiting her signature. Some have been waiting since February and March this year, and they are only mum-and-dad appeals. When can these people expect some action by the minister? Very soon, I hope.

The minister does not answer questions either. A quick look at the questions on notice list will confirm the minister's reluctance to answer questions. There are eight questions on notice relating to the Maylands boat yard from 10 September; one on rail in the central business district from 10 September; one on Carine campus from 11 September; and five relating to Port Kennedy from 18 September. None of these questions is hard or contentious. A further six questions on notice are outstanding from November. When will the minister get on with her job and answer those questions?

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: Within the specified time. Do you know how many questions I get in the upper House each day? Do you have any idea?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The minister has just responded, "Within the specified time." If we play by the minister's rules, that will not be until we come back in late February. That is totally unreasonable from a Government that says it is open and accountable. Why will the minister not give us the answers to the questions within the specified time of three months? She should not wait until Christmas and the new year, when there is a long gap, to delay the answers until late February. We earnestly ask the minister to do her job. I must say that she has a bad record. I do not like to say that today because this is the season of goodwill. Quite frankly, I like the minister. I was most concerned earlier tonight because she had gone missing. I was concerned that she might have been under a bush somewhere or been abducted. Then I thought no, she would never be abducted. I was very relieved when the minister came back into the House, after quite some time. I was talking about -

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: You are a mung bean and a joke!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is a disgraceful thing to say. I said I wanted to get the contentious bit out of the way first, and that had to do with questions. It was an honest plea, particularly to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, to provide the Opposition with answers to questions that we have asked, within the three-month period, and not make us wait until late in February, when we come back. We dearly want those questions answered. That is all I said, but the minister started interjecting and calling me all sorts of names, which degenerated the good feeling in the House, and I am very upset about that.

Mrs C.A. Martin interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: There is some rumbling in the House from somewhere.

Mr D.A. Templeman: It is my stomach; I have not eaten a thing yet.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, I agree, it must be the stomach of the member for Mandurah. He did a very good job earlier, covering for the minister.

Now that I have got over the point about the questions, which I hoped would get a positive response, the Leader of the House spoke about the questions that the Government had answered, and all I wanted to know was when we would have answers to these. I had to point out that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure had a bad record, and I was urging her to try to lift her game, so that we would receive answers to our questions. That is all I wanted to do. If no members opposite had interjected on me, the debate would not have degenerated.

It is Christmas - the season of goodwill - and I have nothing but goodwill for every single member of this House. I want to begin by wishing you, Mr Speaker, and your family and loved ones, a very happy Christmas. You and I have been in this House for quite some time, and I compliment you on the job you have done, in an impartial way. You have been a credit to the job, and I have a great deal of time for you. I congratulate you on the way you have conducted this House. You have been very fair to both sides of the House, and the Opposition appreciates that. So, I wish to you and your loved ones, a very happy Christmas and a very healthy and peaceful new year.

I genuinely wish all members opposite a very happy Christmas, each and every one of them. I hope their loved ones and families have not only a very merry Christmas, but also a healthy, happy and peaceful new year. I wish that from the bottom of my heart, to all of them. I wish all members on this side of the House and their families and loved ones a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and peaceful new year. I always look forward to seeing opposition members when we come back after the Christmas break.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I do not know what it is, but I seem to engender interjections every time I get to my feet. I do not know why, because I have nothing but love in my heart, for my fellow men and women. It is genuine. I have a genuine love for humanity. I digress again, because members opposite just love to interject on me.

I want to thank also the Clerk, the deputy Clerk, the assistant Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms - Peter, John, Nigel and Andrew - for the wonderful job they do and for the assistance they give to all members of this House. It is invaluable and we really appreciate it. I thank all the Chamber staff, who are really tremendous in what they do for all members in this House. They can come up with things at a moment's notice if asked, and they assist us in doing the job we are paid to do. I commend each and every one of them. I thank all the staff in the Bills and Papers Office and the parliamentary secretarial staff. Unfortunately, I am not given a list of their names, so it is difficult to know everybody. I do not want to miss anybody. I thank all the people connected with this Chamber in particular, who help this Chamber run efficiently.

I thank all the Acting Speakers for the job they do. I sat in the Chair for many years. It is not always easy to keep order in this House. No matter who is on this side of the House, they are normally fairly loud and like to have their say and get their points across. Sometimes we may go over the top, but sometimes members on the

government side go over the top. Chairing the House is a difficult job. I commend the Deputy Speaker, the member for Wanneroo, who does an extremely good job. She knows that. I have said it to her both inside and outside the Chamber. I wish all the Acting Speakers and the Deputy Speaker a very merry Christmas. I also mention the new Acting Speaker, the member for Joondalup. He has done a sterling job since taking on the mantle of an Acting Speaker. It will do him good. It is good to be an Acting Speaker in this House because it is one of the quickest ways to learn the standing orders and how to control and manage the House. I wish all the Acting Speakers a very happy Christmas.

