

**HON MARK MCGOWAN — CONTRIBUTION TO STATE**

*Motion*

**HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan)** [11.29 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council acknowledges the retirement of Hon Mark McGowan, former Premier and member for Rockingham, and his significant contribution to Western Australia.

I rise today to express my great thanks to Hon Mark McGowan, former Premier and member for Rockingham. There is so much I would love to talk about regarding Mark McGowan's service; however, the overwhelming number of members wishing to do the same today means I must keep this short and sweet. Mark McGowan's political career spanned an impressive 30 years in public office. As Premier, he led our state into a progressive and economically successful society. In 1996, Mark McGowan ran for the seat of Rockingham, cementing himself in the electorate and fostering a strong relationship with the community that would result in Rockingham being the safest seat in the state by 2021.

Although concluding with his record-breaking run as the thirtieth Premier of Western Australia, it would be remiss of me to not mention the impact he had as a minister, and on me. I met the Premier over 15 years ago and I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his support and friendship over the years. Although I will not have time to go over all my favourite stories—there are a few—or policies that led to real change, I will say this: it has been an incredible honour to serve in his government. Mark McGowan made significant contributions to our state and I am sure members in this chamber will talk about many of them today. However, to go back a little and in the context of the former Premier's time as the Minister for Tourism; Racing and Gaming, I want to take this opportunity to mention one of the reforms I personally believe had quite a big impact. Introducing small bar licences and major liquor reforms truly evolved Western Australia's hospitality scene and gave rise to a more diverse, sophisticated, discerning and creative hospitality sector right here in Western Australia. By muscling in on Melbourne's turf, as quoted by the former Premier himself, these reforms set the scene for the lifestyle we all delight in today. Reforms such as this took Perth and Western Australia to the next level and paved the way for us and our visitors—we have quite a lot of visitors—to enjoy the vibrant state we live in today.

Something I am sure we can all agree on is that the pillar of Mark McGowan's political career was his run as the thirtieth Premier of Western Australia. His dedication to keeping Western Australians safe and strong through the COVID pandemic, and our economy strong, saw his approval ratings skyrocket to 91 per cent in 2020, which is astonishing. It can be argued that his management of the state during the pandemic made him a political rock star, even becoming the subject of things such as TikToks and a few tattoos. From what I understand, there was not just one but a few tattoos of the former Premier. Crazy things were going on during that time. That was the impact he had. The 2021 election campaign was a stark contrast to 2013 when I ran for the seat of Jandakot. I was out with the Premier on the streets and in shopping centres in 2013 and in 2021; the stark contrast of those two campaigns was immense. I would often remind the Premier of the days of walking through shopping centres when nobody knew who we were. We handed out Metronet flyers when nobody really cared. He came so far that he could not even walk into a restaurant or down St Georges Terrace—or anywhere in Perth—without starstruck fans rushing to take a selfie.

The former Premier's decision-making on all aspects of the pandemic, from very strict ones that were very much needed, such as lockdowns, to things like whether Western Australians should have the freedom to train cardio while enjoying kebabs will cement his legacy as one of the greatest Premiers that the state has known. In summary, his legacy will endure as a testament to his unwavering commitment to public service. During the COVID pandemic, I will always remember the Premier's approach being almost like, "Not on my watch." He took very seriously the lives of Western Australians during that time. His legacy will also include his ability to navigate challenging circumstances; his government's investment in our future; the commitment to responsible financial management; securing our fair share of the GST; the unparalleled investment into our health system; the delivery of much-needed infrastructure such as Metronet; climate action through investment in clean and renewable energy; supporting jobs for the future, including manufacturing; and his profound impact on the lives of everyday Western Australians.

