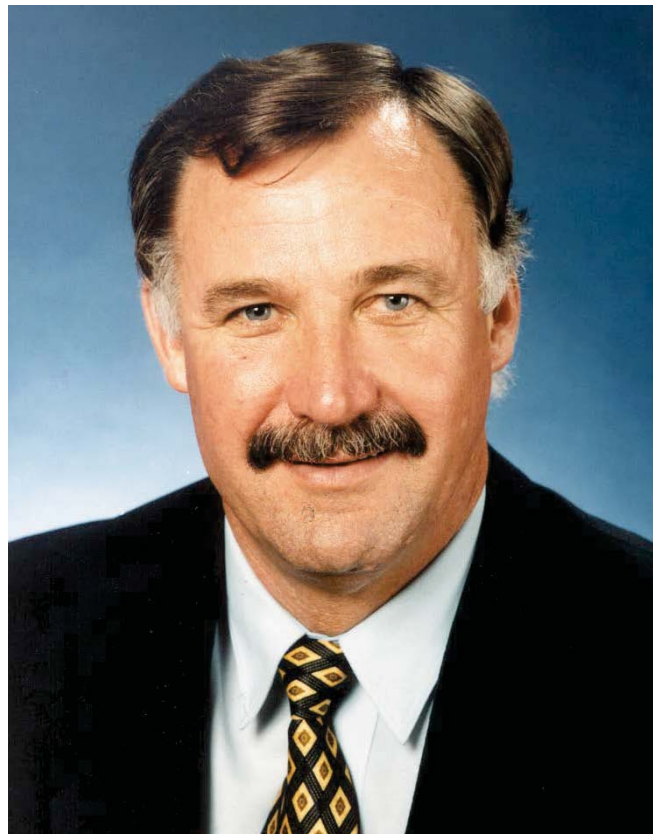




PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HON DEXTER DAVIES, MLC

Condolence Motion



Legislative Council

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Wednesday, 16 May 2018

DEXTER MELVYN DAVIES

Condolence Motion

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [1.02 pm] — without notice: I move —

That this house expresses its deep regret at the death of Hon Dexter Davies, a former member of the Legislative Council for the Agricultural Region, places on record its appreciation for his long public service and tenders its profound sympathy to members of his family in their bereavement.

I did not have the privilege of working with Dexter Davies in Parliament. I was elected in the same election that saw him finish his term as a member; however, like all in this chamber, I am very much aware of the widespread respect and admiration that everyone has for his long service to regional communities and Western Australia more broadly. I will talk a little more about his time in Parliament, but first just some simple biographical information.

Dexter was born on 10 April 1951, and passed away on 17 March 2018 aged 66—just short of his sixty-seventh birthday. This was far too young, and I can only imagine the feelings of loss that Dexter’s family, friends and colleagues, who are here with us today, are feeling. Dexter was born in Kellerberrin and attended Yorkrakine Primary School. He mentioned in his valedictory speech that this was near my colleague, mentor and now late Hon Kim Chance’s old primary school at Doodlakine. Dexter said that his and Kim’s schools would sometimes combine so that they had enough players to form sporting teams to take part in sports carnivals.

Dexter married his wife, Leonie—who I met just today—in January 1972, a few months short of his twenty-first birthday and about a year before he started studying for his degree as an accountant at what was then the Western Australian Institute of Technology; what we now know as Curtin University. He was working on that degree while he was working as a trainee and then assistant accountant. Having been an accountant with Wesfarmers for a number of years, Dexter farmed in Yorkrakine before coming to the Legislative Council. I am sure that many members of this place who we will hear from today—particularly those from the National Party—will give us a greater insight into his life outside Parliament. Dexter Davies was a member of the Legislative Council for a relatively short period of time, but we will hear from members that his parliamentary service was only a small part of his influence on politics, his contribution to the agricultural industry and to the Agricultural Region.

Elected on 11 August 1998 as a result of the resignation of Hon Eric Charlton, who is here with us today, the newspaper reports at the time noted how well respected he was, saying, according to my notes —

Mr Davies is well regarded by both sides of politics, and has been touted as a possible leader of the party when Hendy Cowan retires.

Hendy is here with us today as well. We can understand why he was regarded as possible parliamentary leadership material, having been National Party president between 1990 and 1998, and then again in 1999 and 2000. He also served as the federal National Party vice-president from 1989 to 1998. I understand from former Labor members who were here at the time that Hon Kim Chance was a welcoming presence to Hon Dexter Davies. I gather that there was a strong informal farmers’ fraternity, if I can be impudent enough to call it that, amongst the members in this place at that time, and a key point of connection was Kim and Dexter’s shared history in the Farmers Union of Western Australia, as the Western Australian Farmers Federation was known in those early days. I understand there was a sense of collegiate spirit amongst the farmers in the chamber, regardless of the political side of the fence they sat on. Certainly inside the Labor Party Kim was known as part of the “brown left”, representing the colour of the earth, and good working relationships were formed. Sadly, those two influential former farming members of Parliament are now no longer with us.

Despite his short term as a member of Parliament Hon Dexter Davies worked hard when he was here, having membership on two parliamentary standing committees: the Standing Committee on Public Administration and the Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development. Those committees covered a number of issues of importance to regional Western Australia, including forestry and fisheries issues. As Minister for Education and Training I was especially interested to read about Hon Dexter Davies’ long-time interest in education, from his work on his local P&C associations, including five years as president of the Wyalkatchem District High School P&C, and his work on the state council of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations. He was also on the Moore district education advisory board, and chair of the C.Y. O’Connor TAFE advisory board.

He brought that interest into Parliament, especially when the School Education Bill 1997 came before the Legislative Council. This major bill provided a new legislative and administrative framework for the operation of government schools. Only a few months after he entered Parliament he made a contribution to the debate on that bill, and as all members now know it can take a while to find our feet so contributing to an important bill like that was quite a milestone early on in a parliamentary career. He touched on a number of issues during that speech, including the need to respect and not stifle teachers' professional ability, fines for parents who failed to send their children to school, the conundrum of financially vulnerable parents becoming more so under the weight of fines leading to further non-attendance, and fees paid by parents to schools. On this last issue he talked about the importance of parental involvement in education, and his words are worth quoting. He said —

Of course, there is a degree of involvement at school level, and that participation enhances the level of education that children receive. It is not simply a matter of a person collecting little Johnny from the school and everything else is up to the school. That involvement at the P & C level, the involvement of paying fees and being involved in the education process, is real, and it works.

Hon Dexter Davies' contribution on that important education bill early in his parliamentary career was bookended in November 2000, in the last days of the thirty-fifth Parliament, by a speech he made on a smaller but still important bill—the Medical Amendment Bill 2000. This bill facilitated the registration of overseas-trained doctors to allow them to practice in regional areas in Western Australia, and he once again had wise words to share. He praised the efforts of the WA Centre for Rural and Remote Medicine for its input into the bill but, more generally, he said —

They face an enormous task, and they are trying to satisfy a need that probably can never be satisfied, because our society, with its high standard of living, expects to have the perfect solution to every medical problem. The cost of meeting that expectation is enormous, and in regional areas that expectation is probably as unrealistic as is trying to provide a university education in every country town. However, we need to provide the best that we can, and enormous steps are being taken to achieve that end.

I have not touched on Dexter's career after Parliament, in which he was as active as he had been his whole life in promoting agribusiness and the regions generally. Politically, he continued to be actively engaged and influential.

I have also not touched on his brief career as a player at East Fremantle Football Club, probably because I am a Subiaco supporter. It comprised just three seasons and a handful of games, but he managed to kick a goal or two every season. From all that I have heard, although it was way too short, on the measures we would all want to judge the value of a life: Was he loved and did he love well? Tick. Did he mentor and lead? Tick. Did he treat those around him with respect? Tick. Did he tread lightly on the land and the earth? Tick. Did he appreciate the joy of laughter often? Tick. Were others proud to know him? Tick. Did those who came after him aspire to be like him? Tick. On all these measures, it was a life well lived.

On behalf of the government, I express my sincere condolences to Leonie, Mia, Emma and their families, the broader National Party family and all of your friends for your very sad loss.

HON JACQUI BOYDELL (Mining and Pastoral — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA) [1.12 pm]: It is a great privilege for the house to bestow a condolence motion on a former member and it is fantastic for me to be able to be here today and contribute to this motion.