I also thank the library staff for their assistance, and the wonderful ladies who man the telephones.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: They are ladies to me. They are extremely lovely ladies. I do not believe there are any men in the telephone room, so I will refer to them as ladies. I say that as a compliment. They are wonderful people. I need to say only one word and they recognise my voice. Nothing is too much trouble for them. I thank the ladies in the telephone room and wish them and their families a very happy Christmas and a good new year.

I also thank our security staff, who work under the direction of Ken Craig. They do a superb job. I wish them and their families and loved ones a very merry Christmas and a very good new year.

I thank all the Hansard staff. They do a fantastic job in this place. The Leader of the House was quite right when he said that they correct some pretty dodgy speeches that do not make a lot of sense. Those speeches look wonderful when they appear in the *Hansard*. The Hansard staff do not have to make many corrections to my speeches! The speeches that come back to members are much better than what was said. Many members, particularly new members, are not aware that when they leave this place in the evening, Hansard staff do not leave; they are here for another one or two hours. They must do a lot of work before they finish up for the day. We might go home at one o'clock in the morning but the Hansard staff must stay until unsocial hours. I have got to know many of the Hansard staff over the years, and I want to say -

Mrs C.A. Martin interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The member for Kimberley is very rude to keep interrupting when I am paying compliments to the people in this building. She should be quiet. I have wished her a happy Christmas. She should accept it graciously.

Mrs C.A. Martin interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I ask the member to be quiet. I am trying to say things in good faith. I honestly believe them. This is the season of goodwill.

I wish everyone a happy Christmas. I especially thank the Leader of the House and wish him and his family a happy Christmas and new year. We have had our differences of opinions since I have been doing this job on this side of the House.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan: You have an opinion! There is lots of love in his heart but nothing in his head!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: In the 10 years I have been here, I have never seen members interject in the way they are doing tonight. They are interjecting on speeches when members are wishing everyone a very happy Christmas. It shows the calibre of those members who are interjecting. I ask members not to interject because I am trying to say the right and appropriate thing not only to members, but to members of staff. I just paid a compliment to the Leader of the House because I believe -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: In the 10 years I have been here, this has never happened.

The SPEAKER: Order, members! Members may wish to respond to what the member for Hillarys said earlier but the time has come for this House to wind up - I hope! The more inappropriate interjections that occur, the longer it will take.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: As I said, I was paying a compliment to the Leader of the House. Things have improved over the past six months. It is probably due to the coaching I have given to the Leader of the House in how to run this place!

There has been a lot more cooperation. The Leader of the House will get cooperation provided we are treated in a courteous way. We will delay Bills that we have a philosophical difference on. That is exactly the way it should be. On legislation on which there is no major philosophical difference, the Opposition will scrutinise Bills - which is its job - but it will also pass them as expediently as possible. That is the way we should work and that is the way we will continue to do things over the next 12 months.

Unfortunately, due to the interjections, I have gone astray. I do not want to miss anyone in wishing people a happy Christmas and a good new year. I want to wish all the dining room staff and chefs - those who prepare and serve us food - a happy Christmas. I also include the bar staff. They work very long hours and do a wonderful job. We are so fortunate to have incredibly top rate staff who do their jobs very professionally and serve all members equally. It does not matter what side of politics a member is on or whether a member is a minister or a lowly backbencher. We all receive the same courteous treatment from every member of the staff.

The only groups I have left out are the gardeners and the maintenance staff. I wish them and their families a very happy Christmas and a healthy and peaceful new year. We have sat later tonight than we anticipated. We were hoping to get through the business of the House more quickly so that people could finish up and enjoy the festive season. As the Leader of the House has said, we may need to come back for one day. If we do, we do; that is fine. If we do not, that is even better. Every member of this House has worked very hard this year. It is appropriate at this time of the year that members get time to spend with their families. I know that many members still have school graduations and senior citizens clubs to attend; all the usual things that a member of Parliament has to do in his or her constituency. Although we are leaving this House tonight, and we may not come back for one day unless it is necessary, I suggest that we will all be working until Christmas Eve. We are not exactly having time off between now and Christmas. We never do. I have received telephone calls on Christmas Day from constituents. On one occasion, I received a call from a constituent who wanted to know why the power was off and he could not cook his turkey! I offered to let him bring his turkey to my house. I rang Western Power to try to find out how long it would take before the power was restored. In the meantime, I offered to let him cook his turkey in my oven. That is the sort of thing that any member would do if a constituent had a problem, particularly on Christmas Day. However, between Christmas and the new year, and probably for a couple of weeks after that, members of this House will have an opportunity to have at least two weeks off, maybe three weeks. Even ministers can have two weeks off.

