



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



Hon Robyn McSweeney, MLC
(Member for South West)

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Thursday, 18 May 2017

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

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

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

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

HON ROBYN McSWEENEY (South West) [11.06 am]: Mr President, may I say how fitting it is that we both get to make the last valedictory speeches at the beginning of the fortieth Parliament. We are both members for South West Region until the end of this week. We have worked in the same electorate for many years and have both made a significant difference to the lives of many people. I have done a mere 16 years to your 30, but I congratulate you on being a very fine President; you can be really proud of your career. It was Barry who told me at the beginning of my career that I should buy a dog if I wanted a friend in politics! Such is the nature of politics!

I always knew that I would enter Parliament. Since 1982, when I was 24 years old, I have written letters to myself to be opened 10 years into the future. The first letter I opened in 1992 was about family. Having had two girls I said I would like another girl and a boy; that happened. I also said I wanted to go back to study; I did, and completed a degree in politics sociology and philosophy in three and a half years. I was a justice of the peace by 1992. The next letter I sealed was to be opened in 2002. In that letter I said that by the time I opened it I wanted to be a Liberal Party member for the South West Region; I was sworn in in May of 2001. During that period, I became one of the first women, along with Debra Bentley, to become a state vice-president of the Liberal Party. The next letter was to be opened in 2012. In that one I said I was going to be minister for what was then known as the portfolio for family and children's services; women's interests. When the letter was opened I had been Minister for Child Protection; Community Services; Seniors and Volunteering; Youth; Women's Interests since 2008. I have written another one for 2022. I know I wrote that I would write a book; that has been completed and published. I also said I would have retired from politics; I do not believe that was meant for 2017! It was not my choice to leave; it was the choice of the electorate. After having three Liberals representing the South West Region for 30 years or more, we returned only one member. I was third on that ticket, having been first for many years. I have always been very focused and determined, but there has to be some luck along the way to make all the stars align; they did for me. I have kept all these letters because they are eerily accurate, and sometimes truth is stranger than fiction.

My interest in politics was always in the background. I remember when I was five years old running up the driveway to tell my dad when he arrived home from work that J.F. Kennedy, the American President, had been shot, and he looked at me with a shocked look on his face and said, "Yes, it's a terrible day."

I had always known that my family had played a significant part in developing our state, in particular my great-grandfather Albert Edmund Cockram, about whom I wrote my 728-page book. He was one of the wealthiest men in Australia at that time. He was born in Western Australia in Gingin in 1870 and was a Hale School boy. He owned Burswood Island and turned part of it into Belmont Racecourse and Goodward racecourse. He was the largest importer of thoroughbreds in Australia, sometimes bringing in 150 horses a year from the United Kingdom—and I am talking about 1908. He had huge tracts of pastoral land, owned Griffin Coal, developed Perth's central business district and was a pioneer in agriculture. This country has much to thank him for. Hon Mark Lewis and I would kill for his knowledge of a good racehorse! Sadly, that talent evaded me; however, Mark keeps on trying. I know that the family of Hon Helen Morton, who sits alongside me, is involved with horses, and they have had more luck than me.

My great great great grandfather and grandmother were George and Mary Lazenby. George sailed his own ship into Western Australia in 1831. He was an architect who designed the Wesley Churches, and he was Perth's first shire clerk. He was also the first church minister for the Wesleyans in Western Australia. I am Anglican, and at

that time in Western Australia the Wesleyans were not particularly welcome. His wife, Mary, who was a teacher, started a girls' school. There is a plaque in Wesley Church commemorating George Lazenby. Hon Peter Durack, who was an Attorney-General in the Fraser government, shares George and Mary with me as our first grandfather and grandmother who arrived in the colony. In the first sitting of Parliament after I was sworn in as a minister, there was a condolence motion for Hon Peter Durack, and I wanted to get up and speak about our family history but it was not to be, so perhaps I can now make up for it.

