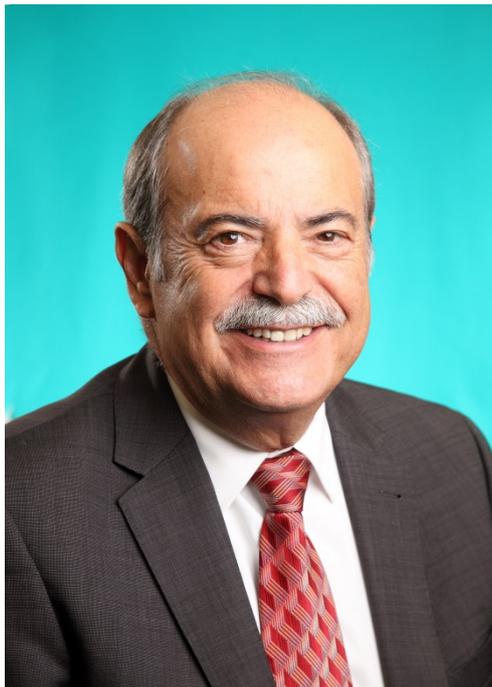




PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



Hon John Castrilli, MLA
(Member for Bunbury)

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 16 November 2016

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VALEDICTORY SPEECHES

Member for Bunbury

MR G.M. CASTRILLI (Bunbury) [5.48 pm]: The time has come, the walrus said, when all good things come to an end—somebody said that somewhere along the way. Mr Speaker, may I say that on reflection, 12 years has come around very, very quickly. It has been an experience of my life that I will never regret. I have met some wonderful people around the state of Western Australia and in other states of Australia, and many from overseas. It has been a humbling experience. It has been character-building and it has been my absolute privilege to be the member representing the fantastic City of Bunbury. In one role or another, I have been in public life in Bunbury for 26 continuous years. That has all been made possible by the continued support and faith that the wonderful people of Bunbury have had in me. I wish to publicly thank the people of the Bunbury electorate for the honour that they have afforded me in allowing me to represent them. I will never forget their kindness and I will never forget their encouragement and the support they have afforded to me and my family.

To my dear wife, Loretta, who—here we go!—from the day we were married has always been by my side attending functions, meetings, electioneering, taking complaints and suggestions whether she liked it or not, and hopefully most suggestions were nice. Loretta supported me through thick and thin, and when I was not able to attend functions she would represent me. Bunbury, I think, is fortunate because it got two for the price of one. Loretta is my best asset and best vote winner. She is a true people's person and I owe her everything. My daughters Lisa and Deanna grew up with me always being on the move and often away from home. At times I wondered what impact it would have on them with me being away so often, but they have totally supported me and Loretta in our roles, and I want to thank them sincerely. I have a great son-in-law, Joe, and three beautiful grandchildren, Rose, Dominique and Alexia, whom I look forward to being able to spend more time with soon. My parents, Antonio and Michelina, have supported me all the way. My father is my greatest supplier of political wisdom. My mother cooked and cleaned et cetera all along the way for all the functions, and, at the age of 87, still to this very day cooks for the entire extended family get-together every week and keeps our family unit strong. I cannot describe or put into words the appreciation that I have for them both. The support from my sister, Teresa, and brother-in-law, Geoff, my brother, Frank, and sister-in-law, Debbie, and their families over 26 years has been enormous and I cannot thank them enough. My parents, brother and sister and their families have played an enormous part in my overall success, including babysitting for Loretta and me when we had to go to functions, assisting with all the functions and fundraising events and setting up booths—you name it. Family support has never been in question.

I want to pay a special tribute to my staff—Leanne Maher, Yasmine Pearce and Taryn Barrett. They are the face of me and my office. A huge part of my electoral success is due to my fantastic team. They shield me from pain, they bring me back to reality, they re-energise me and they get me back on track. They have put their heart and soul into their work. They know their community and have often worked on weekends outside normal office hours. Bunbury has been very fortunate to have such caring people who have never been able to take no for an answer in their quest to assist people. I have to say that they have made me look good and they are the real champions of Bunbury. I want to make one special mention of Leanne Maher. We have worked together for 20 years. I owe Leanne big time and it is a debt that I will never be able to repay. Leanne has been my conscience, and, together with Loretta, has been my rock and salvation. Loretta, Leanne and my daughter Deanna are in the gallery tonight along with some of my special friends.

