



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



Hon Terry Waldron, MLA
(Member for Wagin)

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 16 November 2016

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MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin) [6.01 pm]: When I was approached to stand in 2000, I met a friend of mine, a guy called Ian Taylor, for some advice. Many of you will know Ian; he was a former Labor leader, Deputy Premier of the state, and, for many years, a minister. We worked together in the seventies. Ian gave me great encouragement and I will never forget what he said to me. He said, "Tuck, whether you are in it for 20 years, are Premier for 10 or last one term, it won't matter; it will be the greatest experience of your life." Taylor, man, you were dead right. He was dead right. What a privilege and great honour it has been for me. I have had a wonderful 16 years in this place. I have had a ball and I have enjoyed every minute of it. But, wow, how much have I learnt since I have been here. I have learnt heaps. I do not know whether you remember your first day in this place, but I was fair dinkum scared. I always remember the first day I put my head down for prayers just next to the member for Eyre over there. I looked up and saw Geoff Gallop, Jim McGinty, Colin Barnett and Hendy Cowan and thought, "Tuck Waldron, what the hell are you doing here?" I thought to myself, "You've done it this time; you've just gone too far." I felt like ducking out that back door and going back to Jingalup. Do you know what? I remember watching Geoff Gallop make a speech—a terrific man—but he made a few blues. I thought: hey, if he can do it, I can do it. We are all just people and I have made plenty of blues in here. You get on with it and you learn as you go. I love this game because it is all about people. In Western Australia we have fantastic people. When you move around your electorate, the best part is working with people.

I want to tell you a story about how I met a certain person about eight months in. You meet all types. My Nationals have heard this, I am sorry. I went to a garage, filled up my car with petrol and walked in to pay the bill. As I walked in there was a lady going off about politicians to the guy behind the counter. She was saying, "Blooming politicians; they're all lying, cheating, thieving, stealing so-and-sos. They're all underworked and overpaid; they go on junket trips; they lie and they cheat." She was ripping into it. I could see the bloke behind the counter, who I knew really well and who knew I was a local member, was uneasy, so I tapped the lady on the shoulder and quietly said, "Excuse me, I should introduce myself; my name is Tuck Waldron; I'm actually your local member of state Parliament." With this the lady got really embarrassed and started to apologise and said, "Oh, I didn't really mean what I was saying." She was trying to apologise and I said, "No; don't worry; you were making your point. You are right; we do need to lift our game a bit." We had a good chat. Then she went to leave. She did not know that I had been in real estate for some 16 years. As she walked out the door, she turned to me and said, "Anyway mate, it could have been worse, you know; you could've been one of those lying, cheating, stealing, thieving real estate mongrels." I looked at her and said, "I was for 16 years." The woman looked at me and shook her head and said, "There's no bloody hope for you is there, mate?" I still see that lady and we joke about it and I tell her that I tell the story and she is scared that I would name her, but I never will. She is one of the thousands of people you meet.

What I love about my area is that it is an important part of the state. It is heavily agricultural and farming but with mining, tourism and a little bit of fishing. There are lots of industries; it is productive and it is a great place to live. Once again, it is about the people. What inspires me is the way people in our small communities make things happen. I love that. They get off their behinds and drive you as the local member to make things occur. Over my years that is what has inspired me to keep doing what I have done because they inspire me and I have been very proud to represent that region. I often say when I speak at an opening or if someone has been given a grant, that governments can give money but governments do not really make things happen; it is the locals that make it happen; they drive us and force us to do what is right.

I see a great future for my region—a fantastic future. I have never seen agriculture in a better position. The opportunities for agriculture going forward are huge. When you see the Twiggy Forrests, the Gina Rineharts, and the Walshes of this world down there, it is fantastic, so I think the future for my region is good.

I want to touch on royalties for regions because it is one of the best things that has happened in country WA. I got involved in Parliament to try to lessen the inequities between the country and the city and I think royalties for regions has done that to a great extent. I am lucky, like many of you, as we get to go around the state and around my region and see the difference royalties for regions has made to communities and the confidence it has instilled in people. They are very proud of their communities. It has reshaped country WA and long may it continue.

I want to mention a couple of important things in my community. The importance of sport is one and I am biased when it comes to sport, as you all know. I really believe that and I will talk a bit more about it in a minute. I am very concerned about road safety in my region. All too often I see people who have been affected by road death, trauma or injury. It lasts forever. We need to improve it and it is something I hope to get involved in when I leave this place. In my inaugural speech I suggested that we should get rid of handing out how-to-vote cards. They have always annoyed me. I do not like handing out how-to-vote cards and all the stuff that goes with it. I reckon we should put them on signs outside and in the booths. People know what they are doing; let them go for it. Anyway, that probably will not change.