In my first speech in this house, I mentioned my great-grandfather Albert Cockram, so it is fitting that I mention him in my last. I never imagined back then that I would write a book about him. His sometimes business partner with horses was James Nicholas, who was Gina Rinehart's grandfather. They won the Sydney Cup together with a horse called Ian Or. James Nicholas was also a business partner of Sir Sidney Kidman, and I was in Adelaide the day Gina took control of the S. Kidman and Co stations, and I wished her all the very best. Sir Sidney Kidman and James Nicholas are also mentioned in my book, *Albert Edman Cockram: King of the Racecourse 1870–1943*. Hon Norman Moore was kind enough to launch my book at Ascot Racecourse, and Gina also made a speech and was kind enough to autograph my books for people.

I also shared history with Gina when she christened the first trains that rolled into Roy Hill. She is a remarkable woman and one I am proud to call my friend. Australian politicians need to cut red tape and make it easier for people like her to invest in our great country. It was ridiculous and chaotic that she had to obtain 4 000 government approvals in order to start Roy Hill. There needs to be a smoother process to enable business to flourish in this state and in Australia. Hon Ken Baston's relatives are also mentioned in my book as they were pioneers of the Carnarvon region and owned Quobba station.

Where did 16 years go, and where does one start? There were so many good times, and some very dark and hurtful times. Which parts to put in the speech, and which ones to leave out? I came into this place when the Richard Court government lost the 2001 election. Matt Birney was the only Liberal to take a new seat after that election. He had won Kalgoorlie, the first Liberal in 100 years to win that seat. I hope that one day we will see Matt back in this Parliament. I was elected to the upper house along with Alan Cadby, and that was the sum total. Alan was in Parliament for only one term but I consider him to be my friend.

My first media campaign was when I was given the Environmental Protection Authority Amendment Bill to take through the upper house for the Liberals. Coming from a farming background, I knew that if this bill went through as it was, farmers would be in deep trouble. I learnt this bill and could parrot it in my sleep. Clearing dead trees was out; cutting a branch off a dead tree was okay, but the dead tree had to stay; a puddle could be classed as a wetland; and there was to be no more clearing along a fence line. I could go on and on—I actually did at the time!

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Hon Simon O'Brien remembers me going on and on about this bill! The bill was taken to three drafts and each time it was made more palatable. There were over 160 amendments to that bill. I talked to farmer groups everywhere and worked with the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. I was appalled that the bill had gone through the lower house. But having been in this place for 16 years, I know that is par for the course. We are the ones who scrutinise bills.

I was on the radio one morning taking the then Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Judy Edwards, to task, and my dad, who was in the farm shed, heard me and he yelled out to my mother that I had the minister by the leg and I would not let go. Hon Stephen Dawson, who worked for Judy Edwards at the time, would remember it well.

It took a year for the amendment bill to go through Parliament, and in the end the Greens stepped in and negotiated a deal with Labor that would allow farmers to clear one hectare of land for the purpose of buildings. However, this was never ideal, and the Environmental Protection Act still needs to be amended in many sections, but at least I had a few wins and farmers could still go about the business of farming. This showed me that even though I was in opposition, I could be productive and make changes for the better. Perhaps Hon Stephen Dawson will have another look at the changes needed now that he is the Minister for Environment—and I congratulate you on becoming a minister, Stephen, and wish you well. The Liberals did make some changes to that legislation, but it never went far enough.

Opposition is hard work, and there are very few rewards. I was prepared to work hard, and, if something was wrong, I tried to right it. My sense of social justice and my love for children, especially children who were in care or were being neglected, made me want to right all the wrongs and change things for the better. My background was as a welfare officer contracted to do social work in the south west. My colleagues called me the right wing social worker—it never left me! I have always had the belief that people should not be given things without doing something in return, no matter how small it is, so that some responsibility is taken.

