



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



Hon Barry House, MLC
President

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Thursday, 18 May 2017

Legislative Council

Thursday, 18 May 2017

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 17 May on the following motion moved by Hon Sally Talbot —

That the following address be presented to Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the commonwealth of Australia —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): The question I put from the chair is that the motion be agreed to. This is pretty unusual, but I give the call to myself!

Members, I am very pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to say a few words of farewell as the curtain comes down on nearly 30 years representing the South West Region and serving in the Legislative Council. I have grappled with how to reflect 30 years in 40 minutes and make it meaningful and coherent, so I hope I can.

When I was first elected in 1987 at the last by-election for the Legislative Council before the introduction of the current proportional representation model, I had no idea my time here would be so long or so challenging, satisfying or rewarding. The two important speeches most members make in this place in defining who we are and what we stand for are our inaugural and valedictory speeches, so I have referred to my first speech in 1987 as a starting point for my reflections now. I hope you do not mind, but, as other members have done, I will stick closely to my notes to make sure that I get into *Hansard* what I really mean.

In a positive way—no, I missed a bit! That was not positive, was it? In a way, I can observe that the more things change, the more they stay the same. As I raised concerns then about centralisation of services—it was Telecom at that stage—there is still an issue in regional Western Australia despite some progress. Crime rates, particularly those relating to drugs, are still an issue.

In a positive way, I extolled the great virtue of diversity in the south west and the need for sensitive, sensible development. There was a focus on tourism then, as now, and the great potential of our region. I am very pleased to see such positive progress in the infrastructure requirements I mentioned then, such as the south west airport, the Busselton Jetty repair and upgrade, Margaret River Hospital, Bunbury Regional Entertainment Centre and waterfront developments. Other issues raised were education and health opportunities for young people, the ability of Homeswest tenants to become owners of their own homes and dealing with pesticide residue on prime agricultural land. As I reflect on these issues today, it is encouraging that we have come such a long way, but there is still so much more to do and there is still so much more potential for the future.

In the south west electorate there have been massive changes, mostly for the better, over those 30 years. I like to think this had a lot to do with the theme I mentioned back in 1987—that is, the effectiveness of ownership at a personal and community level of the challenges and opportunities we all face. Much more is gained by taking responsibility for an issue ourselves, individually and collectively, and working with government at all levels to achieve a better outcome. It is never productive to sit back and expect the government to do everything or, worse still, remain constantly at loggerheads with each other to give government the perfect excuse to do nothing. I am pleased to say that there are many examples of self-help communities in the south west that have enlisted the help of government in a constructive way to get things done. I will mention just a few examples.

Firstly, the Friends of the Cape to Cape Track, which I have been fortunate to be patron of for 20-odd years, was initiated by a local group of people who have worked in strong partnership with local governments, the Department of Parks and Wildlife, the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association, Lotterywest, the business community, and environment and transport groups to create a now iconic walk trail and tourist attraction known worldwide. This gave me great satisfaction, as it was developed on the model recommended to government by the trails task force I chaired in the 1990s, and it continues to thrive today.

Secondly, although not a sexy topic, the successful use of treated wastewater throughout Margaret River on ovals, public open space and the golf course came about only through a cooperative approach from the

Shire of Augusta–Margaret River, local schools, the Margaret River Golf Club and, eventually, after a bit of persuasion, the Water Corporation. A similar proposal, plus other aspects, has been put to government by Busselton Water for the Dunsborough area particularly and was approved by the Barnett cabinet. This is a win–win situation for government and the community, and I urge the new government to act and implement this as soon as possible.

The rejuvenation of the Busselton Jetty from the smashed wreck it was when I was first elected in 1987 is a great story. Through enormous local community passion, effort, commitment and hard work, and subsequent support from government, this is now the prime tourist focus and attraction for Busselton in particular and that region. In fact, a new tourist train will be unveiled tomorrow, which I hope to attend as one of my last official duties as a local member.