It is a great privilege to stand here today and honour a great man—a great friend of the National Party and a great friend of many members here today. He lived life to the fullest and gave so much to his family, the National Party, his friends, colleagues and regional Western Australia. I attended the funeral of the late Dexter Davies on Friday, 23 March at Karrakatta, which was attended by over 1 000 people. There is no question that Dexter was adored and admired by many people, but none more so than his wife of 46 years, Leonie; his daughters, Mia and Emma; his son-in-law, Nick; and his grandchildren, Harry and Ella. I also acknowledge in the President's gallery today other family members, close friends of the family, and ex-members of Parliament, including former Deputy Premier Hendy Cowan, Eric and Evette Charlton, Ross Ainsworth, Murray Criddle and "Tuck" Waldron.

Dexter was born in Kellerberrin on 10 April 1951 and he was the third of six sons born to Lloyd and Iris Davies, who lived in Yorkrakine on the family farm, Cardiff Pastoral Company. Although Dexter lived just 66 years, he made those 66 years count. In reflecting on the words of Michael Josephson's *What Will Matter*, which former member Hon Eric Charlton delivered at Dexter's funeral, we can say with much conviction that Dexter made a choice to live a life that truly mattered and live a life in which he would make a difference to those around him. I want to take the opportunity to read a key verse of Michael Josephson's poem. I think it captures how Dexter approached his life. It reads —

So what will matter? How will the value of your days be measured?

What will matter is not what you bought, but what you built; not what you got, but what you gave.

What will matter is not your success, but your significance.

What will matter is not what you learned, but what you taught.

What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage or sacrifice that enriched, empowered or encouraged others to emulate your example.

What will matter is not your competence, but your character.
 What will matter is not how many people you knew, but how many will feel a lasting loss when you're gone.
 What will matter is not your memories, but the memories that live in those who loved you.
 What will matter is how long you will be remembered, by whom and for what.
 Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.
 It's not a matter of circumstance but of choice.
 Choose to live a life that matters.

Dexter lived a life that mattered. He was such a positive and dynamic individual who left no stone unturned. He was a family man, first and foremost. He was passionate about cricket and football and was a champion of both sports. He played 14 games for East Fremantle in the West Australian Football League in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He also played cricket at the same time and was a member of the West Yorkrakin Cricket Club between 1963–64 and 1999–2000, which is a long cricket career. During that time, he scored over 5 700 runs and took more than 300 wickets in 270 games. He was a three-time premiership player and served as the club's president from 1987 to 1992. He was a life member of the Claremont–Nedlands Cricket Club and held the role of president of that club for some 10 years between 2002 and 2013. Dexter was also selected for the WA Country 11.

His other great loves were the National Party, agriculture and being a champion of the bush. Dexter joined the National Party in 1979 and, from then on, it is fair to say that he lived and breathed the National Party. He served as Nationals WA party president for 10 years, as well as the federal vice-president for 12 years, including most recently from 2015. He also played an active role in mentoring the Young Nationals and in the professional development of its members. As party president in the 1990s, he was instrumental in the creation of the new Nationals. At the 1997 state conference, he said that the party needed to “provide dynamic, comprehensive representation of regional Western Australia”, which is a sentiment that members continue to hold today. Dexter was president of the Nationals until 1998 when he was elected to the thirty-fifth Parliament as a member for the Agricultural Region following the resignation of Hon Eric Charlton.

Given his passion for the bush, it was not surprising that the following sentiments featured in his first speech and Address-in-Reply on 13 August 1997. I know that other members will touch on this in their contributions today but an evident theme within his inaugural speech was that we need to engage with the people of regional Western Australia. I quote one comment —

The great qualities of innovation, adventure and pioneering spirit are in the blood and bones of the people of regional communities.

Quite simply, members, his view was that we need to talk to people in regional communities and engage them in policy discussions, not dictate policy to them.

I make reference to one of the comments he made in his valedictory speech on 3 May 2001. To me, this is really quintessential Dexter. From my engagement with him, it is such a Dexter comment and it reminds many times not to waste my energy looking back but to continue to look forward. It reads —

... it does not matter how clever any of us think we are, there is not a lot we can do about what happened yesterday, but if we contribute in some small way towards improving something that is going to happen tomorrow, everything has been worthwhile.

I carry that with me, members, in times of hardship; we all deal with those times throughout our careers. It is something that Dexter continues to tell me as I try to deal with what we try to contribute as members. This was indeed how he approached every aspect of his life—his was a vision of making lives better, easier and richer, and that is why Dexter was so generous with his time. He was generous with the National Party, members, colleagues, communities and regional Western Australia as a whole.

Dexter lost his seat following the Gallop government victory in 2001 but he continued to embed himself in the political space, a space in which he thought he could make a difference. During the most recent Liberal–National government, Dexter served as a principal policy adviser for five years across portfolio areas of regional development, lands and agriculture and food and water working alongside Hon Terry Redman. It was in this capacity that he was able to deal with some of the challenges that face regional Western Australia and develop innovative policy. Dexter was indeed instrumental in the development of Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture policy as well as the Water for Food program. Throughout his career Dexter found time to contribute so generously to a range of boards, committees and regional interest groups. I will list them because the number is quite staggering. He was member of the Western Australian Farmers Federation; a member of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council; councillor of the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia; director of the Rural Business Development Corporation; chairman of the AgriFood Skills Australia and the seafood industry standing committee; chairman of the Aquaculture Council of Western Australia; chairman of the ministerial Dry Seasons Advisory Committee WA; chairman of the Aquaculture Development Review 2003; and ministerially appointed to the primary industry seasonal advisory committee between June 2001–08 and expert

based committee for mackerel fishery between June 2001–02. He was a councillor of the Western Australian Council of Social Service; president of the Wyalkatchem District High School P&C; a former member of the Moore district education advisory board; a former chairman of C.Y. O'Connor College of TAFE Advisory Board; a former chairman of the *Wyalkatchem Weekly*; a member of the Claremont–Cottesloe Cricket Club committee; secretary of the Wyalkatchem Cricket Association; president of the Wyalkatchem Football Club; president of the Claremont–Nedlands Cricket Club; a member of the Western Australian Cricket Association; and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Dexter, if I missed anything, I apologise! The extent of his membership is a real testament to the man Dexter was, what he considered important and his passion for regional Western Australia. Dexter left an indelible mark on the political landscape and his legacy in making regional Western Australia a better place to live will be everlasting. Dexter's ability to connect with people from all walks of life was one of his amazing qualities and one of the reasons that those who met him spoke fondly of him.

I will now present a couple of personal reflections about Dexter's life from people who had a relationship with him. The first is from former Member for Agricultural Region and friend, Hon Eric Charlton, and the other is by his friend and colleague—and, indeed, sporting nemesis—former Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon "Tuck" Waldron, the former member for Wagin. These reflections capture segments of Dexter's life. The first is from Eric Charlton, a former member for Agricultural Region, who, of course, Dexter replaced upon his resignation. According to my notes, it reads —

His service to the people of Western Australia had started a long time prior to entering Parliament and continued following the end of his term in Parliament. Dexter Davies was passionate about every aspect of life and his commitment to the community was unparalleled. Dexter always had time to listen to the views of others and pursue an issue with a genuine and caring response. His interests in politics came as consequence of all those qualities and it demonstrate this throughout his whole life. Being a member of the National Party is not a walk in the park. For more than 100 years, the party has attempted to be the voice for the minority of people living and working in regionals Western Australia. Dexter Davies was a great example of this from the time he first became involved in the early 1980s walking the streets of Wyalkatchem doorknocking, travelling all over the state to support other members and then becoming State President, a position he held for 10 years. During this time the National Party enjoyed one of those rewarding periods in government with a whole range of benefits being experienced through country WA. It is also to Dexter's great credit that following his time in Parliament that ended in 2001, rather than seek the opportunity to represent the Nationals in the seat of Merredin he supported the endorsement of Brendon Grylls. His support for Brendon is a testament to Dexter's team approach and unerring commitment. It is through this quality we have witnessed the election of Dexter's daughter Mia Davies to the Parliament of the Western Australia.

In all his life, Dexter's wife Leonie has been a great example of the power of two people joining together for the good of all. As a family unit together with Mia and Emma so much has been accomplished.

Dexter Davies leaves us with a wealth of memories and gratitude for a life of giving to the people of Western Australia.

I thank Hon Eric Charlton for that contribution. I will move on to some reflections from the former member for Wagin, Hon "Tuck" Waldron. According to my notes, his contribution reads —

Dexter or "little Tacka" as he was known at Wesley. I first met Dexter playing footy and cricket against each other. Dexter at Wesley and I at Hale. We had some great on-field battles and formed an ongoing friendship based on respect for each other, our political interests and backgrounds. I remember Dex getting me out, caught and bowled in a Darlot Cup medal and he never let me forget it! He used to say to me, "I did you with the slower ball Tuckster" he would often say. I have vivid memories of Dexter dominating sprint running at the PSA athletics. He was an absolute champion, a strong, muscular and extremely fast athlete who I and so many others were in awe of.