I started my career in Albany, which looking back was a huge ask of anyone. I had never had anything to do with the Albany community—it was three hours' drive from my home town—but we had no Liberal covering that area, so I felt duty bound to keep the Albany office open. I could never have been successful without the love, friendship and dedication of my electorate officer, Sandra Scott, and my research officer, Anne Marie Mabbs, or Ange as she is affectionately known. Thank you so much to both of you for the 14 years of dedicated service you have given to me. In later years, Robyn Robb also worked for me, and she is such a clever and lovely girl. I was very blessed with my staff in Albany.

Albany was not easy for me. When Parliament was not sitting, I would leave my family and stay in Albany for four nights or more. I would watch city politicians come to Parliament and then drive five minutes down the road to get home when I had many hours of driving to do. I had a few accidents along the way caused by getting home to Bridgetown at midnight and getting up at 4.00 am to be in Albany for a breakfast event. I missed a T-junction while driving in thick fog at 110 kilometres an hour, took out a fence and missed a few trees. I could see the trees coming just as the mud covered the windscreen, and I placed the car in between two trees. I was very lucky. This is an occupational hazard for country members of Parliament. Fatigue causes accidents. We preach safety at work for others, but for us there is no such thing. I was lucky. I was unhurt each time.

In my first term, I was given the portfolios of Seniors and Volunteering; Great Southern; Women's Interests; Community Services, as well as being on the Environment and Public Affairs Committee, so I had plenty to keep me busy in my first term and I was always learning. My first international trip with a parliamentary committee was an inquiry on referral from the then Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, Hon Kim Chance, on GM crops, which took the Environment and Public Affairs Committee to Canada and America. I extend my sympathy to Kim's family on his passing. He was a very good minister and Leader of the House and I respected him greatly.

Hon Bruce Donaldson, who is a good friend, always called me his shadow, as nearly every time he went somewhere while overseas, I was right next to him. What I never told him was that as Washington is a big place and Bridgetown is a small place, I did not want to be left anywhere on my own! He loved travelling. We would always tease him that he had to smell jet fuel at least twice a year or he would go troppo. He is, once again, overseas!

In my first term, Hon Norman Moore was leader of the Liberals in the upper house and he is what I call a consummate politician. Some would call him tribal as far as the Liberal Party is concerned. After spending 36 years in Parliament, he is now the president of the WA Liberal Party. He taught me a great deal about politics but most of it, unfortunately, cannot be repeated here. At least I always knew who was who in the zoo, and that is all I am saying. He was a great help to me when I was a minister and we were both in London House. In the early days, I was in awe of Hon George Cash and Hon Peter Foss. I see them sometimes and enjoy catching up. They could both stand to speak for hours without notes, and they would make a lot of sense. I wanted to be able to speak like them but that would take practice. I do not think I ever got up to their skill.

So many colleagues have gone through this place over 16 years that I cannot name them all, but in my 16 years I found that each person who comes into this place has wanted to make a difference. I will say that in the past year I have seen that change, and on my side of politics it is now manipulation and less-than-honourable means used to get them here. That saddens me. Those members will be coming in here for the wrong reasons, not the right reasons.

In my second term of Parliament I was given the portfolio that I loved and wanted—the shadow Minister for Community Development. I also had women's interests, heritage and local government. During 2005, the Department for Community Development was failing children who were in state care. Caseloads were horrific, children were not being monitored and too many reports of child abuse were not being investigated. The culture in the department was totally dysfunctional. I worked tirelessly to point out the damage that was being done to children in care. Children have always been my passion and I was disgusted at what was happening. I worked with a great journalist, Anita Dalton, and with each report coming out that was worse than the one before, I would give her what I wanted to say and, miraculously, a press release would appear. I would refine it and she would work on it until I was happy for it to be released. We were a great team. She is sitting in the President's gallery today, such is our good friendship. Thank you, Anita.