Port Geographe initially unfolded in the 1990s and 2000s as an environmental disaster, but through persistence, advocacy, cooperation and, again, government support, the rock groynes were realigned successfully and the area is now back on track to realising its vast potential.

Another example close to my heart is the formation of the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association from two previously individualised and under-resourced competitors. The Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association is now a shining beacon in the Australian tourism industry as the most successful and dynamic not-for-profit tourism promotions, marketing and facility-operating business in Australia. I have derived an immense amount of satisfaction, sometimes after long periods of frustrating challenges though, from playing some part in all these projects and more.

When I was preparing what I was going to say on these things, I realised that there is perhaps one skill I may have developed a little bit of expertise in, in my role over the last 30 years, and that is maybe herding cats! Judging by the many suggestions I have received lately to take on coordination roles of this type, it looks as though the word has got around, and I hope I can keep up a decent success rate before I run out of luck.

While I am on the electorate, I guess I have always operated more like a Legislative Assembly member than a Legislative Council member, originally from my electorate office in Bunbury for 10 years and then in Margaret River for 20 years. To some extent, this has created a rod for my own back and given me a full-time job on top of a full-time job, especially while I have been President for the last eight years, but I would not have had it any other way.

I have always considered the community I represent as my primary focus as a representative. I have derived a great deal of satisfaction and reward out of the previous examples and working closely with many other organisations to create a better place to live and work. The heroes of these organisations I have been privileged to work closely with as patron or vice-patron, in an advocacy role or as a support in some way include the Friends of the Cape to Cape Track, Dunsborough and Districts Country Club, CinéfestOZ Film Festival, Margaret River Readers and Writers Festival, Dunsborough Art Society, Geographe Bay Yacht Club, Dunsborough Bay Yacht Club and Koombana Bay Sailing Club. It is funny that when you get into public life, you end up doing all sorts of jobs that you really had no association with before. I am patron of yacht clubs, art societies and rifle associations. I cannot paint to save myself, I cannot sail a boat to save myself and I do not think I have ever fired a gun in anger, but that is the way it goes. There is also Pathways SouthWest; Bunbury Rifle Club; South West District Rifle Association; West Australian Rifle Association; Busselton Tennis Club; 10th Light Horse Memorial Troop; Margaret River Bowling Club; south west cricket association; Busselton Margaret River Cricket Association; Margaret River Community Resource Centre; Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association, which I have mentioned; chambers of commerce in the area; Busselton Water; Arts Margaret River; agricultural societies, rotary clubs, lions clubs, men's sheds, organisations and Zonta clubs; the Augusta Margaret River and Busselton football clubs in particular; and Margaret River Underwater Hockey Club. Of course, in terms of events tourism, the south west has an enormous range of successful events, including the Margaret River Pro, Margaret River Gourmet Escape, Leeuwin Estate Concert, triathlons and Jazz by the Bay. Then there are the other organisations throughout the community, such as local governments, schools, of course, in the education area and health facilities.

I know I am a bit biased, but I have taken to welcoming anyone who comes to an event in the south west at which I have a speaking gig with the words, “Welcome to the best corner of the best state of the best country in the world.” Last Friday night, at a farewell function that was hosted for me by the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River, I was humbled when the shire president, Ian Earl, who is here today, presented me with a mounted plaque for my new home office with those words on it. I think I will make that the title of my book if I ever get around to writing it.

In terms of the Parliament, I have seen many changes and highs and lows. In 30 years, I have seen four changes of government. I have experienced slightly more time—16 and a half years—in two stints in government under the Court and Barnett governments. I have experienced time in opposition in three stints, the last of which will

be, thankfully, very brief! I have seen many changes in this chamber particularly in and around the Parliament in general. There are now many more women in the Parliament than when I started. When I started in 1987, there were only three women in the 34-member Legislative Council. The situation then changed, because between 2010 and 2013, this Legislative Council led the way in Australasia in the fact that 17 of the 36 members of the Legislative Council were female. That is 47 per cent, which at the time was the highest percentage in any commonwealth parliamentary jurisdiction apart from Rwanda. As mentioned by previous speakers, the situation has now changed a bit.