I was very fortunate and very honoured to serve as a minister for six and a quarter years. Premier, thank you very much for the opportunity and the faith you showed in me. To the Leader of the Nats, Brendon, thank you, mate, for the great confidence, support and encouragement. Thank you to the former leader, my mate, the member for Warren–Blackwood, Terry, for continuing to support me. I also thank my ministerial colleagues for their great support while I was doing that ministerial job. Again, I learnt so much in that position. I thoroughly enjoyed the role and I am very proud of what we achieved. People talk about the stadium. I am very proud of the stadium. We got a bit of criticism early because we took a long time investigating the stadium and planning it, but I think that was time well spent. I think the result will be great. I am just as proud of all the other state sporting facilities in the city. We did a lot and I appreciate the support I got to do that. We can host Commonwealth Games here and world championships. We can host major world events in this city and I am very proud of that. Probably most of all, on the little facilities we had built around the country, I want to tell you the story about Pingrup, a little place east of Nyabing, which is east of Katanning. There is not much at Pingrup. They had two netball courts, which you would not even park your car on, they were that bad. The young mums at Pingrup wanted to redo them so that their kids could play tennis, netball and basketball. Some of the older people in the area were not really keen on it. “We haven’t got enough kids; it’s a waste of ratepayers’ money.” These women got on to me, and, as women so often do, drove the idea and I thought: why should the kids of Pingrup not be able to play netball and basketball? We got with the shire and got funding through the department. A few months ago I was coming back late from Jerramungup and I saw the lights, so I went up and there were about 80 adults and 40 kids enjoying that facility. Those facilities are very important for Pingrup as they are for everywhere else. I am also very proud of the programs we developed and I want to mention KidSport, which I think has been a very successful program. It is all about giving kids from lower socioeconomic areas a chance to participate in clubs and sport, and I think that will benefit those kids, their families, and the community.

When the Premier told me I was minister for liquor licensing, I must admit I was a bit scared for a while. I thought, “Blooming hell—liquor!” One of my mates rang me up and said, “You got liquor, Tuck. At least you’re damn well qualified!” I am very proud of the two tranches of liquor reforms that we put through. I think we have made some really good changes. There is more to do. I am proud of the liquor review that we did. That is a good document going forward. I love the work that we did with liquor in Aboriginal communities in the north that were not licensed. At the request of those communities, I went there and we were able to make those communities alcohol free under law—under section 175 of the Liquor Licensing Act. I think we did that for about 17 or 18 communities in my time, and probably 13 of them have gone really well. I hope that continues.

I am also proud of the establishment of the racing infrastructure fund and the focus on safety. We had a big focus on safety in the racing industry, and that was really, really important. I have to keep watching the clock! Once again, it is all about people.

I want to touch again on the importance of sport. When I was young, I happened to overhear someone say, “The problem with young Tuck is he will never get anywhere because he’s too focused on sport.” They were probably right. I was focused on sport. But I knew that I had to do other things for my family—I had to study and do all those other things. However, do you know what? Sport has been very good to me. The longer I have lived and been involved at every level of sport, the more I am convinced of the huge value of sport, particularly team sports and people working together. It is not just sport. It can be arts and culture, community groups or service clubs. Working in teams is the way to go. I thank, once again, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet for the support that I got for those programs.

I quickly want to talk about parliamentary committees. During my term in Parliament I was on the Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, the Education and Health Committee and the Economics and Industry Committee. Committee work is very important. It increases our knowledge as parliamentarians. However, the best thing is that it brings members of Parliament from both sides together. We get to work together and understand each other and have respect for each other. That is really, really important.

I want to mention a couple of parliamentary memories that I have from over the years. When I was first in this place, I used to promote Jingalup. Jingalup is the little town that I come from. There is not much at Jingalup except the school, the tennis club and the golf course, and three houses. I love Jingalup. In my early speeches, I always talked about the mighty purple and gold. One day, I made a speech about drought, I think it was, and I talked about Jingalup, and at the end of my speech I got a note from the then Attorney General and Minister for Health,

Jim McGinty, which said, “Tuck, can I meet you out the back; I need to talk to you?” I was a bit worried—why would Jim McGinty want to talk to me? I met Jim out the back, and Jim said, “I just want to say, Tuck, that was a really good speech”, and I thought “That’s pretty good! Thanks, Jim. That’s really nice.” He then said, “But I’ve got a question. Where the bloody hell is Jingalup?” Jingalup is 20 kilometres south west of Kojonup, and it is the social centre of the south west—do not worry about that!