I had headline after headline in *The West Australian* and was on radio at every opportunity pointing out where the government needed to improve. During 2006, after numerous reports, I found out that many children had been abused after a very short time in care. This was unacceptable to me and I called for a royal commission. Although this was not successful, I put forward that a select committee be formed to look at the adequacy of foster care in this state. With the help of Hon Giz Watson, this proposal was successful and I chaired that committee. The Labor Party then launched another inquiry. This was the only time in that term that the Liberals formed a committee against the then government, and I set the terms of reference. This inquiry was extensive. It went through departmental records and foster care procedures. I said in the press at the time, and I say it again

here as a reminder, I would not have let my dog into some of the houses children were going into—and that was not that long ago. All the committee recommendations were accepted and I am still to this day very proud of the work that we did.

The headline that I will never forget is one that screamed out from the front page, “Why won’t you protect the children, Premier?” The article then listed everything that was in the reports and how dysfunctional the department was. I did the job that a good shadow minister should, and the director general had no choice but to resign and the then minister was moved to another portfolio. I breathed a sigh of relief when Hon Sue Ellery was given the opportunity to become the minister. She was there for only 18 months when the government changed, but she had made some inroads into implementing those changes. I am sorry that Hon Sue Ellery is not in here today. The lovely girl that she is left me a lovely card to say some nice things about me. Please pass my thanks on to Sue; it was a lovely gesture.

In September 2008, the government changed and the Liberals found themselves in government. I thank Hon Colin Barnett for giving me the opportunity to be a minister. I was delighted to be sworn in as the twenty-first female minister in this state since Federation with the ministries of Child Protection, Community Services, Seniors and Volunteering, and later I added Women’s Interests, and Youth. I will say more a little later about the appalling lack of women in Parliament on the Liberal side.

In the four and a half years that I was a minister I changed many policies. I wrote the policies for child protection while in opposition and I was determined to implement them all. One policy I took to the election was that children who had no chance of staying with a dysfunctional parent or parents when they were born, or when coming to the attention of the department and put into care, should be allowed to stay with their foster carers after two years. This was called guardianship. This policy was the first in Australia. It allowed foster carers, after two years, to apply to the courts to keep the child in their care. Parental rights were all but extinguished, except for religion and schooling, and of course the child always knew who their kin were.

I travelled to the United Kingdom to look at their system. There are so many babies and children in the UK who have no hope of ever living with their family because of total dysfunction. Because of that, they try to adopt them out before they are four years old. I thought adoption was too harsh and went for the softer option of guardianship. Children need to know who they belong to, but they do not need to live with a hopeless drunk or a drugged parent or parents who do not have the ability to care about the welfare of a child or children. I have seen too much over my years, and if people are not going to look after their children, they should give them to others who will love them and give them a good grounding for life.

When I left as minister, 300 children were in guardianship. I was out and about one day when a mum of twins who were about three years old came up to me and said, “I want to thank you. These boys are now mine. They will go to Wesley school; they will have so many opportunities and we just love them so much.” I looked at these boys and my heart melted. They were dressed beautifully and they were loved. If I was to tell members the background they were born into, they would never believe me. Income management for those people who were neglecting their children was implemented by former Labor federal minister Jenny Macklin, who I worked very well with, and me. It was a wonderful program. We tried to implement it all over the state. I think I managed Mandurah and up north. Now the federal government is implementing a card—something that we implemented years ago but it just has a new name. New trials are now being undertaken. It was for anyone; it was not for only Aboriginal people or one sector of the community. If a parent or parents were neglecting their children, they were put on income management.

I increased the child protection budget by some 59 per cent and implemented health checks for children in care. Rapid response health care was my policy. I systematically went through my policies and implemented them one by one. Mandatory reporting was shared by Hon Sue Ellery and me—started by Sue and implemented by me. It was hard work but slowly the culture changed. New people were employed and there was a healthy mix of old and new, young and old, in the workforce. Child protection is not an exact science and I may write a few educational books in the future. I have looked very closely at the McGowan government’s changes to departments and I hope that the children in care will not be affected because of it. I will be watching with great interest.