The custom and practice in this Parliament have also changed. In 1987, smoking was permitted throughout this building. I have vivid memories of our Whip at the time, Margaret McAleer, who was the first female Whip in the Parliament of Western Australia, sitting in the chair at the back of the chamber and smoking strong, pungent Capstan cigarettes. If members look closely behind me, they will see that there are still several marks where cigarettes have been left to burn out on the woodwork next to where the time capsule is encased. One of my first actions as President in 2009 was to agree with the Speaker to ban smoking in this building. I think most people agreed with us, although there were a couple who did not, and I have no doubt that that was the right decision.

The lighting in this chamber was terrible. The sag in the roof of the chamber used to alarm me. There was no air conditioning until about 10 years ago. We also had the original bench seating until the long overdue refurbishment in 2009, early in my term as President. Now we also have the kangaroo paw floral emblem in the carpet of this chamber rather than the fleur-de-lis as a uniquely appropriate Western Australian theme.

In terms of communications, there has been a revolution in the last 30 years. During my by-election campaign in 1987, I was very impressed by Barry MacKinnon and Phillip Pental coming to Bunbury and using a car phone the size of a brick, and a newfangled fax machine that printed on heat paper, so we had to be careful not to leave it in strong light for more than five minutes or all the content would disappear. Of course now the world revolves around small hand-held phones, emails and social media. This has also affected the way Parliament operates. Parliament always used to be the place in which the executive—the Premier, the cabinet and cabinet ministers—was the first to report to the people through the Parliament via statements, legislation and the tabling of documents. Now the Parliament is often the last place to know, as communication by the government is usually done well in advance of the Parliament being formally informed. That is usually done via media release, which has now even been superseded by Twitter and Facebook and other forms of social media, and even that is working around the mainstream media.

Some might interpret this as bypassing the Parliament and question our relevance, but I see it differently. In my view, this makes the Parliament even more important as the institution with the powers and obligation to properly and thoroughly scrutinise this information and enforce its accountability role through time-honoured mechanisms such as questions, debates and committee inquiries. So, in this context, I still strongly subscribe to the saying that our system is the worst in the world apart from all the others! Looking towards the future, if and when Australia ever moves to a republic, I plead with Australians to resist the temptation of a directly elected president United States' style and to stay with the Westminster system, under which the executive is borne out of the elected Parliament and directly responsible to the people through that Parliament.

One of the great pleasures and privileges of having been President of the Legislative Council for the past eight years has been the protocol-ambassadorial role as the head of the Western Australian legislature, along with the Speaker. In this role, I have had a close affiliation with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and served on its executive committee for three years. I have attended and presented papers at numerous seminars and conferences around Australia to our close friends in the Pacific and around the world. This role has also provided me with the privilege of representing the Western Australian Parliament to numerous ambassadors, consuls and delegations. I have also led parliamentary delegations to other jurisdictions—namely, China, India, Sri Lanka, Japan, western Canada, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and South Africa.

I have also been involved in signing documents with two different Western Australian Premiers and with the Speaker of Hyogo Assembly in Japan, Governor Ido, and the Speaker of the Parliament of Japan, to acknowledge the thirtieth and thirty-fifth anniversaries of the Western Australia-Hyogo Prefecture sister state agreement, the oldest and one of the most meaningful international relationships that we have.

But the role of President brings other administrative issues, as well as the obvious chamber roles. I want to make some observations about the disjointed and often confusing way the Parliament and members of Parliament are resourced and serviced. These comments may not be populist, but I consider them to be important. Administrative arrangements are shared in a mishmash way by the Parliament itself, the executive government through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. The principle is very clear. Members of Parliament should be serviced and administered by Parliament, not the executive. But of course we cannot do this if we are not resourced. While it is difficult to pinpoint any particular instances, there is always the perception that there may be political oversight, interference or bias in resourcing electorate offices and staff, for instance.