I want to let members know that when they see the Dockers run out, the Dockers’ purple comes from Jingalup. I have said that the colours of Jingalup are purple and gold. When I was on the West Australian Football Commission and the Dockers football team was being put together, Grant Dorrington was in charge of working out what the colours would be. They had consultants, they had kids writing in and they had focus groups; it was going on and on and all this money was being spent. I said, “Dorro, this is bulldust, mate. Give them purple and gold—“Mighty Jingalup”. Just go for it!” It became a joke. On it went, but I kept at it. At the big night at the Fremantle passenger terminal when the Dockers were launched, with 900 people and the smoke and all the rest of it, out came the jumpers, and I saw the purple and thought, “Bloody hell! He’s done it!” Grant did apologise later that he could not get the gold in there. So, when members see the Dockers out there, remember that.

Another thing I want to touch on is that I will always remember when I first came into this place, we were over on that side, in opposition. The backbench of the Labor Party at that time called themselves the halfback line. I remember that it had on it the late Paul Andrews; John Bowler; the member for Albany; and the member for Mindarie. Is John Quigley still the member for Mindarie? It is Butler, sorry; I am showing my age. There was also Martin Whitely. I thought the member for Collie–Preston was in it, but Peter told me he was not; I am sure he was. They used to give us a hard time. A lot of stuff went backwards and forwards. I gave a speech about the opening of the Popanyinning toilets and how important they were. Those boys gave me a terrible time about the Popanyinning toilets. Every time I spoke, they would say, “Are you opening any more toilets, member for Wagin?” and all that sort of stuff. The late Paul Andrews grabbed me one day, and he said, “Tuck, I want to speak to you. I was taking my wife and kids to Albany, and we decided to go through York. While we were on our way down from York, all of a sudden my young fellow got really crook. We were in a bit of a diabolical, and I looked up and I saw Popanyinning, and I thought, Tuck’s toilets!” He said, “They saved the day, and we will never give you”—I will not say that word—“a problem about Tuck’s toilets again.”

I remember that the late Phil Pandal over there used to explain big words to me that I could not understand, like “fishwife”. I am still not quite sure what that means! I also want to mention Eric Ripper, because at one stage in this Parliament, early on, I was the only National here. I got caught in a situation and I did not have a clue about what was going on, and Eric Ripper gave me a little warning. I am forever grateful for that. I come now to Arthur Marshall. I do not think he is in the best of health at the moment, but when I was first in this place, he always encouraged me to speak on sport. I also need to mention the late Bill McNee. Who remembers Billy McNee’s fire and brimstone speeches? We would all be out in the courtyard, and someone would say “Billy’s up”, and this place would fill and Billy would let loose. I did not agree with much of what Bill said, but it was entertaining anyway.

Now for my thank-yous. I had better get rolling. I want to thank all the members I have served with in this place, on both sides, from all parties. I have made great friendships, which I will cherish forever. Can I say to all members here—enjoy what you do, respect the history and importance of this place, and never underestimate the great privilege and honour it is to serve in this place. Also, never underestimate the value of what you do and the value of how you can help many people in their lives. It does not matter what party we are from; we all do that at stages in our career.

I wish everyone in this place the best in the coming election, and say good luck to Kim, Wendy and John, my fellow retirees.

I want to thank all the parliamentary staff. I cannot go through them all. They do a great job and I have so many friends here. I, too, want to thank the media. I always got on well with the media. I do not always agree with them, and they probably do not always agree with me, but we both have our roles to play.

I thank my ministerial staff—Steve Manchee, my first chief of staff, and Michael Cutler; who I think is here tonight. Michael was sensational for me. We are great mates. He is a very talented young man. He gave me very good advice and I will be forever grateful to you, Cuts. I thank Nick Sloan and Jon Nicholls, my advisers. They are great blokes. I always try to enjoy what I do. We had a lot of fun. Those guys worked very hard and they were very loyal and knowledgeable. I would have been no good without them. I also thank Paul Jarvis, Simone Knox and Peter Rule, who are my media people. Jarvo was there for the longest time. Thanks, mate; we had a lot of fun. I also thank Sue Lothian, who was the executive officer in my office. Sue used to work for John Kobelke. John Kobelke said to me that Sue runs a pretty tight ship but she will never let me get into trouble, and he was dead right. Thanks, Sue. I thank all the girls—Karin Stacey, Terrie Peritt, Narelle Jones, Misty Milne and Meredith Graham, and Donna Kennedy, who was involved in the liquor review. I feel that I have missed someone; if I have, I am sorry. Thank you, guys. It was a great time in my life.