I thank my ministerial staff; those who stayed with me and those who departed. All of them worked very hard for me and the government. Dommie, thank you; I know that you are watching online today.

I made top-of-the-world news while I was a minister. Australian news was not good enough for me; I had to go further! I did not know about it until I got a phone call from my daughter, who works in the media. She said, “My God, mum, what have you done?” I said, “I don’t know; what have I done?” The first occasion I was front-page news was when I said the burqa was alien to our culture. It went viral. I certainly still stand by that one. The second occasion was when I said a particular paedophile should have his penis removed with a sharp instrument. Both cartoons adorn my wall. I even made *The New York Times*! The cartoon that Dean Alston drew of me last week was rather curvaceous. I am now on a diet—thank you, Dean!

One of the hardest tasks I had was presiding over the redress scheme. Labor had promised a top payment of \$80 000 for those people who were abused in state care but the money had never been put aside when it lost government. When I went to Treasury and cabinet, they said no to the \$80 000. I put up a proposal for \$65 000 for top payment and once again was told no by Treasury and cabinet. The top payment ended up being \$45 000 and I had to justify that. I hated doing that as I knew it should have been more. I was proud of the way the scheme was rolled out, but I was never satisfied, and never will be, that I had to set up a scheme that paid only \$45 000 for the most horrific abuse that people could ever imagine in their wildest dreams at places like Tardun. It is disgraceful. I hope that this payment will be topped up when compensation becomes available from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. God knows that they deserve it.

While a minister, I shared an office at Parliament with Hon Simon O'Brien and Hon Norman Moore. Simon and I also shared an office during this term. I want to thank you, Simon, for your wisdom, support and friendship. I also thank Joy. I cannot talk about Simon without talking about Joy. I have never seen a couple who are so devoted—except for Mick and me, of course! Hon Simon O'Brien is staying in Parliament and I believe that with his knowledge, he will have a large part to play in the next Parliament. He now holds the history. Eight years is a long time to share an office. I am sure that Hon Simon O'Brien will miss my colourful language that I used at times. The member was a good minister and did not deserve the appalling treatment that he was given.

About six months before the 2013 election, I was having trouble walking and I was in a great deal of pain. I kept working and driving great distances. Ministers are taught to ignore health and that the show must go on. When I was no longer a minister and had plenty of time to investigate what was causing my leg to fail, I was told it was coming from my spine and I needed an operation. This was not a good time in my life. Having spent four and a half years as a minister working so hard, reforming a department, implementing new policies and then not being offered a place in cabinet for the second term of government, and then being in great pain, is not a good recipe. The door was slammed and it was like the knowledge that I had went with that slamming door.

I will always be grateful to Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. She said to me, and I will never forget it, "Robyn, everyone who sits on the front bench ends up on the back bench at some stage, whether by choice or election change or by being put out of cabinet. You did a great job and not many get to be a minister like you and I were." I consider Ljil to be a friend. When she left here, she painted a picture of two birds that symbolised her and me. They were the same but different. The picture hangs above my bed. Some people might think that a Labor person and a Liberal person, both of us pretty tribal, ending up being good friends is really odd, but I consider her to be a good friend.

In April 2013, I went to Anzac Cove at Gallipoli for the dawn service. This was one of the highlights of my career—sitting front row, watching the sun come up over the beautiful haunting quietness. I laid the wreath at the Lone Pine Memorial on behalf of the Western Australian government. I was in a lot of pain but I was not going to miss that trip. Mick and I were on a bus trip with other politicians and we retraced where our Australians fought. The historian on board gave us amazing insight into the horrors of war for our Australian men and women.

I had put my operation off for a little while until I could no longer walk and then events took over. I was operated on and the surgeon told me that if I had left it any longer, I would have been in a wheelchair. It took me some time to recover and it certainly was a wake-up call. Being a minister was a privilege. However, working all hours took its toll. When I was a minister, I still had to drive to Albany from Bridgetown and across the electorate. My husband, Michael, was my driver most of the time. I would be dead now from fatigue if Mick had not had driven me. There is no other way to put it.