Although the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal in Western Australia was set up well in the 1970s and largely operated independently and at arm's length to determine members' salaries, conditions and entitlements, along with those of other persons, I fear it has lost its way since 2000. Our mother Parliament, Westminster, saw many of its members and its system discredited a decade or so ago because it had held members' salaries too low for too long. It then made the mistake of topping up members' incomes with a range of offline cash claims and backdoor, semi-secret benefits that in many cases were unrelated to their roles as members of Parliament and were unaccountable, and in some cases were perhaps bordering on corruption. Although the Westminster Parliament has taken steps to correct its system, I fear we have drifted the other way. Because of the changes that were made in 2000 to members' superannuation, the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal has attempted to correct the supposed imbalance between remuneration for members who are on different superannuation schemes while loading up a range of other benefits. That includes the extra money that is paid to a member for serving on a parliamentary committee. I have always figured that this should be a core responsibility of a member of Parliament anyhow.

Members are given a cash resettlement allowance. However, they lose 50 per cent of that in tax to the Australian Taxation Office, rather than the norm of about 30 per cent—as though Western Australians need to send more money to Canberra given our GST treatment! Members also receive a cash car allowance—that is, a total of \$25 000 for metro members and \$42 000 for country members. Without any consultation and precious little research, this was changed unilaterally from a fully serviced vehicle to this system. I predict a few things will arise out of this. Country MPs will be much worse off than their metro colleagues. Although, on the surface we see \$42 000 as opposed to \$25 000, it will not work out that way. The temptation may well be to get inappropriate, even dangerous, vehicles and resist covering the huge hours and kilometres required to do the job properly. I know in my case I have averaged driving between 80 000 and 100 000 kilometres per annum for 30 years. In the city, some will get, perhaps, old bombs or cheap smart cars, and the result will be that some members will pocket the balance of money with no accountability. I also predict that the Parliament House car park will look like a used car lot, full of cars of all sorts of varieties covered in tacky political advertising. That will not do very much for the professional image of parliamentarians.

Added to that, a determination provides a cash allowance for the parliamentary travel scheme. I am the first to support a system of funding being made available for members to travel. Travel is a very important part of a member's professional development as a member of Parliament and a representative. But I fear there will be a tendency to not use it at all, and perhaps pocket the money and miss out on that professional development, or use it on some dubious, personal or other reason unrelated to their parliamentary duties, whereby there is no obligation to account to Parliament, like in the previous scheme, in a tabled report.

In recent years, the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal undertook a work value case for members of Parliament and reported after several years' investigation that members of Parliament salaries were trending badly behind judges, senior public servants, tribunal members, local government CEOs, for instance, but it did nothing about it, in terms of either restricting the other salaries, if they were so far out of whack, or raising MPs' salaries to bridge that widening gap. Its solution was to resort to these other cash and backdoor benefits for administrative convenience to top up members' remuneration, but in the process forgot about the other responsibilities it has—for instance, making sure that taxpayers' money is spent accountably and upholding the professional and reputational image of members of Parliament, which I believe was one of the main purposes of setting up an independent, arms-length Salaries and Allowances Tribunal in the first place. Consequently, MPs' salaries and allowances, conditions and benefits have become playthings for commentators, and many in the community are quick to take easy cheap shots and, for some, the Parliament has become solely about personality politics and is treated like a reality TV show. I believe that the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal has to get back to an open and honest assessment of an MP's worth and allocate salaries and benefits in a fair and fully accountable way to avoid all this innuendo and unfair and unreasonable attention and ridicule. In addition to these developments, I am more concerned about a recent suggestion that the executive will set MPs' remuneration by legislation. This will take us back decades and attract even more discontent and criticism. We had a good model in the way SAT was set up to operate early, but it has lost its way and it needs to get back on track as soon as possible.