Mr R.C. Kucera: Minister for everything!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, that is the way things work. That is certainly the way things have happened over the 10 years that I have been a member of this place. Members will get at least two weeks, three weeks if they are lucky, of a good break. After that they will get the odd day off until the end of January and then they will be back in the swing of things in February. That is when people come back from holiday and want to see their local member of Parliament because they have problems they want sorted out. That is our job. I am not complaining; I am happy to do it.

I want to finish on these words: on behalf of the Liberal Party I wish every member in this House, every member of staff associated with the House and all their families and loved ones a very happy Christmas and a very healthy and peaceful new year.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [8.40 pm]: Mr Speaker, on behalf of the members of the National Party, I thank you for your services throughout the year, not only for what you do from the Chair but also for what you do around the boundaries of the Chamber. I congratulate you and your predecessors on the improvements to this place. We appreciate the fact that we get good service from you in the Chair and in the premises. We also appreciate the service from the Clerk and the Acting Clerks, which is always given in good spirit. I said to the Clerk that I do not know how he has beaten the bad habits that I taught Andrew Young over a long period of time, but I appreciate the fact that he has. I appreciate the service from the Clerk and the Acting Clerks, as do all members of the National Party.

The Chamber staff are always outstanding. Many have been in this place for some time. The National Party appreciates the efforts of the Chamber staff. They are always level with us, even when we are a bit testy. They deal with us in a very professional and polite manner and we very much appreciate it. We can never say enough about the Hansard staff. They do some miraculous work on some of my speeches; in fact, about 90 per cent to 100 per cent of them - all the time. We do understand the pain we cause the Hansard staff from time to time when we do not get our phrases quite correct. Again, a fantastic service is provided by the library staff. The dining room and bar staff are exceedingly important persons in this place. I say that lightheartedly, but we in the National Party give the dining staff and bar staff one particularly bad day in the course of the year. They deal

with us in an outstanding manner and we have nothing but warm feelings for the fantastic people who service those areas. The staff on the switchboard, again, do not just answer the calls, they get involved and understand the nuances of our relationships. They recognise our partners, our wives and our children.

Ms S.M. McHale interjected.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I have a fair bit. Some of us are more lucky than others!

Ms S.M. McHale: Yes, I am jealous!

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: That is all right. It is not the time of the year to be jealous. The staff on the switchboard do an outstanding job. I thank the security staff and police officers who attend the Parliament. I often feel sorry for the police officers. Lord knows what they are thinking when they are sitting in a corner of Parliament for a day. I thank the Parliamentary Services Department for all the services that are provided in the House. We are always appreciative of the gardeners. When I want to know what is happening in the Chamber I ask the gardeners; they tend to know what is going on.

I congratulate all members who have served in the Chair; they have done a very good job. They are even-mannered in that job, which is excellent. There is one other person whom I wish to thank: Helen Day, the parliamentary secretary to the secretary of the National Party. She is an outstanding person who works very diligently for us with a great deal of passion. It would be remiss of me to miss her, Mr Speaker.

It is always the same this time of the year. The jacaranda tree flowers and this place goes crazy, but this has been a hard year and it is easy for people to get a little depressed. It is time for all of us to go home and put a bright light on what is a great State, a great nation and great people. We should enjoy that and remind people of what a wonderful place they live in and give them a little hope at a time of the year when hope is in short supply. I wish all members of the Chamber the very best. Even though an occasional hard word bounces across from my left, I appreciate the members of the House in general and they treat me and other National Party members well. I will see all members in the new year.

THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling): This is an important time of the year for Speakers because we actually get to speak. It amazes me that the title of Speaker does not more accurately describe the position; it probably should be the Mute rather than the Speaker!

I take this opportunity to thank all members for their assistance in the running of the House. I know that at times people do not agree with the decisions of the Chair, but it is important that all members accept a ruling when it is made. I appreciate the support of all members in this place.

I want to thank a number of people, and hopefully I will get through the list relatively quickly. The first group of people I thank are the Clerks. I especially thank Peter for his outstanding support in the past 12 months. The advice that Peter and his team give is always valuable. The guidance that he gives to the Chair - me and the Deputy Speaker and Acting Speakers - is second to none in Australia, in my view. The efficient way in which he administers both finances and advice leaves everyone in a better position, more efficient and better able to cope with legislation.

Mr J.L. Bradshaw: I think he deserves a pay rise.

The SPEAKER: There is some suggestion that he should change his title to secretary general. That can be done at a later stage!

In the past 12 months we have seen a change in the Clerks' team of Peter, John and Doug. Doug is still a member of the team but he will not be returning to this Chamber. Nigel and Andrew are also part of the team. It is very difficult to get an adequate replacement for part of the team, but I congratulate Andrew on fitting into the Clerk's leadership team and especially for his work with the committees which has assisted the efficient publication of the report that was tabled today. The amount of work that Andrew had to take on and put into that report has not gone unnoticed, and I congratulate him. Doug, of course, will not be with us next year and I take this opportunity to thank him for his many years of service to the Western Australian Parliament. I will be able to thank him personally at the end of January when he will be leaving. I will thank him on behalf of all members for his years of service. I will let people know when that function will take place.