Our former Premier can rest assured that we will continue to work hard under the experience of Premier Roger Cook and Deputy Premier Rita Saffioti. Inspired by his leadership, I am confident that our government will remain strong and continue to better the lives of everyday Western Australians. After 30 years of serving the people of Western Australia, Mark McGowan has drawn the final curtain as Premier. However, his legacy lives on and we wish him and his family all our very best in his future endeavours.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [11.38 am]: I am both pleased and a little bit sad to be speaking to this motion today about a former junior title-holding squash champion from the east coast

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Hon Klara Andric; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Ayor Makur Chuot; Hon Dr Steve Thomas; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Shelley Payne; Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Stephen Pratt

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who went on to become the Premier of Western Australia. I am happy to acknowledge the contribution that he made but, of course, am sad that the toll of that contribution was such that he was as exhausted as he was, which led him to make the announcement of his resignation just a few weeks ago. It is on the record that he was elected to Parliament over 26 years ago. Before that, he served in local government and, before that, he was in the Navy. It was his service and placement in Rockingham during his time in the Navy that led him to meet Sarah, his wife, and make a decision to build his family here.

My friendship and close working relationship with him really began after he became Leader of the Opposition in 2012. He came to that position with a clear vision of the policies that he wanted to implement. I can remember a meeting on the front veranda of my place. He had a big blue folder with the policies he wanted to put in place. He had an enormous work ethic, an understanding of the key stakeholders in industry and in the community that he wanted his team to develop working relationships with, and an eye on the 2013 election—but an eagle eye on the 2017 election as our real hope to gain government. It was the 2013 election campaign that cemented the team. It is when you are in the trenches that your closest relationships are formed. In opposition, you have a choice: you can let the soul-destroying nature of it and your irrelevancy rip you apart—I was in opposition for eight years so I know exactly what it is like—and have you cowering from engagements, or you can be proactive and take every opportunity to engage, build your policies and build your profile as a responsible and safe alternative government, and that is what he did.

The 2013 election was truly awful for us but it was the making of us. The narrative started to build during that time that Mark was growing into the role. That is what he did during that period, despite some very difficult obstacles, not the least of which was the severely damaged “brand Labor” as a consequence of some of the shenanigans that went on at the federal level, which spilt into the states, and a leadership challenge that he faced in 2016. President, you would be well aware that I have worked on many campaigns and with many campaigners over my political life. I have run local campaigns and I have been on central campaign teams. I was in a car alongside Mark in the state campaigns of 2013, 2017 and 2021. He is the best campaigner. It is true that what happens on tour stays on tour, but I can say that it is the role of the chief of staff and the campaign team rep in the car to provide constructive feedback when it is required. In the heat of the campaign, that is not always taken well, but that is the job that has to be done, and Mark took it well until he did not, when he would start cracking jokes about who was the leader and would we like his job! No, we did not.

He is a loyal man, a loyal leader. He built a team and then backed us in. He was not afraid to take the proverbial out of his team members from time to time. He liked to reference my alleged ability to stare others into submission and would frequently make jokes about my powers in that sense, most recently when I was acting minister when tropical cyclone Ilsa was threatening to form into the most destructive cyclone we had seen in over a decade. I was acting Minister for Emergency Services at the time. Mark thought it was hilarious to tell everyone he met that I scared the tropical cyclone away.

In 2016, the commentators said Labor needed to win 10 seats, and that that was too many to win in the 2017 election. In fact, we had a record landslide victory in 2017, in no small part due to the efforts of Mark to show up, build a case for change in the electorate and oversee the preselection of outstanding local candidates. The making of the man, though, as Premier, was really twofold: firstly, by applying real rigour to the state’s finances; and, secondly, by managing the COVID-19 pandemic. He had learnt very hard lessons from Australian political history, in which an orthodoxy had developed that Labor was no good at managing the finances. He was determined to throw that orthodoxy on its head and that that would not apply to a government that he led. He applied a very strict approach to how we managed debt and government expenditure, and I think Western Australians grew to respect that.

The combination of the rigorous management of the finances and socially progressive policies, like on medicinal cannabis, which he came to support after he visited one of his constituents in a nursing home who was suffering real pain that could be alleviated only with medicinal cannabis, voluntary assisted dying and many others, saw a solid performance over the first term.

One of our election commitments was to promote women onto boards: we wanted 50 per cent representation. That meant that he, as Premier and chair of cabinet, would not accept a submission to appoint board members unless that cabinet submission also included us either meeting the 50 per cent requirement or a plan to meet the 50 per cent requirement. That is how he created that outcome.

