

**WALLACE GREENHAM — TRIBUTE**

*Statement*

**HON Dr SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [6.24 pm]: I would like to place on record a tribute to Wallace Greenham. Wally died a week ago exactly, on Wednesday evening last week, 14 June 2017. Wally was an extraordinary man. It is fitting to mark his death by recording in this Parliament some details about Wally's life and achievements and bringing those achievements to the attention of honourable members. I will give members a bit of a feeling for the man that Wally was. He was 90 years old when he died. He celebrated his ninetieth birthday in April. Unfortunately, Wally's decline in health that led to his death, which even at the age of 90 we can call premature, meant that he was not able to celebrate his birthday in April. He had ordered champagne and prawns but, unfortunately, he was not well enough to appreciate that. I am looking forward in the next few weeks to getting my own champagne and prawns and having my own private celebration of Wally, perhaps with some of his friends and family who live down in Denmark.

Wally was born in 1927 at Koorda in the northern wheatbelt. He moved to Mandurah. He has a lot of connection with the south west, so I know that will interest many members here. He moved to Mandurah when he was about nine years old and lived near the estuary. He left school at 14. He did a short spell in the Army. He was conscripted in 1945 and did basic training. He did not see any active service because, of course, the war ended. Post-war he took an apprenticeship as a wood machinist. I can only think that some of the skills he would have learnt as a wood machinist obviously came to fruition when he decided to turn his attention to architecture. It was as an architect that he has truly made a mark on this state. He began studying architecture in 1954, by which stage he had a young family to support. He did some teaching at Perth Technical College from 1959 until the late 1960s, so for about 10 years. It was then he began a series of really remarkable architectural achievements that gave Wally the reputation that he has today in the state.

In the 1970s—I think it was about 1973—he purchased Belvidere, 500 acres on the Leschenault Peninsula near Bunbury, which became in fact a small illegal community settlement with up to 13 dwellings for young people wanting an alternative lifestyle. In trying to find bit more information about Belvidere, I found the following comments on a Facebook history page when the news of Wally's death was beginning to filter through the local community. I would like to share this with honourable members —

Very sad news has been given to us, as Mr Wallace Greenham has passed away. Wally was the most generous and respected owner of land at Belvidere which became known for its alternative living community from the 1970's. Wally Greenham made his land available back then for people to live on and be self sufficient. There was recycled housing and interesting homes. It was described as "A Haven from the outside world". This included gardens where plants such as lavender were grown to self sustain and sell, and even a Buddhist house. There are still small remnants of the community that was once there, if you know just where to look ... The land is now National Park. A message from a former resident of the community there told us "A big spreading tree that sheltered many people at Belvidere has fallen. I, and many people like me who lived at Belvidere in the 70's and 80's courtesy of Wally's generous and impish spirit have lost a person who had a huge impact their lives."

That was Belvidere, and that takes us up to the 1970s. Before that he designed the Whistlepipe Gully house in Forrestfield. If members google Whistlepipe Gully house, they will find some very interesting details about it. Again, there is nothing much to see now. This came to mark many of Wally's creations. He was what we would now call an organic architect. He was quite happy to see some of his properties go into decline and return to the earth. I sincerely hope that does not happen to my house, which is built of perhaps more modern materials. Whistlepipe Gully house is described as —

... a remarkable and beautiful Japanese-style house —

I should add at this point that Wally visited Japan as part of his architectural studies and was obviously very much influenced by Japanese architecture —

built in the early 1960s by architect Wallace Greenham ... as his family home.

Incorporating the granite boulders as walls of the house, he built platforms on one side of the year round creek and a cave-like structure on the other, joined across the creek by a series of bridges and walkways.

That is a truly beautiful mind picture, I think. It continues —

Constructed in 1963, a timber bridge connected the bedroom level with a garage on one end and living areas on the other ...

The idea, to design a house that ‘was completely integrated with the site’, and totally self sustaining. A clamber around discovers remnants of stone walls abutting the smooth granite boulders and broken tiles from what was probably the bathroom.

Central to all this is the creek itself which tumbles across smooth, lichened rock, waterfalling between the steep gully sides. Wallace harnessed this power using a Pelton wheel (designed by him) to provide the house with power.

This is truly a man ahead of his time. It continues —

It must have been a magical place, with descriptions of inward sloping roofs centred on a fish pool and trees growing up through the floor of the suspended walkway and roof. It said the Whistlepipe house had no locks on the doors, bush walkers and visitors were welcome even if the family wasn’t home!

As we move through Wally’s life, we then come to the Denmark chapter, which started in the mid-1970s when he moved to a property called The Cove, which is next door to my house in Denmark. He designed and constructed low-cost innovative dwellings, including places where he lived with his family and, eventually, some holiday accommodation for guests. He served as a Denmark shire councillor for several years in the 1980s. He also had a hand in designing the original frail-aged section of the old Denmark District Hospital. He moved to Normans Beach, 50 kilometres east of Albany, around the Mt Manypeaks area, in the 1980s and constructed a large geodesic dome that was his home for 10 years. This is a truly remarkable building and I will give members a flavour of it. I quote —

The house at Mt Manypeaks, just east of Albany, sits sandwiched between two national parks on a stretch of uninhabited coastline. With Mt Manypeaks immediately to the east, and waves breaking over rocks out to seas, the site for this house is exceptionally beautiful.

This is written by fellow architect Andrew Boyne. He writes —

The house consists of a seven form concrete tubes that radiate from a large glass dome. Because the windy coastal environment is often unpleasant and made it difficult to grow a desert garden, the glass dome provided a warm comfortable space that acted somewhat like a greenhouse.

This is a geodesic property on the beach. It continues —

Greenham was even able to grow a fruiting banana tree.

This is down on the almost Arctic coast between Albany and Esperance. The passage continues —

The dome was replaced by a polycarbonate sheet roof that protects the edges of the central courtyard from rain. The new arrangement provides adequate protection from the elements.

It is an absolutely magnificent house and I urge anybody with even a passing interest in these things to google it and look at some of the pictures on the internet.

Members would be familiar with the Western Australian chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects and its Wallace Greenham Award for Sustainable Architecture. Members would be interested to know that the award was won in 2013 by the West Kimberley Regional Prison and in 2015 by Fiona Stanley Hospital. Wally returned to live in Denmark for the last 10 years of his life and, as I said, he died at Blue Wren Lodge on 14 June 2017. On behalf of honourable members in this place, I pass on our sincere condolences to his daughters, Susan Cenin and Perri Pires, and his son, Kim Greenham. He was a true visionary and an inspirational man. I pay tribute to Wally’s memory.