Dexter and I played WAFL football against each other. Dex at East Fremantle and I at Claremont and we played six seasons of 'A' grade cricket together at Claremont Cottesloe where our friendship grew and was cemented. We shared holidays together with our families at Rottnest on a number of occasions and socialised together from then on. We also played WA country 11 cricket together and it was Dexter who encouraged, urged and counselled me to go into politics. He was a fantastic mentor to me throughout my political career and I turned to Dexter for advice on many occasions during those years. We shared so many great times, great fun times, he was a fun time bloke, which I will never forget.

Dexter was a special man, a gregarious big fella who was so good with people and was universally liked because he was a great bloke who gave of himself. His contribution to sport, politics, country WA and indeed rural Australia has been immense. I know he has personally helped and mentored so many. From the moment we first holidayed together at Rottnest with our kids, it was plain to see the love and dedication Dexter has for his family and this continued throughout his illustrious life.

He was indeed a wonderful family man. I know how proud he was of his wife, Leonie; his two beautiful daughters, Mia and Emma; his son-in-law, Nick; and of course his treasured grandchildren, Harry and Ella.

Two great memories I have of Dexter are, firstly, his great ability in his younger days to open his gullet and literally pour a jug of beer straight down in two seconds flat. That won many a bet. Secondly, when playing against Dexter in a Country Week football carnival final at Subiaco Oval, we, Central Great Southern, were four goals up at three-quarter time versus Dexter's team, Mortlock. In the final quarter, Dexter played one of the greatest quarters of football one would ever want to see, single-handedly inspiring his team to overrun us and take out the title. It was an awesome effort that is still embedded in my memory. I, along with so many, will really miss Dexter, who was a special person who made this world a far better place. My sincere sympathies to all his family and friends. Rest in peace, mate.

I also had the privilege of listening to the eulogy at the funeral of Dexter Davies. I want to share some of that eulogy, which was delivered by his daughters, Mia and Emma. It was beautifully done, and a beautiful reflection of his life and their memories of him. I have taken some extracts from that eulogy, which I will share with members. It states —

We want to thank everyone that has supported our family over the past six months since his diagnosis. We've felt supported and loved, and Dad appreciated all the visits and calls to keep his spirits in good check.

A very special thanks to the medical staff at Mount Hospital, especially Dr Wei-sen Lam, Dr Pritchard and the Oncology Unit staff who were so wonderful to both Mum and Dad during his treatment, and for making his last days as comfortable as possible. They do amazing work in the most difficult circumstances—no words can express our gratitude.

He was surrounded by those he loved—making it known to us that when the time came he wanted to know we would all be together to comfort and support each other.

And that was Dexter.

He had an enormously strong sense of family, of being the protector, the mentor, and the coach. He was a 'fixer'—everything had a solution if you were prepared to be patient, persistent, and apply yourself.

His outward appearance and physical strength were matched by a moral compass that did not waver and a sense of integrity that was not dependent on the outside world for assurance or validation.

Every decision made, every problem to be solved, every piece of advice offered was anchored to this set of values and the filter applied was always 'what is the right thing to do', even if it was the hardest pathway to navigate.

...

The twenty years back on the farm in Wylie with his brothers and father building Cardiff Pastoral Company into a successful and thriving business was yet another chapter in life.

They had some extremely tough years, but he threw himself into it and embraced being part of the Wylie community.

This was a time of country week sport, of Wyalkatchem Association Cricket, of West Yorkie Cricket Club, of the Wylie Bulldogs.

John McCormack tells me the Wyalkatchem Association cricket team between the years of '79 and '86 was one of the most memorable and enjoyable sporting teams he played in.

Dexter was clearly the most dominant personality but he never used that presence to be anything but one of the team.

As his captain for some of that time, he felt Dexter's greatest contribution was the enthusiasm he brought to every game. No matter what the state of play his attitude would not change.

He reckons that if you google enthusiasm, Dexter Davies should appear on the screen.

Amongst the sport and socialising it was a time of extraordinary hard work.

And then we —

His children, Mia and Emma —

arrived. Mia first, and me two years later in a rush. Such a rush, Dad had to deliver me.

Despite everything else he did Dad always made time for us—even if it meant a trip down and back to Perth in a day when we were at boarding school.

He was firm, fair, supportive, made sure we were respectful of others and instilled in us that anything less than our best effort was to let ourselves down.

Dad did try to make sportsmen of us both—unfortunately to no avail. This involved making us shoot hundreds of practice goals for netball and drilling us for athletics by running up the shearing shed track ... both of us have the words ‘knees up knees up knees up’ indelibly imprinted in our brain.

His expectation was that we achieve our absolute best at all times, regardless of what the task was or whether we were good at it. The bar was set high, but this work ethic and encouragement meant we believed that we could become anything we wanted.

...

Sometime in the mid-80’s our neighbour Eric Charlton asked Dad to join him at a branch meeting of the National Party in Dowerin.

With assurances from Eric ... ‘just come along and see what it’s like, you won’t have to do anything’ Dad returned home as a delegate to State Council.

This was the beginning of a lifelong commitment to rural politics.

Dexter believed rural and regional Australia deserved and required specialist representation and his commitment to that through The Nationals at a State and Federal level endured from this meeting in Dowerin right ‘til the end.

Even in the week before he passed away—in the midnight hours he couldn’t sleep in hospital—we were solving the problems of the world.

He remained committed and active in the organisation even after personal disappointments of unsuccessfully running for pre-selection twice and as a candidate before becoming the Member for the Agricultural Region on Eric’s retirement. He applied the same persistence and commitment he did to his sporting career to this pursuit and when he could have easily walked away, just kept going.

Perhaps most gutting was the moment the Coalition lost Government in 2001, just two and a half years after he stepped into his dream role as the Member for Agricultural Region, and shortly after he’d left the farm.

Now suddenly without a job—a job he’d loved—he set about finding other ways to continue supporting the sectors and causes he loved.

He was of the view the Party owed us nothing as individuals—that it is our privilege to serve in whatever capacity we can.

He was the ultimate team man, in politics, sport, family and life.

Having started out doorknocking for Eric Charlton with Clifford Nock under the guidance of Ernie Strahn in 1984, he became more and more involved, ultimately becoming the State President for 10 years from 1989, and then Federal Vice-President from 2015.

He was an astute strategist, a person who loved the regions and the people in them and it was his joy to connect, mentor, inspire and guide those that shared that passion.

It was a mark of his character that despite having been instrumental in negotiating a traditional Coalition agreement for the Court–Cowan Government in 1993, when Brendon and our team said ‘independent, going it alone, no Coalition’ in 2008 he was one of the first to embrace this strategy, and Royalties for Regions, throwing himself into the task of getting us back into Government by supporting our new Leader and team.

Dexter was bestowed with his Life Membership to The Nationals WA in Merredin in 2006.

He accepted the honour looking like he’d gone a few rounds with Danny Green having been led astray by his partner in crime Doug Cunningham the night before. On their way back to the salubrious Olympic Motel, crossing the railway lines and Great Eastern Highway, Dexter disappeared into a ditch. But not even that could wipe the smile off his face that day—he was so very proud to join the few that have received that honour in our Party’s 100-year history.

Words cannot describe how proud I was to work alongside my Dad doing what we love. And while politics was banned at the kitchen table in our family—there had to be some relief from the dissection of the day’s events—Mum and Emma were unfaltering in their support for us both.

...

Even though he was only with us for 66 short years, he packed more into his life than most.

...

Dexter’s life and the legacy he leaves will be something different for everyone—but for us, he was our Dad and he is an irreplaceable part of our lives.

That eulogy was delivered very beautifully by Dexter's daughters on the day of his funeral.

Dexter is probably the reason that I found myself becoming a member of the National Party. I first met Dexter in 1997. At that time, I was a new mum and I had absolutely no time for all of the discussion and carry-on that they were carrying on with. It was at a meeting at my house with Hedy Cowan, Eric Charlton, Dudley Maslen, Dexter Davies and my mother, who actually ran for the Nationals during that time. I did not know then that later in my life I would come across Dexter and that he would play such an important role in my career within the National Party. He is one of the reasons that I am determined to be here today. I first met him a very long time ago. He played a major part—and still continues to—in my development and ongoing work as member for the Mining and Pastoral Region. It was through that involvement with my family, Eric Charlton and Dexter that I find myself here today. My contact and my commitment to the National Party was sparked at that time. It was fostered and mentored by Dexter over a long period of time.