There are other aspects of the management, administration and resourcing of Parliament that need attention and commitment. The Parliament is the state's primary institution and should be taken more seriously. This Parliament was first built on this site in 1904, representing great foresight by our forefathers. There are many sketches and plans around this building indicating what it was supposed to look like when it was finished, but it was only half-built then, containing the two chambers, members' dining room and Parliamentary Library, which originally was intended as a ballroom, and little else. The only major addition since then, in 1964, has been the eastern three-storey extension, containing the entrance, staircase and office space, and turning the building around to face down St Georges Terrace, as was always intended. However, in the 1960s the freeway was also carved out, creating a great division between Parliament and the Perth CBD that still exists. Apart from a few other relatively minor changes, there has been no major expenditure to help this institution cope with the exponential growth in the complexity of and demand on our functions and services in the 113 years since it was first built.

Parliament House is a wonderful old building but it is now totally inadequate for modern requirements. We lease expensive space in five other buildings that are scattered around West Perth to accommodate parliamentary committee staff, the library staff, administration staff, IT services and other functions. The Parliament has received \$1 million annually for the last decade for maintenance and some minor capital improvements. As you can imagine, this does not go far on a 113-year-old heritage building and barely scratches the surface of an estimated \$30 million backlog required for proper maintenance alone. Through excellent and prudent management by the parliamentary departments, we have done well to maintain standards in this institution and made some improvements, but these are only bandaid solutions—for example, the courtyard where we have used old pavers and all-weather covers when the building really requires a sensible glass dome across the whole area. A second example is reworking every bit of space possible downstairs for Hansard and Building Services staff to free up a few more badly needed offices for members. Thirdly, we are currently working on a proposal to refurbish the old fountain structures at the front of Parliament House for barely adequate office accommodation to locate some staff and save on expensive lease costs across the road.

I take note of the previous remarks. It has been very frustrating dealing with this situation over the years. This reached extreme levels for me and the Speaker a couple of years ago when the public servants in the government accommodation area failed to secure the property at 3 Harvest Terrace, which is wedged between other government-owned properties at 1, 5 and 7 Harvest Terrace, when it came up for tender. This would have given the government ownership of a sizable development opportunity of four adjoining lots at a very reasonable cost, allowing for development of its own building, or selling it as a development lot and transferring the money to the parliamentary precinct. Instead, ineptitude soured this opportunity and it was lost. Pretty soon we had the new private owner on our doorstep with a concept plan to develop the property to our specifications and enter into a long-term lease, of course. Although I understand his motives, and it was the best option I had seen in my eight years as President, our preferred option has always been for the government to build our own dedicated ancillary building on the current car park site to provide committee areas, function space, secure parking, which is more than ever required in the modern age, and other staffing areas so all services can be located on the parliamentary precinct.

A comprehensive plan to address this situation was made in 2010. As Presiding Officers, at the time we persuaded the Premier, Hon Colin Barnett, to fund a master plan for about \$100 000 for this area of West Perth. It was logical in other ways as well because Perth had largely been linked to the north by the sinking of the railway line and Yagan Square, opened up to the south and the river by Elizabeth Quay, and linked to the east by apartment buildings, the new stadium and the Burswood complex. That left the untouched divide to the west created by the freeway. Parliament is the people's house and we need to improve the connectivity physically and symbolically between Parliament and the people in the Perth CBD. The master plan of 2010 addressed these issues in an excellent way by proposing a covered area over the freeway between the Hay Street and Malcolm Street Bridges, creating a large people space and providing some commercial opportunities to help fund the venture.

It outlined staged plans for ancillary buildings on the parliamentary precinct and the executive precinct around Dumas House and the old Hale school. The plan also outlined the need for parliamentary precinct legislation. We are one of the very few jurisdictions not to have this in place despite strong advocacy by a succession of Presiding Officers to governments of both persuasions over many years. Regrettably, apart from some adjustments to the executive precinct, as the government had to relocate ministers' offices out of 197 St Georges Terrace when the building was refurbished, the master plan was not acted on or released to the public. Although the master plan will obviously need the figures reworked, it is a very sound document containing an excellent plan to move forward. Therefore, to stimulate discussion and hopefully action, I now table the final draft of the "Parliamentary Precinct Master Plan Report — Document A: Findings and Recommendations", which I was privy to in 2010 as a participant in the working party set up under the Government Architect.