I then moved my electorate office from Albany to Bridgetown and this took some 18 months. Every member of the Albany branch of the Liberal Party was informed during this lengthy period. My staff members in Bridgetown were two women who I had grown up with, Beverley Walsh and Sue Tomkinson, my friends, and it was lovely to have them work alongside me, both of them so very talented. Barbara Johnson has been a friend for over 20 years and was shire president of Kununurra; she has many skills. Thank you to the three of you. My life was made easier because of you. I know that they are watching me on the computer.

I had just over two wonderful years in my home town and was able to see more of my elderly parents. Sadly, my father passed away in June last year, so to spend some more time with him was wonderful. My mother has now left the farm and lives in town. She is such a strong lady. At 85 years of age she chose and purchased a house and then told us. I have good parents and a good foundation and I miss talking politics with my dad. Over the last four years I have immersed myself in legislation as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislation. We have had a number of complex bills sent to us and we have done what the house has asked of us. I thank Hon Dave Grills, as I know how hard it is for country members, but he always turned up and was a great member to have on board. I hope that he can get a job training adult rangers or doing something that he likes. One of the last committee reports was on Bell Group resources and I very much enjoyed having Hon Ken Travers on the committee. Members would be co-opted onto the committee depending on their

interests, but we all worked together no matter the make-up. Both Hon Ken Travers and I knew this legislation would never fly.

I have had so many opportunities and I have taken them all, sometimes wondering just what I was doing at a particular place. For example, in Africa I was stranded in the middle of six or eight nonconforming traffic lanes in a bus when the driver walked off and left us in the middle of the road. Hon Barry House and another politician and I were bewildered, but the driver eventually came back. African drivers are a nightmare. I have had opportunities to travel to other countries on trade delegations and for legislation purposes. Two years ago, as the Deputy Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, I travelled with the committee to Scotland, Ireland and England to talk to other children's commissioners. I have travelled extensively throughout Western Australia and certainly extensively throughout my electorate. I know every back road—I will say it quickly—that does not have a policeman on it! That is my sense of humour. I have enjoyed helping people no matter what their problem was. Being a politician is not a straightforward role. There are many facets to the job and it is a profession of which we should be proud.

I want to get back to the topic of women, or lack of them, in the Liberal Party. I have been in the media and said that in the new Parliament we will only have one woman in the upper house on our side—and what a woman she is! Hon Donna Faragher is an accomplished young woman who I am proud to know. She is also the mother of Harry and Clare and is a lovely mother. I am going to miss hearing about Clare and Harry and their exploits. This morning they gave me a picture that they painted and they said some really kind words. It is sad that she will be the only woman on our side; it is not only sad but unacceptable. In the lower house we have two women. I am advocating to have targets with teeth—enforceable targets. Why? I look at the last round of preselections and I see that men are taking the top positions, not in all cases but in many regions. We have a new breed in the Liberal Party and it does not sit well with me. Women are 51 per cent of the population of this state and that is not being recognised in this party.

The Liberals need to lift their game or they will go further backwards. I was not in favour of the Labor Party quotas, but I have seen how their women who I thought were not—what I would say—up to the job at the time of entering Parliament, after one term are. They have been mentored to become good politicians. The Liberal Party is not ready for quotas, but targets may start the ball rolling. I hope so. I was told I was too old for politics and needed to go. This is what I learnt the night before preselection. I am not the only one in this house either. I was meant to be pushed off the ticket, but that never happened. However, it was the nastiest preselection I have ever been involved in. I am 59 years of age and if I were a man that would never have been said. I listened to Hon Wendy Duncan's valedictory speech and she said she was called "Granny Duncan", and not in a nice way. In my humble opinion, Wendy would have made a great minister. Parliament is the poorer for her not being here. This attitude has to go. Women of my age and older have the knowledge and wisdom learnt from life and they have the time to devote to politics. Men get grey in their hair and they are called distinguished. Women keep dying their hair to cover their greys so nobody calls them old.