In early 2020, we saw the beginnings of the COVID-19 pandemic. That extraordinary event saw Mark’s leadership, his work ethic and his resilience combine to ensure that our economic, health and social response saved lives and maintained, as much as possible, the lifestyle that Western Australians so love. In the early days, the kind of decisions that we had to make included national decisions and state decisions. I am not revealing any secrets when I say that Mark McGowan led the argument at a national level that we needed to keep the resources industry going. He needed to put that argument because some others did not agree. Thank goodness we did, because that is what

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really saved not only the Australian economy, but also the Western Australian economy. We had to make some extraordinary decisions at a state level at that time. I was on the subcommittee that managed those decisions and I saw the really hard work of so many, led by Mark. They were decisions about whether we had enough ventilators; and, if we did not, what criteria we would apply to decide who would get a ventilator and who would not. There were also decisions about whether we should take sick people off the ships or turn the ships around. Those were hard moral decisions to make, yet we had to grapple with them, and we did so under his strong leadership. There were incredible moments. We could tell how tired Mark was getting in the daily press conferences when the crease between his eyebrows was deeper than usual, and it has been deeper than usual over the last few months.

There are others who want to speak, so I will conclude my remarks by saying that I was privileged to have served under the leadership of Mark McGowan. It has probably been the highlight of my career to date. I thank him for his friendship and his loyalty. He has left Western Australia as he intended—in a better place than when he came into government as the Premier. On behalf of Western Australians, I thank him.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT (North Metropolitan)** [11.47 am]: Thank you, Hon Klara Andric, for moving such a fantastic motion. As a member of the Legislative Council, I support that very thoughtful motion. Today I stand in this Parliament to say how proud I was to serve in the McGowan government and how proud I am to serve in the Cook government now. The day that Hon Mark McGowan announced that he was stepping down is a day that many Western Australians will always remember. I received so many phone calls from community members asking whether Mark was okay. That was a true testament to how incredible he was as a leader.

I personally know Mark McGowan to be a man who profoundly values relationships. There is nothing more important in politics than relationships. As the Leader of the House just mentioned, he was and still is a man loyal to government. For me, that is leadership. He values fairness and equality, which are Labor values. I am proud of Mark McGowan.

We all know that the government Mark McGowan led connected with Western Australians and diverse communities. His government made efforts to reach out to all Western Australians. He is a man who led confidently and compassionately during the COVID-19 crisis. Many Western Australians are very proud of these achievements. To me personally, he was much better than any other Premier in Australia in reaching out to the most vulnerable community members, including our culturally and linguistically diverse community. His government implemented a strategy that protected our most vulnerable community members, saving many lives. We all know this is the truth. WA's COVID response was the envy of the world. I thank Premier Roger Cook and Hon Mark McGowan for that outstanding achievement. I, too, was involved in delivering the government's COVID health strategy and saw firsthand how very effective it was.

I have a message to the former Premier from community leader Mr John Aciek. According to my notes, he said —

It was great to have worked with both of you during difficult times and during great times; on behalf of the South Sudanese Community Association of Western Australia Inc., I thank Hon. Mark McGowan and WA Labor team for working tirelessly to protect our WA citizens during COVID, protecting the lives of the people of WA was the first on the table. And South Sudanese West Australia was also part of that campaign to save the lives of our elderly and every West Australian.

We thank Mark and wish him and his family the best in his next public life or career. We also welcome the able Leader Hon. Roger Cook, Premier of Western Australia and his new team to take our state forward. Hon. Roger was also on the same page with Hon. Mark regarding protecting West Australian lives during the last Pandemic. Every West Australian can recognise him, even those who haven't met with him in person, because both were always on our West Australia TV every day advising the public on what is the next step in fighting against COVID-19.

Personally, I would like to thank Mark McGowan for giving so much of himself to this state. I am blessed to have been the first woman of South Sudanese heritage elected in a Labor government and to serve in the forty-first Parliament under Mark McGowan's leadership. I thank Mark McGowan for valuing inclusion, for which we have advocated for many years. The opportunity given to me has motivated many young women and young people globally to seek positions of leadership in the future.

I am also so blessed to have had my two kids during Mark's leadership and for my kids to have been accepted as non-strangers in this Parliament. It is something that we all should be proud of as a government. It is essential to support women in government. We have come a long way. One hundred years ago, Edith Cowan had to go home to use the toilet. I am proud to be in a government that supports women.