[See paper 208.]

The PRESIDENT: I hope that this provides everyone with enough information to pursue an important and worthy cause. Yes, it will cost money, and we all realise that the financial climate is not good at the moment, but I urge the fortieth Parliament to engage in a sensible, mature and bipartisan debate on this matter to make at least a commitment to address the need in a staged way over the next decade. I wish you luck in that and I hope I live to see it. I am just about as nervous as I was in 1987!

Now it is time for me to look towards the future. I am going to attempt to do this by changing the terminology from "retirement" to "reirement". Community involvement is now well and truly in my blood and make-up, so I intend to remain active in some aspects, but I will step back from a lot of things initially and work out which areas I can and want to stay involved in. I have developed a keen interest in the tourism area, so this may well be an avenue in the years ahead. I also want to retain a bit of time for myself so I hope that I can pursue my love of sport with an occasional game of golf, tennis or maybe bowls, and I have warmed up for that with the last

couple of parliamentary bowls carnivals. I have a nice rural property at Yallingup, which needs a bit of tidying up, so I will get a decent tractor as a big toy to play with for a while before deciding what to do to realise its potential in the long term. But I suspect it is a pretty stupid idea to even contemplate starting farming at the age of 67—we will see.

Hon Mark Lewis interjected.

The PRESIDENT: You are only young!

I have set up my man cave at home with a decent shed and office to operate from. I am a hoarder so I have mountains of accumulated boxes, papers, photos, artwork and bits and pieces from 30 years of electorate office and parliamentary work, so that has to be sorted through first. I have intentions of writing my memoirs for my three grandchildren, if no-one else, and this may evolve into some more detail about my family history and the south west. I hope to have more time to spend with my family; my daughter lives in Melbourne and my son with his young family lives in Sydney, so maybe a bit of travel might be involved as well. I know there will be an adjustment in lifestyle required. I have been a bit of a nomad for 30 years, in a sense, living half a dozen different lives, constantly in a motor car and almost permanently living out of a suitcase. That is the lot of a regional member of Parliament in Western Australia.

Finally—I bet you are glad to hear that—some acknowledgements and thankyou's. It has been an enormous privilege to be a parliamentary representative in this Legislative Council for the last 30 years. I am honoured and humbled that I have had this chance in life and I would do it all again. None of us do it on our own so I want to identify some key people without trying to name everyone. I would like to, but I would be here for a couple of hours and I do not think you particularly want to miss afternoon tea and dinner. Please be assured that I include all when I mention a department, organisation or area that you have been involved in. To all my colleagues and friends, past and present, in the Legislative Council and the wider Parliament, and I count members and staff in that general description, I will recognise a few people. In the current Legislative Council, the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Peter Collier, and the now Leader of the House, Hon Sue Ellery, who is away on ministerial business but who left a very nice note for me today, which I appreciate, and everybody connected with all sides of this Parliament, it has been an enormous privilege to know you.

It has been an enormous privilege to know and work with all of your predecessors and some of your successors as well. In terms of the staffing of Parliament, I thank the departments of this Parliament headed by the Clerk of the Legislative Council, Nigel Pratt; Rob Hunter, the Executive Manager, Parliamentary Services Department; and Kirsten Robinson, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. They are outstanding, professional and capable people who provide great leadership in this Parliament. The cooperation and cohesion between the different parliamentary departments and with other important institutions such as Government House and the Governor have never been better, so I congratulate and thank my Clerk and all the other executives in this building and, by definition, everybody else under those departments who have provided such wonderful support and friendship over 30 years—it is really appreciated.