Parliament and its traditions are very dear to me. Before I get onto family I will say a little about some of the members I have worked with. When I came into this place the only other woman on my side was Hon Barbara Scott, whom I note was given a well-deserved Order of Australia medal. I entered Parliament in 2001 with Hon Sue Ellery, Hon Adele Farina and Hon Kate Doust. Now, I am going and they are still here. Hon Sue Ellery was Minister for Child Protection and then shadow Minister for Child Protection. We had a healthy respect for each other; I congratulate her on becoming Minister for Education and wish her well. I am prematurely congratulating Hon Kate Doust on hopefully becoming the first female President of this house. I know she will do it with the grace and dignity that the office demands. Both Kate and I have become grandmothers within the last couple of years, and I think, for both of us, that is more special than anything in the world. It is for me, and I am sure I have seen a smile on the face of Hon Kate Doust when she has held her little granddaughter.

Hon Adele Farina and I shared representing the South West Region. It saddens me that she is not a minister. She is a lawyer, she worked hard and deserves to get a promotion; she runs rings around some of them. It says something when three Labor women are still members, and four of our female members are going. Hon Sally Talbot came into Parliament in the election following the one in which I was elected. I have always had a good working relationship with Sally, and we shared an electorate. Sally is what I call a tribal Labor girl. I wish her well in this Parliament. I have worked with Hon Liz Behjat for eight years, and I always believe that if a member is working hard and doing a good job then they should continue. I thought Liz was badly treated, and I wish her well for her next adventure in life.

I introduced Michael Mischin to his now partner, Laraine, whom I have known since we were 10 years old. I took her to a Liberal function and said to her, "Michael is unattached, go and see if you like him." He never had a chance to escape, but I do not think he ran very hard either. I thank Hon Ken Baston for his friendship and sense of humour. He was a good Minister for Agriculture and Food. Hon Phil Edman, as the Whip, kept us all on our toes, but the other side to that is that pairs were given out on a very fair basis. I have a bone to pick in that I did not get my fair share of Toblerone! He used to give one out every week, and I would miss out.

For eight and a half years Hon Peter Collier has given me a glass of water at the beginning of each sitting day without fail. I must have annoyed him for a couple of days as he forgot yesterday, but I did get a glass of water today. For four and a half years I sat next to Peter in the first term of the Barnett government. I thank him for giving me the opportunity to chair the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council. Mia Betjeman, who was the first female Clerk in this Parliament, is the chief executive officer and I hope Hon Sue Ellery recognises her talent; I am sure she will.

I have always found Hon Rick Mazza to be very practical and down to earth and I wish him well. I know his party is called Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, but we affectionately call it shooters and rooters, or rooters and shooters. Did I say that? I did not say that! I never agree with any of the Greens' policies, but I have enjoyed working with Hon Robin Chapple and Hon Lynn MacLaren in our committee work. They are good people, and I wish Lynn well in her next endeavour. I wish the National Party well. I always like to tell the Nats that my great uncle, William Carroll, who sat in this chamber, was the first Senator from Western Australia to go to Canberra for the Country Party. Hon Colin Holt and I shared the South West Region and Albany for a few years and we always respected each other in the electorate. I wish Hon Jacqui Boydell and Hon Martin Aldridge well for the next Parliament.