I want to thank Mark and Sarah, and their children, for giving so much to our state.

**HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition)** [11.52 am]: Friends, Western Australians, members, lend me your ears. I stand to farewell Hon Mark McGowan, not simply to praise him. There was a time,

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President, when the evil that men did lived on after them and the good was often interred with their bones, but that was during a period of history before the media, media management and the modern media circus. These days the reputations of people who are approved of are generally bleached whiter than the bones of history. So let it be with Hon Mark McGowan. If they decide that you are a villain, it looks very different. It is often left to the cynical and sarcastic to reflect that perhaps we are not all perfect saints after all. Many will remember the eulogy song from *The Chaser's War on Everything*. It caused great outrage at the time but simply reflected that we often pick winners and losers and anoint them as being at either one end of an argument or the other. That is what has occurred.

Former Treasurer Hon Mark McGowan and members opposite have told us how he was a great economic manager—repeatedly. We have to take some notice of that because they are honourable people. The cabinet is full of honourable people. But the budget does not always reflect the absolutes that our friends opposite would have us believe. It has been mentioned that the government and the former Premier were very keen to manage debt. The former Premier told us that—repeatedly. The Premier took state debt from \$32 billion when he arrived in office down to \$28 billion, but the budget forward estimates say that it will rise to \$36 billion. We had to take the former Treasurer's words at face value when he presented the budget because the former Treasurer is an honourable man.

We have had massive budget surpluses in this state, for which, again, the government is very keen to take credit. I note that this week we were surpassed by Queensland. Its \$12 billion surplus somewhat overshadows our repeat \$6 billion surpluses and I suspect we may struggle to catch up. It has been said that the former Premier took pride in that label of economic manager and I think we can give him some credit for some particularly wise moves. The first of those was obviously to put a very low predicted price on iron ore. I suspect Hon Mark McGowan, as Premier and Treasurer, realised that whether or not the state had a surplus relied almost exclusively on the iron ore price. It was a wise move.

The former Premier will also be remembered for his activities on COVID. Again, we have to give him some credit for his application of the health advice in Western Australia. It was well applied and he was rewarded for that application. I think over time the former Premier would like to be remembered for his response to COVID. Looking back, perhaps we will vary our memory of this period. I have said repeatedly that I think the way the budget surpluses were spent is probably a better reflection of the performance of the former Premier, but time will tell.

Interestingly, I probably spent time around Mark McGowan before most members, because we attended the University of Queensland at the same time, commencing in, I think, 1985. In fact, he was in the college next door to me. I was in Kings College and he was in another college. We stayed on campus during the same period, not that we knew each other, but we share a similar historical link.

One of the former Premier's great claims to fame is the GST floor that was put in place by the Morrison government. It is very interesting because everybody claims credit for that. Let me simply say that if the Morrison government had not been desperate to hold on to seats in Western Australia at the 2019 election, it would not have happened. Yes, Hon Mark McGowan lobbied for a floor to be put in place, as did lots of other people. To suggest that the floor was the result of the state government's activities is obviously not accurate. However, history judges people more often by what they say they did than what they did. In many cases, what the Premier did was very good. I agree with the Leader of the House that the 2013 election was the low point for the Labor Party. As I handed out how-to-vote cards in Collie, I remember people asking for the card to get rid of the then Prime Minister because it was the Rudd–Gillard–Rudd era and they wanted to know how they could get rid of Julia Gillard during the state election. That was certainly the low point. I hope to never again see an election like the 2021 state election that resulted in the imbalance that we currently have. But to give credit to the government, it took a very firm line on a range of issues from 2017 to 2023. I noted a comment in *The West Australian* of 31 May after the Premier announced his resignation that states —

Sources also told *The West Australian* Mr McGowan had become annoyed about criticisms that had come his way over his handling of the State's coffers, despite being the only Premier and Treasurer to boast billion dollar surpluses and State debt at just under \$30 billion.

Part of the role of opposition is obviously to attempt to hold the government to account. I assume that the comments in that article are true. Why would we question what is in the media? Are they not also honourable people? I am quite pleased that that demonstrates that inroads can be made, even with an incredibly popular Premier with a high, but somewhat slipping, popularity approval rating of 91 per cent, down to 70 or 72 per cent. I forget the last figure.