When I found out that Dexter had been awarded a life membership in 2006 and that the night before he had fallen into a ditch whilst crossing Great Eastern Highway and rail lines in Merredin, I was exceptionally impressed. I can picture Dexter in full flight, in full animation, talking about the issues of the day. The only other person in my life I know who has done that, on two occasions, is my mother. It is a great skill to achieve, being able to walk and chew gum at the same time, but occasionally you find yourself in a ditch. One of the great things about Dexter is that you could always have a laugh with him. He never took himself too seriously but he was always a steadying hand, a guiding figure and someone who, as Tuck reflected, many of us in the National Party, over our careers, went to for advice, guidance and involvement to work out how we could be better members of Parliament.

I will share one other story with members. I have replayed this story to myself many times, which I am sure Dexter would be happy about. During the 2017 election campaign, we had a very animated campaign meeting and things were not quite going the way that I had determined they should be going. As things do in the height of a campaign, things became quite heated very quickly. Dexter called me after that meeting and said, "You know, Jacqui, one of the best things that people like you and I can do in moments like that is to just shut up." I thought to myself: that is exactly right; that is exactly what I should do. In moments when I am feeling that frustration, I replay that message to myself in my head and say, "That's exactly right; that is what I need to do", and I just let it happen. I thank Dexter for that. I have thanked him for that on many occasions. A few people have said to me that he was a bit brave to say that to me at the time, but he was exactly right, because Dexter was a very genuine person and he was committed to ensuring that the right outcome was ultimately delivered, and you could have those conversations with him. People come along in your life, particularly in the job that we do, members, and so you value that. I remember that time when I am feeling that level of heightened anxiety, as we do too often.

I am very, very happy and grateful that Dexter's family could join us today in thanking Dexter for the commitment that he had to the public of Western Australia and to regional Western Australia in particular. It was his great passion and his great love. Right to the very end, he was always on the phone so that you could have that conversation with him. I was always very pleased to accept advice and we had many animated conversations about what we thought was the right way forward. Dexter was an outstanding member for the Agricultural Region. He was a hardworking, committed member of the National Party. We will miss him, but we will not forget him. My personal recognition of a life well lived. Thank you, Dexter. May he rest in peace.

Members: Hear, hear!

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [1.45 pm]: I stand on behalf of the Liberal Party to support the condolence motion for Dexter Davies. Although Dexter Davies had a relatively short career as a member of this house, he played a decisive and consistent role in political and business life for some 30 years, not least as state president of the National Party throughout the 1990s.

Dexter Melvyn Davies was born to a pioneer farming family in Kellerberrin in April 1951 and attended Yorkrakine Primary School before completing his secondary education at Wesley College. Between 1970 and 1977 he worked as an accountant at Kleenheat Gas and later with Wesfarmers Europe, and graduated with a Bachelor of Business from the Western Australian Institute of Technology in 1976. He returned to farming at Yorkrakine in 1978 and for the next 20 years was a director of a family farming partnership. He became senior vice-president of the Mortlock zone of the Western Australian Farmers Federation and a general executive member in 1997.

It is an understatement to say that Dexter Davies was a keen sportsman. He was the state schoolboys athletics champion in 1968. On three occasions, he was cricketer of the year in the Claremont–Cottesloe Cricket Club and he played in the Western Australian Country XI. For 10 years, he was secretary of the Wyalkatchem Cricket Association and later served as president of the Claremont–Nedlands Cricket Club from 2002 to 2013. He played 14 league football games with East Fremantle from 1969 to 1972, he was vice-captain of the state amateur team and was captain, president, and fairest and best player at the Wyalkatchem Football Club.

Dexter Davies joined the Wyalkatchem branch of the National Party in 1979 and was a member of the Merredin district council from 1986. In 1987, he became state councillor of the reunified National Party. He was elected state vice-president in 1988 and served as state president from 1990 to 2000, with a year's break in 1998 to 1999. From 1989 to 1998, he was also vice-president of the federal National Party. During his term as state president, he played a vital role in the formation of an unprecedented coalition agreement between the National Party and the Liberal Party in 1992, paving the way to election wins in 1993 and 1996.

At the 1989 election, he was endorsed for the third position on the National Party ticket for the inaugural election for the Agricultural Region of the Legislative Council. Dexter Davies contested the seat of Moore at the 1993 election against a popular incumbent, the late Bill McNee, falling short by 1 329 votes and finishing with 44.2 per cent of the total vote.

He was a principal negotiator in deciding the one-off electoral agreement between the National and Liberal Parties prior to the 1996 state election to not contest incumbent seats in the Legislative Assembly and to run joint tickets in the South West and Agricultural Regions of the Legislative Council. Dexter Davies again contested the Agricultural Region in the third Nationals spot and overall sixth position on the combined ticket. When Hon Eric Charlton resigned from the ministry and from Parliament in July 1998, Dexter Davies was elected to his seat on 10 August after a recount of votes. In his inaugural speech three days later, he expressed his concern at what he termed the rise of isolationist politics and called for greater decentralisation in government, notably in regard to taxation, from which the federal government raised 77 per cent of all revenue. He called for a share of revenue to be granted to the states. He argued that the electoral system should recognise the needs and geographic realities of country voters.

At the 2001 elections, with a major swing against both the Liberal and National Parties, Dexter Davies was unable to secure re-election from the second place on the Nationals' ticket for the Agricultural Region. In his valedictory speech on 3 May 2001, he reflected on his goal of delivering services to the regions and his satisfaction in having helped bring community banking to Western Australia. He stated —

One of my favourite sayings is that it does not matter how clever any of us think we are, there is not a lot we can do about what happened yesterday, but if we contribute in some small way towards improving something that is going to happen tomorrow, everything has been worthwhile. I have done this, in my own way, through the National Party and in public life, and finally being involved in this Chamber. The processes I have been involved with on the committees, and the people I have dealt with on those committees, provide a way of concentrating on problems, and focusing energies on solving them. I found that most rewarding.

After leaving Parliament, Dexter Davies had an active career as a consultant in the rural and fishing industries. He was CEO of the Wheatbelt Growers' Cooperative Ltd, chairman of the Aquaculture Development Council of WA, a consultant to James Point Pty Ltd in 2001–02, and a director of the Rural Business Development Corporation board. He was a board member of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council Inc, executive officer of the Western Rock Lobster Council, and chair of Agrifood Skills Australia's Seafood Standing Committee. As chair of the WA Dry Seasons Advisory Committee from 2001 to 2011, he advised federal agriculture ministers on the provision of financial and social support for farming communities. In the wider community, he chaired the Wyalkatchem Weekly and the advisory board of the C.Y. O'Connor College of TAFE, and had served on the Moore District Education Advisory Board. Most fittingly, he became a life member of the Nationals WA, and served as ministerial adviser and chief of staff when the Nationals returned to government in 2008.

Dexter Davies was a mentor to other younger members of his party and was justifiably proud when, in 2008, his daughter Mia followed him as a Nationals member for the Agricultural Region, later serving as a minister after 2013 and becoming leader of the Nationals last year. Dexter Davies' term in this chamber was only one part of his deep service to Western Australian political, rural and community life. His own life has been cut far too short and his loss has been felt deeply, particularly by his family and friends. We express our sympathy to Mrs Leonie Davies; to our valued colleague and friend Mia Davies; her sister, Emma; Emma's partner, Nick; and their children, Harry and Ella.

HON COLIN HOLT (South West) [1.52 pm]: I will give this the best crack I can. I remember delivering the eulogy when my father died. I had to put a little electronic fart machine up on the desk because he thought it was the funniest thing ever. I put it there to make myself relax. I think I need that now to distract me a little from what I want to say!

Can I first welcome Dexter Davies' family, friends and colleagues to this occasion in this house. When someone says "stalwart", I would say that every member would picture someone in their mind who is a stalwart of their party, organisation, sporting club or whatever it might be. I am sure that members have someone in mind when they hear the word "stalwart". I would say that every Western Australian National Party member, past and present, would think of Dexter when they hear "stalwart". Not only that, I would say that a fair few eastern states Nationals would think of Dexter as soon as they heard the words "party stalwart".

Dexter was a life member of the National Party, forged over many, many years of service. He served as state president for 10 years and federal vice-president for 12 years over two stints. He was a Western Australian MP in this house from 1998 to 2001. Dexter lost his seat in what was really, in National Party folklore, the One Nation election—when One Nation rose in the wheatbelt to knock off many National Party members. However, those One Nation members lasted only a year in their party—they all became Independents within one year. I know that Dexter would often reflect on the fickle nature of voters and electors, especially in the wheatbelt.

Dexter was state president for 10 years and really led the party through tumultuous times. I also was a party president for a number of years and I can tell members that when following in the footsteps of Dexter Davies, they were very big shoes to fill. He had big feet to fill those big shoes. In fact he had big shoes, big hands, big shoulders, a big smile and a big heart. There are two types of past presidents. Dexter was the kind who let any new leader or new president do their job, but he was always there to help when called upon. He never judged the new leaders or the new people who came into the party; he always stood there ready to give assistance when needed. The National Party, as in any party I would suspect, needed him often. I remember calling upon him and other life members to sort out some of our rubbish because I was not capable of doing it. People like Dexter could be called upon because they are really the custodians of the party. They are life members and custodians of the party who help to solve problems and provide leadership when it is needed most.