I turn to my personal staff as the President. I firstly thank Lorraine Coogan, my personal assistant, who is sitting up the back. Lorraine provides a style and class and is, more than anyone, responsible for the high standards that are maintained around this Parliament. Thank you, Lorraine. You have also served three previous Presidents extremely well and you will be retiring yourself in about a month, so I wish you all the very best for the future. Deborah Kapoor, who is also up the back, is ever cheerful and efficient as the President's steward. She has helped me enormously over the years, as she has all Legislative Council members.

There are many other staff members of Parliament House, but I want to isolate one person, and that one person is Simona Milea. Simona, as many of you know, is a librarian in this institution. She has enormous passion and commitment to this institution as a Parliament and she has enormous artistic ability, which is extraordinary. I have been very privileged that Simona has done five paintings for me over recent years of the Parliament, which I have purchased from her, and I have used those for my Christmas cards over the years. They have created a terrific series. You might recall that there was an exhibition for Simona last year. Those paintings make a wonderful collection. I am not sure whether I have the appropriate place for them at the moment, but I intend to talk to the Clerk of the Legislative Council and the Parliamentary Art Advisory Committee about leaving them here on loan for display if that is considered appropriate. I might add that last week Simona presented me with a portrait that blew me away. She is a very kind-hearted and wonderful lady. Thank you, Simona.

In terms of the community, and obviously the Liberal Party in general, none of us, or very few of us, ever get to this institution without the backing of a political party, and the Liberal Party has backed me over many years—sometimes a bit more positively than other times, but we all scrape through!

I already named a heap of organisations earlier and have many friends in all of them. I am proud of all of them and admire their passion, commitment and achievements for their communities. By being associated with them in some way I have also derived huge satisfaction and rewards out of working with everyone. They, more than anybody else, have made the south west what I have titled it—the best corner of the best state of the best country in the world.

My electorate office is the front for us to the community and I have been very fortunate to have had several long-term electorate officers who have served me extremely well and have become great friends as well. I want to particularly name a few. Firstly, Libby Mettam. Is Libby here? I think she was going to try to get here. As members know, Libby is now the member for Vasse. She has developed enormously in capacity over recent years and I am very proud of her. Sylvia Griffin was my first electorate officer and she stayed with me for 18 years. Hartley Joynt is a great friend. My current electorate officers are Robyn McBeath and Erin Davey, who have been a fantastic support. Over time I have had some other electorate officers who have worked for short periods in my office, including Fran Temby at the back, who helped out from time to time; thank you, Fran.

To my family and friends in general, as many mention in their valedictory speeches, this is the area that we all know affects us and them. They are affected the most in this unique and often crazy world that we are operating in. To my immediate family, can I hugely thank Sharyn, Brigitte, Michael, Emily, and my three “grandies”, Eva, Quinn and Wren. There you go, their names are in *Hansard*. I want to publicly thank them and acknowledge their great support. I also have other family here this afternoon. I have my brother, Ray, my cousin Graham and some other friends from Margaret River and elsewhere. I really appreciate you taking the time to be here. There are past colleagues here, Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm, my deputy for four years, and Hon Ray Halligan. They were a great support. Without naming anybody else in particular, because I will forget somebody, I generally want to thank everybody involved in this institution.

Finally, again, we are very lucky to operate under this system of government. My message to all members, staff remaining and the community we represent is continue to work hard and respect the institution and it will continue to serve us well into the future. In conclusion, I will return to my inaugural speech from 1987 when I concluded with these two sentences —

... I would like to mention how humble and honoured I feel at being here to make this speech today. I am looking forward to serving this House and the State for some time to come and aim to earn that honour by being a diligent and effective member.

I still feel the same way about that first sentence today after 30 years. Regarding the second sentence, all we can really hope for is respect and credibility for the way we have operated by having worked with people and achieved good outcomes. I hope I have some of that respect and credibility as the curtain falls on this stage in my life and I go into the next. So, thank you and best wishes to the Legislative Council, the Parliament in general and the south west community I have been so pleased and privileged to work with. Thank you.

[Applause.]