The motion before the house is a good motion and it is well worded. It is easy for the opposition to support the contention that we acknowledge Mark McGowan's retirement and note his significant contribution to Western Australia. It absolutely was a significant contribution to this state. As he goes off to a number of appointments in business, particularly with companies that do business in China and are perhaps organised by, in the words of *The Australian*, not mine, the "Perth mafia", he will move on to a big future going forward, and we wish him and his family all the best as he does.

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**HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan)** [12.02 pm]: I have a very brief contribution to make so that others will have time to speak. I will take a slightly different approach. I will reflect a little on the man I worked for in the years prior to my election. I had the fortune of working for two leaders in my life as a political staffer—one federal and one state. Obviously, the state leader was former Premier Mark McGowan. They both had very different styles but are incredible people and consummate politicians. Other members have spoken at length about the former Premier’s achievements, leadership, incredible campaigning ability, management of COVID and financial management, so I will avoid all that and reflect on Mark, the person for whom I worked directly. He is astute, intelligent and has an amazing sense of humour. Whether in strategy meetings at the start of the week or in the daily parliamentary strategy meetings prior to question time in the Legislative Assembly, his sense of humour is something that not many got to see every day, but it is incredible. I acknowledge that I saw only bits of it. I am sure that Hon Sue Ellery would have 50 stories about that for every one of mine, but when he was in the mood, he was genuinely funny. I sometimes came out of parliamentary strategy briefings before question time with tears of laughter running down my cheeks. That happened on more than one occasion.

I have three little anecdotes that I want to share. I could share many that go to his sense of humour, but I want to share this one because I am not sure whether his actions were deliberate, which makes it even more interesting. I worked closely in his office with Cale Herbert, a great bloke and an absolutely brilliant speechwriter. Cale wrote almost all of Mark’s speeches. On one occasion, for some reason—I do not remember why—I was asked to write a speech for him. I often went through the speeches with Cale because our desks were side by side. Mark would take them and come back with all sorts of queries and suggested changes, and every page was marked up with a comment or what have you. It usually took two, three and sometimes four times to get it right. I knew that was the first, and undoubtedly the last, speech I would probably ever write for him. When I finished it, I put it in his bag for him to read on the way home. The next day, it came back with one comment on it. “Great job” was scribbled on the front. I could not believe it, but Cale especially could not believe it. Just last week Cale and I were out having a drink and the story came up again. I am telling this story because I am not sure whether Mark did it deliberately as a joke on both of us because he already knew what he wanted to say and my speech probably was not important, or whether in fact it was a great speech. I would like to think that it was the latter, but I am pretty sure it was the former and that he was messing with Cale in the funny way that he would, given that we had adjoining desks. But who knows? We may never know.

I want to tell another story that goes to the former Premier as a person. He was not above recognising the importance of his role to the next generation of Western Australians. I remember sitting in his office when he took a call from a couple of high school students who were doing an assignment for their politics and law class or some element of political history. I could hear only one side of the conversation. Members should have no misunderstanding about how busy or full a Premier’s diary is, and especially someone who is such a hard worker as former Premier Mark McGowan was, yet he found 10 or 15 minutes to have a conversation with a couple of students on that occasion. The conversation was conversational. That is the only word to describe it. It was fascinating. That speaks to his humility and to his passion for politics and passing on his knowledge to the next generation. Most people in this place saw only the parliamentarian, the politician and Premier, but beneath all that, he is an incredibly decent person and has an incredible intellect.

He also has—this has come out many times—an incredible knowledge of history and a fantastic memory to answer anything that was put to him with certainty and, as I said, with intelligence. No matter what we were talking about, whether generally in a conversation or specifically to do with Parliament, he pretty much always knew the history of the matter. He was right across the big picture. As all members know, he was a brilliant speaker and could always answer anything put to him. In fact, there was only one time I can remember in my entire association with him and working for former Premier McGowan that he was stuck for words and did not have an answer. Some in this house may remember that it was at a press conference when he was asked a question by Gary Adshead in the context of the upcoming 2021 election. The question put to him was, “Can you tell me who is fourth on your north metro ticket?” For the first time ever, the Premier was stuck for words. As mortally offended as I was at the time—I hope *Hansard* picks up the humour of that—we joked about it on more than one occasion afterwards.