I have been associated with the Nationals since 2005 and Dexter has always been there. I would say that in every critical decision made by the party, Dexter was involved. The party knew it could call upon him and rely upon him. He had the history and the best endeavours of the party but, more importantly, the best endeavours of community and country people at heart. At one stage he had the official title of party trustee. The National Party had a bit of a quirk in its constitution that meant it needed some trustees. No-one could have thought of a better person to bestow that title on. We knew Dexter was the custodian because he wanted to ensure our great party, which was even his great party really, continued to grow and prosper over its now 105-year history. Dexter was really much more than a stalwart or a life member; he was actually a part of the fabric of the Nationals. In fact, I would say that he was the master weaver of that fabric. He was the guy who stitched it all together over many years. In all the years that I have been involved, Dexter was the guy who stitched the fabric together. If members look up “weaver” in a dictionary, it refers to the weaving of threads, but I think it also says the weaving of yarns. Dexter was not just a master weaver, he was a master yarner! I am sure that everyone would agree. Whoever met Dexter would agree with that. He was the architect of our party in modern times. As I said, he was always there for the critical decisions. He provided guidance when called upon and played his role when it was needed.

Can I just say to Dexter’s family and friends that we are all going to miss him. He was a great man who has left an impression on the National Party forever. Vale Dexter Davies—life member, master weaver, master yarner, icon and stalwart.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [1.58 pm]: I, too, rise to support the motion before the house and add some personal reflections on the passing of Dexter Davies—a former member of this place but, more importantly, someone whom I counted as a personal friend. Born 10 April 1951 in Kellerberrin, Western Australia—which at that time had a population of about 2 300 people—Dexter was blessed with an amazingly devoted family in wife, Leonie, and in daughters, Mia and Emma. I welcome and acknowledge the presence of Dexter’s extended family in the galleries today. Dexter’s heart was always in the central wheatbelt and, indeed, in regional Western Australia—demonstrated no better than in the strong advocacy and representation that he gave it throughout his career, throughout his public service and throughout his life. Dexter was a farmer and a consultant before he entered the world of politics. He was also an avid sportsman, a fact that has already been well detailed in previous contributions. I recall travelling with Mia whilst she was Minister for Sport and Recreation and she would often tell people how much she loved sport but how she had failed to benefit from any of the sporting prowess that her father had demonstrated throughout his life! In his early years, he pursued a career in accounting, followed by a brief stint working for Wesfarmers, before he returned to the family farming partnership in the late 1970s. Throughout the 1990s, Dexter worked with many organisations, including the Wheatbelt Growers’ Cooperative Ltd, the Rural Business Development Corporation and the Western Rock Lobster Council to name just a few. He was well known to the Western Australian seafood industry from his time as chairman of the Aquaculture Development Council in the early 2000s, which played a vital role in providing the government with advice on the development and management of the aquaculture industry. He also assisted the industry through his role on the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council board from 2007 to 2010 and as chief executive of the Western Rock Lobster Council, especially during the times of fishing restrictions in the late 2000s. Past Pearl Producers Association CEO, Brett McCallum, who worked with Dexter throughout his career, said that he was a larger than life character, always ready with a beaming smile and a helping hand. He said he was never happier than when empowering people, whether it be his constituents in his electorate or a fisherman in a small port along the coast. He described him as a passionate Dockers supporter who would always stop by first thing on Monday morning to regale in Freo’s success or carefully analyse the reasons for their failure, but never talk any players down. Mr McCallum noted that Dexter was very proud of the success of the Nationals in

2008 and was one of the masterminds behind royalties for regions and said he was never prouder than when his daughter Mia was elected Leader of the WA National Party. Dexter was known for his involvement in sport, agriculture, politics and many organisations and committees over his years, but was also well known for his insight, integrity and passion for regional Western Australia. Western Australia has lost a great rural advocate with his passing.

Dexter's involvement in politics was lengthy. He was first elected on 11 August 1998 to represent the Agricultural Region in this place following the resignation of Hon Eric Charlton. His electorate covered the Avon, Geraldton, Greenough, Merredin, Moore, Roe and Wagin districts, an area that at the time was some 263 000 square kilometres. In his inaugural speech, Dexter spoke about fairness and equity for regional communities, to which he argued WA needed to pay attention to move the country forward. He said —

As it stands, regional communities face a number of significant social and economic challenges. These include —

- unacceptably high unemployment levels;
- a perceived decline in the provision of government social services;
- disenchantment with future economic prospects among the silent majority; and
- the alienation of young people and regional people from the political process.

He went on to say —

One of my ambitions in this Parliament will be to ensure that Western Australia's regional communities are heard and are more than adequately represented by ensuring that the system of weighted voting remains the right of regional people.

During his time, Dexter saw the highs and lows of politics and, indeed, agriculture. He was a member of multiple farming-related boards such as the WA Dry Seasons Advisory Committee from 2001 to 2008, which provided high-level advice to the agriculture minister on the provision of financial and social services support to farming communities under pressure. Through the early 2000s, Dexter was witness to seriously dry conditions for growers, especially those with livestock. Through his work as the Dry Seasons Advisory Committee chairman and Rural Business Development Corporation chairman, he worked with growers, producers and government in the development of their response. During his time in government he fought for rural and regional WA, ensuring that regional communities had equal opportunities, including health care, police, services, jobs, and community development. He called for —

... a renewed vision for the future development of the country and the role of regional communities in making that vision real. We need a new commitment for the representation that puts in place the social and industry framework that will enable people to achieve their aspirations for themselves and for their children. How long is it since each of us has devised a new plan about what we can do to help regional communities to thrive and prosper? How long is it since we worked hard to ensure that government resources and regulations are used to help people, not hinder them; that our children can get the best education in the local town; that there will be a choice of local jobs; and that there will be a doctor and local hospital; in other words, to create opportunity, not limit it, in this world of change?

He also spoke of the importance of a responsive system of Parliament and a government that listens to regional communities, works with them to create local opportunities, works with them so they achieve their aspirations, works with them to solve local problems, works with them to make sure their interests are represented in a robust and forthright way and works with them to ensure that decisions that are made here benefit or affect all people fairly and equally, irrespective of where they live.

Dexter was a member of the Standing Committee on Public Administration and the Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development. Dexter was defeated on 10 February 2001 and was expected to contest the seat of Merredin in the 2001 by-election following the resignation of Nationals MP and former leader Hon Henty Cowan. He selflessly stepped aside as a preselection candidate for the seat of Merredin back in 2001 to make way for the next generation of the party in Brendon Grylls. That is something that I was not aware of until recently, but it comes as no surprise as Dexter's sole purpose was the party interest, not self-interest—something that he instilled in many of us.

Dexter was an ambassador for regional WA and was a true supporter of regional development. *Farm Weekly* described the former Wyalkatchem farmer as a giant of Western Australian politics and of the National Party at state and federal levels, having held several positions since signing up for the party in 1979. A life member of the Nationals WA, Mr Davies was state president from 1990 to 1998 and again between 1999 and 2000. During his time as state president he was heavily involved in the branches and the membership. Until his passing he held the position of federal vice president of the Nationals. If it was not for the intervention of public service, with Dexter serving a minister in the former Liberal–National state government, I have no doubt he would have gone on to serve as a federal president, such is the high regard he was held in across the party nationally. Dexter was a life

member of our party, a mentor, a friend, a strategist, a campaigner and a volunteer. Whatever the party needed of Dexter he gave, sometimes to the detriment of himself and his family. WA farmers described him as always sympathetic, frank and an open participant in agriculture and rural dialogue, as well as an extremely passionate man who was a strong advocate across all rural industries.

Dexter and I had the opportunity to spend countless hours together, first in an aeroplane as we travelled from Perth to Adelaide, and then in a small hire car by road to Broken Hill in May of last year to attend the NSW Nationals state conference. I have many good memories of those few days with Dexter, often in close confines, and some that I would sooner not recall, such as stopping in Yunta so Dexter could partake in the consumption of the Yunta burger at the Caltex roadhouse en route to the New South Wales border, or the last few kilometres as we rolled into Broken Hill listening to the Proclaimers as loudly as the radio of our hire car would provide! I think we have that bit on video for those who may like to review our vocal talents or deficiencies. They were good times and there were countless other stories that I could recount from over the years. One such occasion occurred shortly after I joined the party. I had attended what was, if I recall correctly, my first party conference in Merredin. Returning from the conference dinner that night, at which Dexter had received his life membership, a small group of us including Dexter, Mia, Brendon Grylls and Doug Cunningham—I thought Hon Colin Holt was there, but he denies any involvement!—were returning to our accommodation on foot across the railway tracks. I remember Dexter was a few paces behind us chatting to Doug before disappearing in a trench, rudely interrupting what I am sure one was any number of great stories that he could offer from his many and varied experiences, typically enhanced with the addition of red wine and other performance-enhancing liquids!

