

LEE BUZZARD FOUNDATION

Statement

HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral) [10.03 pm]: I stand tonight to speak in memory of a young worker tragically killed at work and a family and a community supporting each other through a tragedy. Twelve months ago yesterday, there was a tragic incident at the Channar mine site near Paraburdoo in the Pilbara. This incident resulted in a 32-year-old man, Lee Buzzard, losing his life. Lee had worked at the Channar site since 2006 and had been working for Rio Tinto for 13 years. He was a third generation miner from a mining family.

A workplace fatality is highly traumatic for many people, mainly the family, friends and work colleagues. I know from experience that a workplace tragedy is a numbing time—a time of chaos. Families are often left with a thousand questions and it seems as though it takes decades to get a straight answer. Support services can be confronting and, in remote areas, hard to find in general.

Out of the tragedy of Lee's death, his mother, Sharon Westerman, has unbelievably harnessed her grief and her love for her son to fight for his name. Lee had two brothers, Kyle and Evan. This family, as I said, is a mining family and they have taken on a challenge that is inspiring. Together with support from community members, work colleagues, family and friends, Sharon has chosen to use her son's legacy to fill a gap in support for families who lose loved ones on the job. Yesterday, on the anniversary of Lee's death, the Lee Buzzard Foundation was incorporated. Everyone who knew Lee has been supportive of this foundation, as it really honours the way he lived his life, which was caring for others.

I will now talk briefly about what the Lee Buzzard Foundation stands for. Under the heading "In Safe Hands", it believes that when loved ones go to work, they should be in safe hands and when a tragedy happens, let us ensure that families are in safe hands. The Lee Buzzard Foundation has been established in honour of Lee Buzzard, who passed away as a result of a workplace accident in Paraburdoo on 19 June 2016. Lee was 32 years old. Throughout his life, Lee embodied the principles of hard work, determination, resilience, giving back to the community and making the most of the opportunities that are given to you.

Lee worked from the time he was 15 years of age, successfully completed year 12 and embarked on a trade as a diesel fitter for which he was awarded Rio Tinto's apprentice of the year for three years. Lee was respected and a skilled tradesman. He gave 13 years of loyal service to his employer and made his family proud. Lee spent his short life caring for others. He wanted to make the world a better place, and he did. In his own quiet way, he helped and inspired others. The foundation is inspired by the way Lee lived his life. The values he had will be integrated into every aspect of the foundation's activities in order to pay respect to Lee's memory.

The following words from Lee's uncle, Mike Westerman, encapsulate Lee's legacy —

Much has been written about Lee and his Journey and the lives that he touched during his short 32 years

However I would like to let you know about the man he became.

Too often we look to achievements and material possessions as the measure of a man.

Well, Lee saw it differently. How we treat our family, our fellow man and those people in our community, even the people that we do not know says something about a person.

I can't remember a time when Lee put himself first in anything.

I can't remember a time when he was too busy to help and I can't remember a time when, what he had he didn't give freely.

A person who sacrificed so much for others deserves so much respect today and for always.

Respect in life is not given, it is earned. It is earned by hard work and consistency. It often evades those who pursue it, but comes to those who shy away from it.

Lee is a man who thrived on hard work and someone who made the most of the talent that God gave him. I've lost count of the times that I have used the work respect when talking about Lee.

Why is this foundation needed? Having a loved one ripped from your life as a result of a workplace accident leaves families and colleagues struggling to cope with the impact. It is the unthinkable. A loved one goes to work, as they have done every day, yet they do not come back. No-one is prepared for such a cruel loss and the intense grief. This is enough to deal with, but there are often protracted and traumatic legal processes and investigations, as well as financial and emotional burdens. Often multiple parties are involved. The circumstances of the tragedy have to be revisited over and again, adding to the trauma. Support for the family generally dwindles. Life goes on for the family, which has had no time to prepare for this sort of situation. It is

not their fault that the accident happened, yet they pay the highest price emotionally and financially. Some families have more support than others and some employers provide support in the initial stages; however, this varies greatly and many families find themselves alone, as everyone gets on with life. Companies go back to making profits and workers go back to earning incomes, but as a result of the accident, the bereaved family may have no income and the future may be very uncertain.

It is unacceptable for a person to go to work and not come home. We must continue to work hard in this space to ensure that no more families are left devastated by workplace tragedies. I have to say, Sharon, you truly are an inspiration. I look forward to seeing what you do with this amazing foundation and to watching it grow to give families much-needed support and to continue advocating for workplace safety.

House adjourned at 10.10 pm