In any case, unlike the memory of the former Premier about my candidacy at the previous election, the people of Western Australia will never forget his decisions as Premier that kept this state and the people of this state in the best possible position during the pandemic. Mark, I would like to thank you on a personal level for your management of the pandemic. On a political level, I would like to thank you for your leadership and for leading the party to an incredible election victory that was responsible for putting me in this place and, once again on a personal level, for allowing me to join your team during your last term of government and for all that I have learnt from you both directly and indirectly during your time as Premier. You will be missed.

**HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan)** [12.09 pm]: I thank Hon Klara Andric for moving this motion. What can I say? Mark McGowan—the man, the myth, the legend. I am sure history will record all the wonderful

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things he has done, including the things everybody is talking about here today. I will share a personal story about Mark because we all know everything else he has done. Back in 2019, my husband and I went to the state executive country caucus meeting in Northam. It was a beautiful 42 or 43-degree day—such a lovely day to be in Northam! I thank Hon Darren West, who I am sure put on that weather for us. I had met Mark several times in the past and I was like, “Yeah, it’s Mark McGowan; he’s the Premier.” I was a bit blasé. We left and my husband said that he had forgotten his drink and he needed to go back in. I said, “Really?” In he went and he was gone for ages. He came out all smiles and said, “Oh, Mark McGowan asked for a selfie with me.” I said, “I beg your pardon?” He had not. My husband went up and fangirled Mark McGowan. This was before COVID-19, before tattoos and before running with kebabs. Mark was not “the man”, the “state daddy”, that people later called him. However, what did impress my husband and me was that when he spoke to Mark, Mark obviously cottoned on to the fact that my husband was Scottish—from his very slight Scottish accent! He asked him where in Scotland he was from. We are asked that a lot and my response will be, “Do you know Scotland?” Most people do not and if I tell them where I am from, they will not know. My husband said that he came from a town called Greenock on the Firth of Clyde. Straightaway Mark was in there, saying: “Oh, Greenock? I know about that. It is across the water from Faslane. Yes, they build ships there.” He talked about Scots and Linlithgow—I cannot remember—and about the building of the ships. He talked about the sugar trade and then the Oberon-class submarines. This is when my eyes glazed over as my husband was telling me, but I did pick up that there is an Oberon-class submarine at the WA Maritime Museum in Fremantle that was built the year my husband was born. They then started talking about the fact that my husband’s uncle worked on that submarine.

That shows the kind of man Mark McGowan is. As Hon Dan Caddy said, he has subject upon subject; he has an enormous memory. He can recall details. After we all gave our inaugural speeches to Parliament, Mark came up and asked me questions about my speech. He cared and he read every single speech. He was not just the Premier; he was the leader of Western Australia and he led us through a very hard time. It took its toll on him, and now he is not listening to this! He is relaxing and enjoying himself. I hope he is running somewhere with a kebab, because that is a sight I would like to see.

**HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural)** [12.13 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to stand today and acknowledge our amazing former Premier, Mark McGowan. I thank Hon Klara Andric for moving this motion today. I echo the comments of our leader about what an absolute privilege it has been to serve under the McGowan government. As a female, as someone from the regions and as a migrant to this country who came here with nothing but the education I had, it has been a great privilege to serve in this diverse Parliament that the former leader built. I thank Mark McGowan for his service to the state for over 30 years. Many members have talked about his economic management and his leadership through COVID-19, which put WA on the world stage. We see that through the number of overseas visitors we have had since the borders opened; it is clear how we are looked upon globally. We have the eye of the world, which will further help with our economic position into the future.

I also commend him on his commitment to the regions. This was the reason I came into politics in the first place. When one comes to a new country, it takes a long time to figure out the nuances of a new culture. Even though we speak the same language, I grew up on totally the other side of the planet. I spent a lot of time figuring out why we were not being listened to down in the regions. How could we make a difference and how could we be heard? I am proud of this government. I really feel as though it listens to the regions and tailors things for the regions. The things we have done make me very pleased to be part of this government. The regional road safety program is up to \$1 billion now with 9 000 kilometres of road. That was something that had not happened for many decades and the McGowan government got onto it.