Despite Dexter's sudden and unexpected illness, he remained positive and in good spirits. I would often receive text messages to let me know the progress he had made or how he was responding to treatment, and they were always positive. It was not in Dexter's DNA to do it any differently. Dexter was a well-respected man. He will be remembered as a man of great honour and dedication, and a true champion of the National Party in regional Western Australia. Above all else, he was my friend. I will miss his friendship and his counsel, as I know many will do. It is an absolute honour to contribute today in recognising the life of Dexter Davies. He may not have retained the honorific applicable to former members of this chamber due to his relatively short length of service, but you will find no man more honourable than him. May he rest in peace.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural) [2.11 pm]: I rise in support of this motion acknowledging the untimely passing of Dexter Davies. I begin by acknowledging his family, friends, colleagues, former members and guests who are here today. I think it speaks volumes of the man to see so many people here, but also the diversity of the people we see here, from those younger people in the gallery to members of Parliament and others. That is testament to the reach of Dexter and the influence he has had over so many people.

Back in late 1999 or early 2000, Dexter was chair of a committee, the Deep Drainage Taskforce, under former primary industry minister Hon Monty House. I first met Dexter at a public meeting about that issue, a number of which were held in the Agricultural Region. They were extremely charged meetings—very powerful views on both sides of the fence were expressed. I remember this tall, moustached politician who, when he stood, would stop the room. People respected him immediately, but, equally, his respect for them was evident as well. It was testament to him that he had the ability to extract the views of a number of different people on what was, and still is, a very difficult issue. I found a copy of that report recently, the subheading of which states “making it work, not proving it wrong”. I think that that encompasses Dexter's approach to many other issues that he dealt with in the time that I got to know him—that was, finding ways of making things work and delivering good outcomes for everyone involved. Others have already spoken today about their respect for him across the political divide. That is evident in certainly everything that I know of him and the work that he has done.

In 2012, my good friend and former neighbour Marg Agnew, also a member of the WA Nationals near Esperance, suggested that Dexter Davies would be a good person to chat to when I decided to seek preselection for the Nats. His advice at that time was excellent from my point of view; you just had to get through the small smattering of football anecdotes on the way through—he loved his footy. In the years subsequent to that decision and when I was state president of the party, as Hon Col Holt mentioned, Dexter was always around. His advice and counsel were always welcome and sought, because he knew better than anyone in the organisation how things worked and how to get the best from everybody. His passion and his belief in the Nationals as the party to represent our regional constituents were not lost on me. It was that kind of passion, belief and commitment that we all share in the organisation, and I think he was instrumental in instilling that in many of us.

Over his period on the federal executive and my period on the state executive we worked closely together, quite often attending meetings in Canberra. We would share a breakfast in a dodgy Canberra hotel and talk about, among politics and other discussions, family and those relationships, and managing them in the roles that we had taken on. I never grew tired of the conversations we had. I will never forget his incredible smile whenever he spoke about his family and the Nationals. But the stories of the latest escapades of his grandchildren always brought the biggest smile to his face. There was no man more committed to his family than Dexter Davies. It was just wonderful to see that.

He was always a mentor for me in whatever role I had within the party and I do miss him. That knowledge and ability, as Hon Jacqui Boyde said before, to offer his advice at times when we were dealing with difficult issues was always very valuable and welcome. His family ethic and the support of his family were also incredible. I am not quite sure how he managed the balance that he did, but he did it well in my view, and I think that is a testament to the man.

I am certainly personally very grateful to have known Dexter and very thankful for the contribution he made to regional Western Australia and to the political landscape in this state. I will miss his guidance, his advice and those football anecdotes, and his love for the bush and its people. He is a great man taken too soon. Dexter, thank you for your friendship and support and may you rest in peace in that big locker room in the sky.

HON RICK MAZZA (Agricultural) [2.16 pm]: I cannot recall the pleasure of meeting Dexter Davies, however his name has always been synonymous with politics and the National Party. Listening to the sentiments expressed today, I am all the poorer for not having met him. Born in Kellerberrin on 10 April 1951, Dexter was a man of the bush, exemplifying everything about country life. He farmed the land, loved playing sport and was always looking out for his mates in regional Western Australia. Like most country boys, he had a passion for Australian Rules Football, which saw him play 14 games for East Fremantle in the then Western Australian National Football League between 1969 and 1971. He was also captain, president and fairest and best for the Wyalkatchem Football Club.

Dexter's interest in sport extended to cricket. He was a member of the Claremont–Nedlands Cricket Club and was cricketer of the year three times. He played in the WA Country XI, was secretary of the Wyalkatchem Cricket Association for 10 years, was a member of the Western Australian Cricket Association and was president of the Claremont–Nedlands Cricket Club.

Dexter's political life was also extensive. He became a National Party member in the Wyalkatchem branch in 1979. He was a state councillor from 1987, state vice president in 1988, president from 1990 to 1998 and from 1999 to 2000, and federal National Party vice president from 1989 to 1998.

Dexter gave much of his life to the National Party and that service and commitment was repaid with life membership of the Western Australian branch. Dexter also served in local government, being a member of the Shire of Merredin council from 1986. In 1998, Dexter entered the WA Parliament's upper house as a Nationals member for the Agricultural Region, with the noble intention of ensuring that the people in Western Australia's regional communities were heard. He was elected on a recount to fill a casual vacancy following the resignation of Hon Eric Charlton. Dexter served in that capacity for two and a half years. During his parliamentary valedictory speech on 3 May 2001, he said that his goal had been to deliver services in the regions and to ensure that the people in those areas had equal opportunity to those in the rest of the world. He said —

If Western Australians cannot do that, there is not much hope for people in the rest of the world.

As a fellow member for the Agricultural Region, I certainly relate to those words. Dexter added that contrary to what he read in newspapers and saw on the television news, this was still the best place to live in the world. Those sentiments were true then and they are certainly true 17 years later. Dexter said in his 1998 inaugural speech that the thing that gave him more satisfaction than anything else was being involved with the former member for Avon Hon Max Trenorden in bringing community banking to Western Australia. He recalled how the pair had toiled long and hard on the project, which he said worked against the odds to deliver a service to people in very small communities. Dexter recalled how being a member of the Standing Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development was a baptism of fire in the forest management process, saying it seemed never-ending. He said the task was to balance what needed to be done against the different requirements of people and the state with previous contracts and social aspects of the issue. It remains a struggle to this day, and Dexter was well aware of that. Dexter said the inquiry into the western rock lobster industry was also a challenge; however, it allowed him to indulge his intimate knowledge of the fishing industry. Dexter was also involved in the inquiry into the sale of Westrail Freight, which was interesting to him because of his background in the grain industry.

During his 2001 valedictory speech, Dexter shared one of his favourite sayings that reflected on the difference we can make as human beings to create a better tomorrow. Dexter said —

... it does not matter how clever any of us think we are, there is not a lot we can do about what happened yesterday, but if we contribute in some small way towards improving something that is going to happen tomorrow, everything has been worthwhile.

That is the third time that has been quoted today, but it is a very good piece of philosophy and maybe something that could be hung on the wall of Parliament for present and future members to contemplate. We should all remember and carry those words with us while we are not only inside this place but also outside it.

Dexter's political legacy lives on through his daughter Mia—the first woman to lead the WA Nationals—and I reiterate my sympathies to her, her family and the WA Nationals.

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [2.21 pm]: I rise today on behalf of the Greens to indicate my support for this motion. I did not know Dexter Davies personally, but my Greens colleagues from the thirty-fifth Parliament did. When I relayed to them the passing of Dexter Davies, they indicated sorrow and commented that it was very sad because “he was one of the good ones, and a really decent man”. I know he was well liked and respected, and was very much recognised for being a family and a community-minded man.

Dexter Davies had a distinguished career as an advocate for primary producers, with a serious interest in the fisheries industry, including, as has been said, business development. He spent years with the Rural Business Development Corporation, the Aquaculture Development Council of Western Australia and in education and training, and many years as a member of AgriFood Skills Australia’s Seafood Standing Committee. He had policy expertise, having been on the ministerial Dry Seasons Advisory Committee. He was of course a primary producer in this state in his own right. We cannot ignore—it has been spoken of already—his decades as a well-respected and senior member of the National Party. He had many sporting achievements and membership of cricket and football clubs and committees.

