

**HON MARK McGOWAN — CONTRIBUTION TO STATE**

*Statement*

**HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan)** [5.25 pm]: Earlier today a motion was moved to consider the contributions of Hon Mark McGowan. It was a time-limited debate, so I was unable to make a contribution. I want to make a short contribution now, if I may. I joined the Labor Party at the Whitfords branch in 1986. The previous Premier, Mark McGowan, was active in Rockingham, and I suppose the geographical distance meant that I did not have a lot to do with him in those early days. Indeed, even when he was elected in 1996, I did not have a lot to do with people up on the hill. Most of my work was with the lay party at the branch level.

Mark McGowan first came to prominence when he was elected Leader of the Labor Party and fought the 2013 election, which was very, very difficult. I think he said that to make a good Premier, you need to spend some time in opposition, and that time in opposition certainly made the man. I think he was tested greatly during that time. I first really became aware of the previous Premier, Mark McGowan, when I was elected to this house in 2015. I then became intimately aware of his work ethic and how hard he worked on behalf of the people of Western Australia and the Labor Party in general. I personally witnessed how hard he worked, particularly in 2016 leading into the 2017 election. He had a vision, he had a plan, and he worked tirelessly to implement that vision and plan and get the whole Labor Party on board towards that. I think he visited every electorate twice during the year leading into the 2017 election.

That was a monumental win, and I was very, very grateful to be a part of it. At the time, we thought it was the greatest win ever. Leading into that and leading the state, I think he showed he had courage and was a strong leader, but it was not necessarily confrontational, and that is something I admire—someone who can stand their ground without being aggressive. I think Hon Mark McGowan showed that in spades during that time. In 2016, there was an opportunity for me to put a personal view on his leadership, and I was happy to come down in his camp. People who have been around a while know what happened in 2016.

As I said, he worked hard coming into the 2017 election. He implemented everything he promised during the first term of government and showed that he was not just putting words forward. He actually had a plan and implemented that plan. Part of that plan was, of course, the economy. The previous speaker mentioned Hon Colin Barnett, and I have a lot of admiration for him in a number of ways. Obviously, there were concerns about the way he managed the finances of this state. I want to talk about a couple of those things to draw the contrast. One issue that has been raised is that the former Premier underestimated income, and that that is a bad thing, whereas the previous Premier, Colin Barnett, used to overemphasise income to justify continual spending. I cannot believe that anyone is actually considering that to be a preferable situation. It led this state into a diabolical financial situation.

The other thing that I admire greatly is that even though Mark McGowan won the 2017 election, he did not rest on his laurels. When we got to 2020, leading into the 2021 election, he worked just as hard to make sure we won that next election. Of course, the fact that we won that election by a great majority is history now, but it was only through that very hard work.

Another issue is that people look back and say that success was only because of COVID. Of course, the way he led us through the COVID pandemic with minimal deaths and so little interruption to our lives compared with other places played a big part of it, but not the only part. As I said, from 2017, he grew in stature, and I think that constituents noticed that and flocked to support him. COVID just proved the merits of the man when he led us through that difficult time, which, of course, is not finished yet.

I say that the reasons that Mark McGowan gave for leaving are absolutely justified. Those were difficult times. Right back from when I first took notice back in 2016, the man did not stop. He led us through the COVID pandemic, he led us through two magnificent wins in elections to the detriment of himself and his family, and I hold no negative view at all of the time that he chose to pull the pin. I and obviously many of my colleagues could have wished that he would lead us to the next election, but in looking after his own mental health, in looking after his family and in accomplishing what he has accomplished, I think we can have only gratitude for the amount of work he did and the length of time that he did it. I wish him well into the future.