The next group of people I want to take some time to thank are the members who assist me in the Chair. I thank my deputy for her fantastic work over the past 12 months, especially when I do not go into the Chair, for example, during debates on the estimates. I know that is a very stressful time and, because I was not contacted at all, the week obviously ran exceptionally well. I thank Di and her team for those efforts. I also thank the member for Southern River, the member for Carine, the member for Bunbury, the member for Riverton and, of course, the newer member for Joondalup for taking the pressure off me -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Yes, and the member for Greenough, whom I did not include on my list. I apologise to the member for Greenough, a fellow traveller of the world. It was inappropriate for me to miss the member for Greenough. All those members have made it possible not only for the House to function properly but also for me to participate in the other duties I need to perform during the working day. I hope that their contribution is not underestimated by anyone. I am sure that all members who sit in this Chair endeavour to be fair and reasonable. If members think that that has not occurred, it is not because of the efforts of those members, it is because of people's perception rather than the reality.

There is a list of people I wish to thank. I will not go through the entire staff of Parliament, because there are some hundred-odd people. It would take too long and I would be bound to miss someone. However, I will mention the various section heads. Russell Bremner is the head of our joint house team. His performance has assisted this House to be as efficient as it has been in various areas. I will also list a number of areas with which members should and would have had contact and the heads and staff of those offices. I hope that the heads of those offices extend my thanks to their staff.

Ken Craig is the head of security. That area will become more important over the next 12 months as different types of processes will need to be put in place. I thank Ken and his team for their efforts in that area. I thank Chris Hall from Hansard. Everyone knows how valuable Hansard reporters are and they put in countless hours to make members' speeches sound good. Believe it or not, when I used to make speeches, I occasionally made a mistake and they would fix them. That was very rare, of course, but they were exceptionally good speeches by the time I saw them! Quite often I did not realise that I was the one who actually said those words.

I thank Judy Ballantyne from the Parliamentary Library. A lot of changes are taking place in the library and Judy has been asked to manage a lot of change and will be asked to manage future changes in the next 12 months. Rolf Goff is the head of the information technology section. The parliamentary side of the exchange of our laptops was exceptionally good. However, I do have some criticism of the part the Premier's office played in the handover of our laptops, which I think highlights the need to have a one-stop shop rather than a two or three-stop shop.

Rob Hunter and his team from human resources go about their business in a very efficient and effective way. Michel Crouche and his team from the finance section are often seen but definitely not heard from. I am sure that every member in this place has dealt efficiently with the finance section in the past 12 months. Enno Schijf is the catering manager, and everyone knows how important it is to feed us and allow us to drink as much as possible at various times of the year.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I think you should rephrase that!

The SPEAKER: I think I phrased it correctly! Some of the functions are not always easy, but the staff are always both friendly and efficient in assisting people. Vince Pacecca, the Building Services Manager, has been here probably longer than most people in this place and continues to perform a vital function. As the extensions to the building continue, we will see an even greater role for Vince.

The Parliamentary Education Office is in the process of expanding its role to outreach work. I thank Jane Gray for her efficient management of that section, and I congratulate her for winning a national award for the program she is putting together. I also thank the switchboard ladies. Everyone in this place thinks they are sensational, and I support the kind words that have been said by many members tonight about the way in which they perform their duties.

I also thank the Government for seeing the merit in spending some money in this place at long last and for providing some significant money for the redevelopment of the Library area and for the northern extension. I also thank members of the Opposition for their bipartisan support for that action, because without bipartisan support those kinds of improvements to this place would not be possible because of the adverse reaction that often follows that sort of announcement. The way it has been handled by both the Government and the Opposition is exceptionally pleasing to both the President and me.

Lastly, I thank Siobhan, my personal assistant and secretary, for her support and organisational skills. I am sure that all the people in this place who have dealt with Siobhan share my thanks for her abilities. Her services and friendship to me are very much appreciated. I also thank, of course, Vince La Galia for the professional way in which he manages my dining room. As I have said this evening, I know nothing about wines, but he always makes me look good, because he has forgotten more than I will ever know. Vince's efforts are outstanding.

If I have missed anyone, I apologise. I thank all the people who are associated with this place. I wish everyone in this Chamber a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. I hope that none of us or our families is involved in any over-drinking and driving during the holiday period. I am sure we are all grown-up and old enough to know better, but I do not know whether we are all mature enough to do the right thing. I hope we all are. I hope sincerely that we see all staff and members of Parliament back here in February to resume this session.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.57 pm