I have read his contributions to Parliament and they are reflected in the actions and words of the people who loved and knew him. He desired to create a better future for everyone. He wanted everyone to come together with open minds and hearts, to bridge divides and, very importantly, work hard to ensure that everyone regardless of background and location had the opportunity to be healthy, happy and have opportunities. That was shown again and again in his commitment to rural businesses and education, be that through his work on committees, councils and boards, or through initiatives such as his advocacy for changes such as community-owned banking. Another thing that really stood out to me was that he believed he could improve what we currently have without tearing down what went before. Through his words in Parliament, I can see that he did not want to waste time fighting and arguing about the past and distributing blame; he simply wanted to quietly and practically get on with the business of improving the world. I have seen and heard how important his leadership, mentorship and friendship has been to many of my colleagues in this place. It would have been good to know him.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Greens (WA), my very sincerest condolences to Dexter’s wife, Leonie, of course to our parliamentary colleague Mia, to Emma, to the rest of the Davies family, his friends and his National Party colleagues.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.25 pm]: I will add some brief comments in support of the condolence motion moved by the Leader of the House for Dexter Davies, who sadly left us on 17 March. I will not reiterate what has been said, other than to pass on my personal condolences to Leonie, Mia, Emma, the extended Davies family, his colleagues and his many, many mates. Dexter was a bloke who touched the hearts of a lot of people and was widely respected and acknowledged around agricultural areas. He was seen as a good bloke by many. I have said in this place that one of the best parts about being a member of Parliament is the people we come across, and it was certainly great to come across and engage with Dexter.

Despite the obvious political divide and differences, having been born in the wheatbelt, being a fellow farmer and representative of the Agricultural Region, we had quite a lot in common. He was a great advocate for regional Western Australia, and also a great mate of the late Hon Kim Chance, as was earlier touched on. Kim was a great political influence on me, but Kim and Dexter worked closely together when the coalition was in government and also when Kim was minister. The Leader of the House was quite right when she said there is collegiality among us farmers, and despite our differences, we always have that in common.

Dexter was an outstanding sportsman, as has been mentioned. He played a few games in the Western Australian National Football League, but he was also a member of the Mortlock Football League Team of the Century, which some pretty good footballers made. We had some outstanding footballers from our part of the world. He was certainly a worthy member of that team. He was involved with the Western Australian Cricket Association, the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council and the Dry Seasons Advisory Committee—sadly, we are looking at another dry season in our part of the world—and provided very high level and good, sage advice to important decision-makers at the state and federal levels.

He was of great service to the Western Australian National Party, and I think it is fair to say he was generally recognised as a larger-than-life character. His reputation preceded him, but he lived up to it. He was a highly respected and fierce advocate for his community, the wheatbelt and regional Western Australia. Dexter Davies always made people feel important. When people met Dexter, he always had a smile—“How’s it going?”—and showed a general interest in people. Before and after I became a member of Parliament, he always gave me the impression he was pleased to see me. That is an endearing trait. So here we are again, another good bloke taken way too soon. Vale, Dexter, and thanks for your service.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [2.28 pm]: I never got to know Dexter. I met Dexter for a short period of time at Claremont–Nedlands Cricket Club. I obviously knew of his reputation on the football field and cricket pitch because I played against some of the sides that he played in, and I played with many players who played cricket and football with and against him. I knew Dexter mainly as a sportsman as a younger man growing

up, and later as my interest grew in political areas, I also heard of Dexter and the contributions he had made to this house and the National Party. I congratulate honourable members on their contributions to this condolence motion today.

One Nation, as mentioned by Hon Colin Holt, first got involved in this Parliament back in 2001. We always knew that National Party members of the calibre of Dexter Davies would be very difficult opponents on election day. I want to mention some of the things that have been said about Dexter today, but I will be very brief because the contributions have been fantastic. It is quite obvious that he was a man of great passion and enthusiasm. He was very positive and very persistent. He obviously made an outstanding contribution to the National Party. He played a high level of sport while he was a member of Parliament. Hon Jacqui Boydell made an incredible contribution to the condolence motion; it was incredible to hear what she said. I never knew the man but he obviously made a major contribution to her life and to the National Party. Pauline Hanson's One Nation is only a brand-new party in this Parliament, although, as Hon Colin Holt said, we had a crack back in 2001. People like Dexter Davies are amazing. If our party could build a party one day that gained valuable members like he was for the National Party, hopefully our party could sustain its approach and be in this Parliament for many years to come, as he made a major contribution. To his family and friends who are here today, thank you for attending. It is a great honour to give to an obviously outstanding person. I thank members for the opportunity to speak.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [2.31 pm]: It is with a sense of sadness and purpose that I rise to contribute to this condolence motion. We have a tradition of condolence motions in this house for several purposes. Firstly, it is to place on the record our own tribute for posterity to a former member. It is also a way of reaching out to the family and loved ones of our former members to reaffirm, publicly, that former member's worth and dignity, and thereby, hopefully, provide support and comfort to their family and loved ones. You find out a lot when listening to a condolence motion or the proceedings at a funeral. We find out things about people that we did not know during the time that we knew them. In itself, that is an enriching experience. I recall Dexter Davies' funeral recently. I have never seen such a large funeral. We all learnt a great deal about someone and that, as usual, most of us did not have the complete story before we attended. As an aside, may I say that his daughters, Mia and Emma, did him proud. Those of us who were there were touched and would like to offer our congratulations and esteem.

My own acquaintance with Dexter stems from the thirty-fifth Parliament in this place. I think I am probably the only one here who was in this house at that time. I will mention that in a moment. In the spirit of this motion, when so much has already been said, I want to add the very little that I can add, which members might not be aware of, as part of my contribution to achieving those things we have set out to do. The first time that Dexter Davies came to my notice was when I was a schoolboy; it shows that at least my long-term memory is intact. We were in the stands at Perry Lakes Stadium and we were looking through the record book, which was part of the program that shows the records. There was a chap in there with a very alliterative name—D. Davies or Dexter Davies. It came to my notice because we look in the book and take notice of who the record holders are and perhaps from last year, there will be someone we know from our school, or we look for who holds the oldest record in the book. If memory serves me correctly, Dexter Davies appeared quite a number of times in the record book, so I noted that. He is actually the only chap I have ever known called Dexter. It is not that it is an unusual name, but he is the only one whom I have ever known, so I remembered it. One of the records I think dated from 1968 and it was later in the 1970s that we were looking in the book. But we could have looked at the book at any time for decades because this one particular record, we noted, I believe lasted for several decades before it was beaten. If I have some of this detail wrong, please do not interject! I fancy that it might have been the 100 metres, which was then known, of course, as the 110 yards. Do members remember that we were all bilingual in the 1970s, as we swapped over? The 110 yards was the 100 metres and, in these record books, it was variously referred to as either/or. I was looking at this book with a classmate who was himself a state junior champion in hurdles, so it took a bit to impress him. We were impressed because Dexter's time was a bit over 11 seconds, if memory serves me correctly. I do not know how much over 11 seconds, but it struck me as an outstanding time and the fact that the record stood for decades says a bit because, even now in my prime, I could not do it that quickly! We soon discovered that Dexter Davies was a very fine athlete. We have heard how he was prominent as an outstanding cricketer, a player, a leader and an office-bearer. He was also a very, very good Aussie Rules football player. You have to be to play that many games for a club as fine as East Fremantle. As a vice-patron of the club, I would like to convey our respects on behalf of the president, members and supporters of East Fremantle Football Club, for one of our beloved former players.

The next time I came across Dexter, he was already showing what an agent of good influence he could be. I was with the Liberal Party by then, before I came into Parliament. We went to state councils from time to time in the late 1980s and early 1990s. When we were not worried about whether Fred and Noel were fighting and Wilson was getting a bit snarly, the other thing we had to worry about in those difficult days was whether the Nats were going feral. We were always reassured by state presidents at the time: "No, it's all right, everybody; let's not go off the tracks." I can remember Peter Jones saying, "I've been talking with Dexter Davies, the state president. He

is very positive, a straight talker and”—tellingly—“he has given me his word.” These were the reassurances we were getting in what was a hothouse environment. When my very good friend Hon Eric Charlton retired from this place in July 1998, I was excited to then meet this chap I had heard so much about—Dexter Davies. He came in and I found out that everything members have heard was lived in the chap whom I met and got to know over a few years. He sat opposite, where I sat too. Another group of members there was called the “three Murrays”. They were the Murrays Criddle, Montgomery and Nixon, all of whom were colleagues of Dexter and I.

Hon Darren West: We’ve got the Colins now.

Hon SIMON O’BRIEN: Indeed, but I will leave that one.