If I have not mentioned the newer Labor members, I wish them all well in the new government and the roles that they have; it is a great honour to be in government. Hon Helen Morton is not making a speech, but if she did we would hear about changes that she put forward in mental health and disability. I respect her work ethic as she too carried a heavy load, along with child protection. It seems that women have to work twice as hard, and even when they are sick, they are not allowed to be sick. I thank her for the work she has done in this state. I wish Hon Alyssa Hayden well in her next adventure, wherever that takes her. I heard every day the banter between her and Hon Jim Chown. I am not sure who teased whom the most. We sit long hours, and Hon Jim Chown has a sweet tooth and was always offering me his favourite sherbets. I never took them—I did sometimes! Hon Nick Goiran is a very serious young man who has a good future ahead of him. He is like a dog with a bone if he thinks he is right, and he won me over when he would not let Hon Colin Barnett shut him up in the party room. He kept going. Well done, Nick.

To be a politician one must have good friends surrounding them and, even more importantly, a wonderful family. In the President's gallery today I have Derek and Beth Dilkes. Derek and I were on council together some 20 years ago and Beth was president of our local branch for many years. Both are dedicated community people. I thank both of them for always having my back and being my friends. I have known Lyn Whitney all my life, and what an amazing lady she is. She runs an architectural drafting business and did this while her children were babies, twins amongst them. She is a netball coach, swimming coach and all things community, and is married to Peter, who is not here, but is also a dedicated community person. They too have always had my back, with Lyn also being secretary of the branch. I thank Chris Dagg, who is our branch president and was also on council with me some twenty years ago, for his friendship and the help that he gives to people in our community. Also in the President's gallery are Greg and Carol Giblett. I have known Greg all my life and Carol since she was 13, and I love it that Greg wanted to be here today to hear my last speech. Greg had a brother, Neil, who died in March two years ago and left us far too young. We were on council together as well. He always helped me on election day and was a great supporter of mine. I like to think he is here in spirit.

I have mentioned Anita Dalton before. She has worked in this Parliament for Brian Ellis and he was lucky to have such a talented lady work for him and she was lucky to work for such a lovely man, and I am proud to call both of them friends. I take this opportunity to thank the Parliament House staff, from our Clerk, Nigel Pratt, to the chamber staff, kitchen staff, Hansard and everyone who works here, no matter what their role is. I want to thank Peter Gale, who has been here one year longer than me, for his professional manner and the help he gives us all, and Lisa and Hayley, who are in here.

Lastly I get to thank my family. I met my husband, Michael, when I was 18 and he was 28. We have now been married for 40 years and I could not have done this job without him. He has been my absolute rock. I have had to stop him wanting to punch out a few members over 16 years, and that four-by-two got very close sometimes! I call him my "Crocodile Dundee II", but I say that with pride and love because, well, he is my driver and I do not want to walk home! Truly, I could not have done it without you. Two of our children are here today, Jenny and Holly, and Jenny's partner, Craig, who must be outside with the baby—my only grandchild, the apple of nannie's eye, Cooper Joseph Myatt. Our other two children Kristy and Jason, and his wife Susan, are in Sydney at work. Mick and I are truly blessed with our family. They have had to put up with a mother who was always on the go, but I hope they know that they came first and always will. Craig and Susan have been a welcome addition to our family and Craig, as the father of my grandson, gets a few more brownie points—inducement for another! Our children are amazing adults and I love them dearly.

After 16 years, if I have missed anyone, it has not been intentional. I thank the people of the South West Region and in particular those Liberal members who have always supported me. I sign off with a great sense of achievement and a job well done, as I know I put my heart and soul into making a difference—not a bad effort

for a girl who grew up in Bridgetown, a small country town in the south west. I know it is the right time for me to leave this place. It has given me so much and taught me so much. I leave members with a poem by Edwin Hatch, titled *Towards Fields of Light*, because it is about how I feel about parliamentarians who are in here for the right reasons, and I certainly was —

For me—to have made one soul
The better for my birth;
To have added but one flower
To the garden of the earth;
To have struck one blow for truth
In the daily fight with lies;
To have done one deed of right
In the face of calumnies;
To have sown in the souls of men
One thought that will not die;
To have been a link in the chain of life —
Shall be immortality.

God bless you all, and thank you.

[Applause.]