I thank Ron Alexander and the staff from the Department of Sport and Recreation, and Barry Sargeant and the staff from the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor in my ministerial days, and everyone from across the industry. I had a great relationship with Ron and with Barry. They are very different people, but I found them great to work with and I will be forever grateful.

To my electorate office staff, we all know how important they are. Tonight I have here Linda Nottle and Di Dohle, who have been long-serving staff members for me. To you, Linda and Di, you are sensational. You have been brilliant for me, particularly when I was a minister. I was a minister in a country electorate, so those girls were pretty much the member for Wagin a lot of the time. They did a great job. Thank you very much.

I also thank Jill Sounness, Lisa Goldsmith and Rosemary Archer. Jill whipped me into shape when I started out as a young pollie and probably did not know what I was doing. Thank you, Jill; I appreciate that. Thanks also to Samantha Scott, Jackie Ball and Tori Castledine, who helped me with media, and Dorrie Kerrigan and Janet Sieber, who helped out from time to time.

I want to thank the National Party—Dexter Davies, Jamie Kronberg and Helen Day when I first here; Mary and Stuart Graham; Bob and Chris Wiese; Doug and Jenny Fowler; Alan and Rita Marshall; Ian Robinson and his wife, Debbie; and Vin Dawes and the Young Nats. Thank you very much for everything. Our Young Nats are fantastic.

I also thank my parliamentary team. I served under four leaders. Hendy Cowan was a fantastic fellow, an icon of Western Australian politics. Max Trenorden is a terrific bloke. I hope to catch up with Max in the near future. Brendon Grylls is an outstanding leader and an outstanding Western Australian. I have learnt very much from Brendon. You have done a great job, mate. I also thank Terry Redman. I was very lucky to have Terry and Brendon as leaders. They are fantastic leaders and fantastic guys. To Mia, that little kid at Rottneest who was mates with my daughter. It was great to turn to Mia one day on the front bench and say, “Here we are, Mia, sitting on the front bench”.

I am running out of time and I want to get to my family. To my late mum and dad, thanks for your love and for giving me every opportunity in life. Thanks to Delphine and Rosemary, my sisters, who are here tonight. Thanks very much for your great support, great advice and great love. To Peter and Brenton, my brothers-in-law. Pete’s not too well at the moment but he rang me today. Get well, Pete. To Brenton, thanks, mate. Brenton and I played footy together at Claremont just after the war, and he is a great brother-in-law. I thank him for everything he has done for me.

I have only one of my beautiful daughters here tonight—Kelly, who is my second daughter, sitting in the back row there. I have Jemma in Sydney, Kelly here tonight, Bonnie who is on Barrow Island at the moment, and Jessica who is working in a restaurant in Subi trying to make a quid! When I speak, I always say that I have four daughters, and that is why I am bald, broke but very, very happy! I realise the effect that being a politician can have on your kids; they have been great support to their dad, and I know they have made many, many sacrifices. I now have grandkids that I did not have when I started. I have Ali, Ben, Tyson and Seanna. They are wonderful! One of the reasons I am leaving is because I want to have time with them.

To my beautiful wife, Noelene, “Noelsie”, I said when I stood down as a minister—she still has not watched that either, by the way—that Noelsie is a little ripper, and she is a little ripper. She has been an unbelievable support to me and given me so much love. Thank you, darling. I know the sacrifices that Noelene has made, but the thing I love about Noelsie is that she has always given me the opportunity to do my own thing. When I have wanted to have a go at something new, she has said, “If you want to do it, have a go”, and I tell you what, mate, I am looking forward to that caravan! We will have a ripping time then.

During my maiden speech I saw the Premier, who was not the Premier then, pass a note to Hendy Cowan. Hendy later passed me the note. The Premier and I played football together at Claremont, and the note said, “Hendy, ask that little fat bald-headed bloke if he ever damn well handballed”. Every time the Premier and I opened something new when I was minister, he would always have a go about me not handballing. I have to admit that I did like to kick a goal! But, Premier, I want to prove something to you. Here.

[Applause.]

Mr T.K. WALDRON: As you can see, I did not handball often because I just about killed Mia!

Mr R.H. Cook: That’s why he never handballed.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I did handball at training a bit.

I will finish by saying thank you to my electorate and the constituents in it—fantastic. Thank you for the great opportunity I have been given.

Members, good luck to you all, and I just wish you all the best at the election. It has been a blast, and after Wendy’s speech it is time for a beer. Thanks.

[Applause.]