I witnessed Dexter’s maiden speech, which has been quoted today. I remember it as well. It is a pity that more of us, including myself, cannot always live by some of that example he set.

My experience was that here was a fellow who every morning or afternoon when we would come in, we would exchange greetings and they were genuine greetings. We enjoyed each other’s company. We would sit down and break bread together. I guess I was a metropolitan Liberal and I could be a colleague rather than a competitor, and that was good. Afterwards when he left Parliament, I would frequently see him around whether it was at Dumas House or this place and we always had a cordial relationship, even though we had not grown up together, we had not gone to school together and we had not been involved in rural politics together. We had a good cordial relationship and I am the richer for it.

I want to conclude with two observations that I hope are something nice for Dexter’s loved ones to take away with them; they are well meant. My observation, both firsthand and having listened to others I respect, is that Dexter was certainly was an all-rounder in not only sport but also just about everything, including bringing up a very fine family. In everything he did, he strove for distinction—and generally he achieved it.

Finally, and the second point I would like members to contemplate, I again go back to the beginning and to this all-rounder sportsman. I have seen a few skilled amateur sportsmen who exhibited the same quality. I am thinking very much of my friend the late Trevor Sprigg, who exhibited the quality I am about to describe. Hon “Tuck” Waldron is another one who comes to mind, even though he got to play only for Claremont, not Old Easts. Of Dexter you could also say, as you could of them, that I never heard him, no matter how much commitment he was displaying and no matter how strongly he was working for the causes he believed in, say a nasty word about anyone. I have never heard anybody say a nasty word about him. I hope that is a very fine legacy for his family to be proud of and take away from today, together with our sincere sympathies and best wishes.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Regional Development) [2.43 pm]: I acknowledge Leonie, Mia and Emma, and all the family who are here today. All our National Party colleagues and National Party family are represented here, including many of my former parliamentary colleagues. I give a special shout out two former sparring partners Hendy Cowan and Eric Charlton. It is sad that this is the occasion on which we are seeing you, but it is good to renew old acquaintances.

Like a number of people who have spoken today, I did not know Dexter extremely well, but he was such a well-known name throughout the 1980s and 1990s. He was Mr Farming; indeed, when a voice was required to speak on behalf of rural communities or farmers, it was very often Dexter, so much so that in fact when we were getting ready for this, I said, “He must have been president of the Western Australian Farmers Federation.” We had a look. “No, no. He does not seem to have been.” He had such a dominant voice in the community representing, as I said, farmers and rural communities generally. Hon Simon O’Brien reflected on the name “Dexter”. A few other Nationals have had interesting names, which, perhaps, have helped to elevate them into public consciousness.

I want to briefly pass on some reflections from staff of the old Department of Agriculture, past and present, who worked with Dexter in his capacity as Dry Seasons Advisory Committee chair and director on the board of the Rural Business Development Corporation. They were very keen that their thoughts be recorded. According to the notes provided to me —

Dexter Davies was committed and driven from the late 1990s to the late 2000s in assisting government, on both sides of the aisle, to understand the impact of drought and dry seasons on rural and regional Western Australia. Dexter’s focus was not only on farmers, but also the impact dry seasons had on communities, schools, and the businesses and jobs connected in towns both large and small.

Dexter was appointed to the board of the Rural Business Development Corporation ... in May 2005 by the late Kim Chance MLC the then Minister for Agriculture and Food. Before this appointment to the RBDC, Dexter was involved in leading the WA government’s response to drought and dry seasons as the Chair of the State’s Dry seasons Advisory Committee.

Unfortunately from 2000 onwards for the both pastoral and agricultural regions in Western Australia these were quite challenging times for primary producers through a significant and continuing drying of seasons, and the interspersed region specific droughts, such as those experienced in the northern and eastern grainbelt, and the Gascoyne Murchison.

Federal government programs at that time, defined drought in a very narrow set of criteria that often disadvantaged and in some cases ruled out WA drought affected regions from receiving the timely assistance that was available to the rest of Australia in times of drought.

...

Dexter was very effective in leading the campaign to correct this as he headed up a Dry Season Committee comprised of a cross section of industry groups, Banks, counsellors, and a wide range of State Government and Local Government agencies.

One feature of public life throughout that period is fronting up to public meetings to listen and talk to very frustrated and desperate people who want to tell the government how they are feeling and how they believe the Government should respond. This is a robust and essential part of our polity, and people in regional areas are known for their forthright expression, so these meetings could get understandably quite passionate.

Dexter always embraced these opportunities and the more difficult and distressed the community, the more passion he would throw into both listening, understanding and explaining why the Government had made certain decisions. Staff members recall a particular and quite passionate meeting in Yuna, where Dexter calmed the crowd and then stayed on in Geraldton talking late into the night to all those who wanted to be heard and talk to someone.

Dexter could talk to and importantly listen to anyone, anywhere, at any time, and his positivity and commitment was absolute. He had a very thick skin and a big heart. Dexter's compassion, soaked up the angst and anger that came from people stressed from the consequences of drought. And he could do this day after day.

What he learned from these meetings, he would take to the Government of the day, whatever the political colours, and persuade the minister of the day that they could do better in supporting communities through these tough times. He also ensured that the public servants who he worked with understood the needs of people and community.

Dexter was excellent at connecting people. As result of Dexter's approach, there was a strong emphasis on supporting the whole community through the drought, through a range of measures from the provision of counselling and social support services, and through supporting local government authorities and community groups to hold community events.

Quite clearly, Dexter was a man much admired, a man much loved and a man who will be much missed.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Environment) [2.50 pm]: I wish to make a brief contribution to this motion this afternoon by adding my words of condolence to the National Party family in particular. I first came across Dexter as a young adviser to former fisheries ministers in years gone by. It was around the same time that I came across Hon Murray Criddle and people like Hon Bruce Donaldson, who were champions for the industry at the time. I had the great pleasure of attending the fourth National Rock Lobster Congress with Dexter in Hobart over a number of days. It was similar to the experience of Hon Martin Aldridge on his trip to Broken Hill in that many, many drinks were consumed over those few days and we sought to fix many of the world's problems. I recall a conversation at the time—I was trying to convince Dexter that being from a party of agrarian socialists meant he had more in common with the Labor Party as socialists, and that we should be working together over the years. I remember Dexter very fondly as an adviser. Although he was a National Party stalwart, he provided advice to governments of all persuasions. He was certainly a warm, gregarious, intelligent and insightful individual who gave us great advice, and particularly me as a young adviser. We were dealing with some difficult issues in the western rock lobster industry at the time. Dexter, as not only the executive officer of the Western Rock Lobster Council, but also a member of the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council board and the Aquaculture Development Council was always very helpful to me. I want to acknowledge the support he gave me over the years. I fondly recall seeing him around the state when he was an adviser to Terry Redman. I often bumped into him in Kununurra or Broome. He was always very genuine, respectful and supportive. I remember him fondly. I wish his family all the very best at this difficult time, not only Leonie and Hon Mia Davies but also Emma and the extended family, and also the National Party family, because he was obviously a stalwart. We will remember him fondly.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Kate Doust): I want to add a few words to this condolence motion. Unfortunately, I never got to meet Dexter Davies, but I certainly knew him by reputation. I have listened to all of the contributions today. It is very important that we have these opportunities to acknowledge the contribution members have made in this chamber and their electorates, and to the development of the state in a broader sense. We can certainly see from Dexter Davies' first speech in this place that he had great vision and was seriously committed to improving the lot of people in the regions. He even focused on some matters we are talking about today, such as changes to electoral regimes, which he was obviously very passionate about. Today we have heard that this is a man who

lived life to the fullest. We celebrate a very full life across the spectrum. He was certainly a great family man and obviously a significant sportsman. He engaged fully in his community and was certainly engrossed in the National Party, which has been acknowledged through his contribution and by his party over time. Having listened to the contributions of members today, whilst he obviously made significant endeavours in his time here in the chamber, it sounds as though a lot of his greatest work was done after he left here, certainly in the fashioning and reorganising of the National Party into a more modern party and with his mentoring of members of this chamber. It is evident that he will be greatly missed by those people and perhaps will be recognised in the longer term for the changes he brought to that party at an important time in its history.

I want to offer my condolences to his wife, Leonie; his daughter, Emma; our parliamentary colleague Hon Mia Davies; his broader family and certainly those colleagues who are here today. Having listened to everyone today, I am sure he will be greatly missed. We acknowledge his contribution to the work of this chamber.

I ask members to rise and support this motion by observing a minute's silence.

Question passed; members and officers standing as a mark of respect.

The PRESIDENT: I advise that in accordance with our custom and practice, a copy of the *Hansard* transcript of this condolence motion will be sent to Dexter Davies' family.