The airfare caps made it easier for people to travel to the city and be connected. In such a vast state, the airfare network is important. The regional economic development grants have helped transform a lot of our regional communities. They have been fantastic and have brought vibrancy to regional communities. The community sporting and recreation facilities fund has helped to develop community sporting facilities across the regions. I am really proud of the great investment in the regions.

I have talked a bit about our diverse team and I again commend Mark McGowan for his work in building his diverse team. I am particularly honoured to be part of the team in the Legislative Council with Hon Rosie Sahanna, the first Indigenous person elected to the Legislative Council. That is the thing about the way the Council works. People need to be selected on the ticket and I am proud to be part of a government that selected the first Aboriginal person. It has taken this long but I am proud to be part of that government. I am the first Canadian-born person to be elected to the Legislative Council, and I am a female from the regions. Hon Klara Andric is the first Serbian-born member in this place and Hon Ayor Makur Chuot is the first South Sudanese-born member, and she came here as a refugee. I commend Mark McGowan for the way he has built this diverse team, with 50 per cent women. We have an awesome team here in the Legislative Council and I am honoured and proud to be part of that. Thank you to Mark McGowan for the team he has built.

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Finally, I thank him for coming down and opening my office. It was the first Labor office in Esperance since 1989—over 32 years. I thank him also for visiting Lucky Bay Beach, which was recently announced as the best beach in the world. I wish him and his family well and thank him again for his contribution to the state.

**HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural)** [12.17 pm]: I thank Hon Klara Andric for bringing this motion to the house. It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to stand up and express gratitude to the former Premier, Mark McGowan, for all he has done for Western Australia, but also all he has done for us as members of the WA Labor Party. I do not think it will come as a shock to anybody for me to say that but for Mark McGowan I would not be standing here. I was the third person on the ticket to be elected for the Agricultural Region. That is an unusual situation to have occurred but it is entirely attributable to the incredible popularity of Mark McGowan. As I see it, his popularity is attributed to his steady, determined and consistent leadership, but is also due to his relatable and very human and compassionate approach to being a leader. I can certainly attest to that because each time he spoke to members of Parliament or to members of the community that I had the privilege to witness, he was genuinely interested and engaged with people. That is something that struck me very early on. I found some personal aspects of McGowan particularly endearing. I remember looking across the members' dining room and seeing him having dinner with his school-aged daughter. It was just the two of them. His real engagement with family and those genuine actions were important. For that young woman, the value of that was evident in the way she carried herself in that context as well. She felt comfortable and relaxed and she would come and say hello with the Premier. I thought that was a beautiful thing for him to do as a dad. It does not surprise me at all that he ended up being referred to as the “state daddy”, which I am sure was deeply embarrassing to him.

It is a really good moment right now to thank Mark McGowan's family. I am incredibly grateful to his family and his wife, Sarah, because it was obviously a significant sacrifice for them. The job of Premier is 24/7—it never goes away—and it was the job that he conducted during significant pressures and disasters. For me, personally, not long after I was elected, cyclone Seroja occurred in my area. Mark McGowan spent time in the area. He was very compassionate, caring and present for people during that really challenging time, and also during COVID of course. The outcomes of that for McGowan's family included people breaking into their home and the vulnerability that they must have felt. There is incredible sacrifice for a family behind a leader. I extend my deepest gratitude to Sarah McGowan and Mark McGowan's family for sharing their dad and partner with us. It was a very generous thing to do for the state and I hope that they really enjoy having their dad back. I think that is an important thing to note.