I want to thank the Premier of this state, Hon Colin Barnett, for giving me the privilege and honour of being a minister. It is something that I will always treasure and be thankful for. I have met some wonderful people and gained an enormous amount of experience and satisfaction in that role. To all my parliamentary colleagues in this chamber and staff of this Parliament, I thank you for your friendship and support over the 12 years. The work we do for the betterment of Western Australia is something that I certainly value and appreciate. To my lifelong friend and former chief of staff Gary Brennan, I offer my thanks and appreciation for his support and valued expertise and guidance over many years. He has also been my campaign manager and supported me in all my public life. To members of the campaign committee over the years, I give my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for your wonderful work and support. To the Bunbury branch of the Liberal Party, in particular Findlay and Glenys Osborn who are tireless workers, I also say thanks, and to the many dedicated members and supporters who have helped me over the election days during my 12 years, a really big thank you.

While considering my parting comments, I revisited my inaugural speech back in 2005, as I suppose some of us do on occasions such as this. I reflected on the great statesmen and women of Western Australia who had the respect of the Parliament and the respect of the citizens, while retaining their dignity and getting on with the job. It is about not mistaking civility for weakness. Perhaps I was somewhat naive in 2005, but I remain proud that I have held onto the value of respect. Many times I have talked about the Choose Respect initiative that I introduced into Bunbury back in 2008. Cultural change is hard work. It is long term and it is difficult to measure any short-term success, but I strongly believe that a community as a whole has the responsibility to work towards building resilience in our young people, to teach respect, including self-respect, from an early age, and for us all to be considerate of others. Without respect, no matter how many laws we make in this place and how many services that we, as a government, put in place, they can be only bandaids solutions that will always need to be increased. It disturbs me that members of Parliament are often portrayed as rude or having childlike tantrums, and I ask: what message is that that we, as role models, are sending to our community?

In my inaugural speech, I also acknowledged the political differences that exist in this chamber, but I also focused on the importance that we all have much in common and the common goal is to achieve better outcomes for Western Australia. I spoke of my preference to get things done through building partnerships and working with people to achieve great outcomes. There have certainly been times over the past 12 years when I have been frustrated with process-driven issues. However, I believe that I have stayed true to my beliefs and, on the whole, the great outcomes that I have been able to achieve for Bunbury and Western Australia have mostly been possible through teamwork.

One example of a strong partnership saw the establishment of Treendale Gardens, a fantastic home and respite centre for young people with degenerative neurological diseases or acquired brain injuries. Prior to Treendale Gardens, there were no facilities outside the metropolitan area and our young people were either placed in aged care or forced to be away from their families. At the time, our efforts hit one brick wall after the other, but we did not give up. After forming a partnership with the Multiple Sclerosis Society of WA, we were finally successful in opening this home in 2012 that has now changed the lives of so many people. It remains one of my proudest and most emotional moments. I want to thank chief executive officer, Marcus Stafford, and the MSWA for coming along on this incredible journey.

There have been many great moments. Bunbury has seen huge improvements in its health services in particular. In 2005, when I was first elected, our region had no adolescent mental health offices. Counsellors were actually treating young people in their cars. Carers and consumer support groups were using my office for their meetings. Although I accept that there is much to be done, Bunbury now has some of the best facilities and clinicians for mental health. Our hospital has had huge upgrades and is now delivering many specialised treatments that were previously available in only Perth. So much is often said about the big picture projects, but by far the most challenging and most rewarding aspect of being a member comes from the individuals who come to you for help. I am sure that everyone in this chamber has experienced stories of unimaginable hardship and courage that some of our constituents have revealed. Over the years, I have been humbled by literally thousands of people who have entrusted me with their story. I take great pride in the efforts that my office has made to give these individuals or families hope to empower them or to simply break down walls that they had found impenetrable and to find a way forward. I believe that the true privilege of the role we all have is that we are in a position to make a life better.

Our Bunbury community, I believe, is special. Although we are a rapidly growing city, we have never lost our country soul. We have not developed that atmosphere that I so often see in other cities of heads down, always rushing, too afraid or too busy to engage. No matter where you go for a walk in Bunbury, it is most likely that someone will make eye contact with you, offer you a smile and say hello, whether you know them or not. We still know who our neighbours are. We still keep an eye out for each other and although I am very proud of all the great infrastructure improvements that we have achieved over the past decade, all the best buildings in the world will never replace that caring spirit that nurtures a community. My biggest thank you of all is to the people of Bunbury.

After 26 years of public commitment, Loretta and I will be taking a bit of time to travel to catch up with some of our overseas family. However, working for Bunbury in our community will always be part of our life, and I look forward to seeing the many projects I have worked on so hard over the past decade come to fruition and I will continue to watch our beautiful city bloom.

I take this opportunity to wish everybody in this chamber and all of us who are retiring all the best for their future endeavours. We are here and I think our main thing is to look after our people, to listen to our people and to help them solve their problems because, as we all know, when people come through our offices, sometimes we are the last port of call and they rely on us to solve their issues. They dump on our shoulders and say, "Please fix my life." I think that is one of the great privileges we have. Thank you.

[Applause.]