In terms of Mark McGowan's popularity, it is that genuine kindness, being a steady, consistent family man, and someone who cares about people that allowed him to capture the hearts and imagination of people. He is also relatable. Any person I speak to still talks and laughs about the kebab interview. I recently watched that again, more out of curiosity, and thought: “What is it about that that captured people's attention so much?” I think it is that it was such a genuine response, one that he allowed to happen, and also the fact that he really struggled to get his laughter under control, because we have all had that experience. It was so very real and relatable. It was also when we were all under significant pressure and not feeling safe with the unknown of what COVID would be and what that would look like. The fact that we felt safe and protected during that time is an incredible achievement for a leader. From my experience, and observing from the outside, it is not typically the role of politicians to encourage people to feel safe. In fact, it is the opposite. I think that is one of the great flaws in the whole Liberal Party philosophy; it encourages people to feel unsafe and under threat in order for them to keep voting or behaving in a consistent way. That is not something McGowan did. He wrapped us up in a sense of safety and security and kept offering that. That was one of the great things he did for us at a time that we all felt incredibly vulnerable. I am profoundly grateful for that.

I would also like to extend my personal thanks to McGowan for the opportunity of allowing me to be in Parliament and of service to my community in this way. It is a profound privilege and one that I will forever be grateful for.

**HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary)** [12.22 pm]: I cherish the opportunity to say a few words about our good friend, our former Premier. I dare say that history will judge former Premier McGowan as one of the best Premiers, if not the best Premier, Western Australia has ever seen. I got to know former Premier Mark McGowan in 2013 through Labor Party meetings and functions. Over time, my huge respect for him as a person and as a leader grew. We heard other speakers talk about the difficult and challenging election we had in 2013. Mark threw himself into the community and into the task and turned up at events, no matter how difficult that would be or how challenging the atmosphere of that meeting would be and how tired he was. He applied himself to the task. People rightfully rewarded him and the Labor Party in 2017. We then went through a more challenging once-in-a-century pandemic. Not many leaders would have to go through that. Some leaders went through that and failed miserably, but not him and not this Labor government. We were up to the task, thankfully, with Premier McGowan's leadership. As we heard from the Leader of the House, there were tense moments. Decisions had to be made with very limited information, in very short spaces of time. Decisions had to be made during a treacherous, dangerous and challenging time. We came out the other end stronger and better equipped to deal with the post-pandemic world thanks to former Premier Mark McGowan.

**Extract from *Hansard***

[COUNCIL — Thursday, 15 June 2023]

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Hon Klara Andric; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Ayor Makur Chuot; Hon Dr Steve Thomas; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Shelley Payne; Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Stephen Pratt

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I find him to be a gentle, kind and considerate person. At the same time, he is a decisive and gutsy leader who is fair in his decision-making. I feel that all his decisions were guided by his strong moral compass. President, I want to touch on a personal experience. Members who served before 2021 would remember that for a period of three days I was under intense attack from the Murdoch press about my cultural heritage and my connection to the Western Australian Chinese community. My colleagues, the Leader of the House and the Premier all stood up for me. They stood up to the dog whistling and the racism that circulated at the time. It took me a little while to listen to some of those recordings and read those articles. I recall one particular press conference at which the Premier and the Leader of the House were announcing the opening of a new school. Two questions in, the press turned its focus on me. The Premier defended me every step of the way. I want to thank him for being such a good friend and for being such a strong defender of multiculturalism, pushing back on racism and discrimination. I want to thank him for that.

He is now retired from politics. I am sure that he will enjoy his Netflix and probably have a walk, run or jog with a kebab in his hand. I am sure Sarah and their children will appreciate his presence at home. He no longer has to get up at four o'clock, be on the road by five and be in Dumas House by six to start his day, sometimes six days a week, sometimes seven days a week. I am sure he will appreciate the sleep-in that he can now enjoy. I am sure my colleagues in this chamber wish him all the very best in whatever he is looking at in his next chapter. Thank you, Mark.

**HON STEPHEN PRATT (South Metropolitan)** [12.28 pm]: I have about 60 seconds. I want to obviously thank Mark, like the rest of my colleagues, for his leadership. I want to highlight that from my experience, what we saw under Mark McGowan was a return of the public's trust in government. During the pandemic, people looked to the government for advice and they certainly got clear concise leadership and guidance during that tough time.

I will touch on the financial management aspect that was a highlight of the McGowan leadership. I remember being in Rockingham with Bob Hawke and him explaining the myth of the conservative management of finances, and it is exactly that—a myth. I also congratulate Mark McGowan for knowing he was exhausted. It is Men's Health Week, and I will touch on that more later this evening. Knowing to bow out when you are at the top of your game is definitely worthy of mention.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.