

**HON SANDY LEWIS**

*Condolence Motion*

**MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier)** [2.01 pm]: I move —

That this house records its sincere regret at the passing of Hon Sandy Lewis and offers its deepest sympathies to his family and friends.

Sandy was born Alexander Ashley Lewis in Glen Osmond, Adelaide, on 22 January 1931. His father, Lance Lewis, was the South Australian managing director of Goldsborough Mort and his grandfather John Lewis had been a pastoralist and a member of the South Australian Legislative Council. His uncle Essington Lewis was the celebrated managing director of BHP.

As a boarder at St Peter's College in Adelaide, Sandy Lewis spent much of his holiday time on the rural properties of his extended family. He commenced an engineering degree, but soon devoted his attention to farming and rural industry. He first came to Western Australia in 1952, and farmed at Kojonup after 1955. Then branching into the servicing of farms, he founded PS Agencies in 1961 and relocated to Boyup Brook in 1963. Sandy Lewis pioneered the organisation for farm machinery dealing in Western Australia, to the benefit of both dealers and the wider rural community. He maintained his support for this industry after entering Parliament and leaving his own business. He served as state secretary of the Farm Machinery Dealers Association of Western Australia for 26 years, from 1977 to 2003, and within this time was also national secretary between 1979 and 2002.

In 1954, Sandy Lewis joined the Liberal Party and was president of the very active Mobrup branch, which is named after a locality near Kojonup, and a considerable force in Liberal Party affairs. He served as president of the Forrest division and as state vice-president during the presidency of his friend and future senator Reg Withers. In December 1972, he was endorsed by the Liberal Party to contest a by-election for the Legislative Assembly district of Blackwood, which was caused by the resignation of David Reid, MLA, who unsuccessfully contested the federal seat of Forrest. Blackwood was a strongly agricultural seat that included Capel, Donnybrook, Bridgetown and Boyup Brook. First held by the late John Hearman for the Liberal Party from its creation in 1950, Blackwood had been won by the Country Party in 1968 and retained by it in 1971. After a careful, thorough campaign, overshadowed by the federal election held two weeks earlier, on 16 December 1972, Sandy Lewis gained 2 023 primary votes—nearly 400 votes ahead of the Australian Labor Party and 560 votes ahead of the Country Party. After the distribution of Country Party preferences, he had a comfortable majority of 1 443, or 64 per cent of the vote.

In his first speech to the Legislative Assembly on 21 March 1973, Sandy Lewis argued that the marketing of rural exports had been neglected. He urged that if three-quarters of one per cent of the turnover of the profitable apple industry were set aside, it would be sufficient to hire marketing experts and survey consumers. He stated —

Let us go out and market our agricultural products in the same manner as all other products are marketed. Let us sell through promotion and surveys of the markets, and modernise our concept of the marketing of rural products. When we do this we will have no overproduction because this country, with the markets it has on its doorstep in South-east Asia, will be able to supply the needs of those countries; ...

Sandy Lewis's free enterprise vision of 1973 is today's long-accepted wisdom at a time when rural industry is of increasing significance.

Sandy Lewis did not remain long in the Legislative Assembly, as the district of Blackwood was abolished in the redistribution of boundaries held earlier in 1972, with its four shires distributed between the ongoing districts of Vasse, Collie and Warren. Instead, he was endorsed for the Legislative Council seat of Lower Central Province, now consisting of the districts of Katanning, Collie and Warren. Katanning was a stronghold of the Country Party, renamed the National Alliance, while Collie and Warren were then safe seats for the Australian Labor Party. It was no small achievement for Sandy Lewis at the March 1974 election to become the first Liberal member of the Legislative Council for Lower Central Province, narrowly finishing ahead of the National Alliance and then defeating the Australian Labor Party candidate on preferences. He spent 15 years in the Legislative Council, and his record there will be noted in another condolence motion in the other place. He served as secretary of the Parliamentary Liberal Party from 1977 until 1984, and was secretary of the shadow cabinet from 1986 until 1988. Sandy Lewis could be outspoken and even belligerent, particularly in regard to his electorate; however, he is also remembered as a constructive peacemaker behind the scenes and as a meticulous organiser of generally successful election campaigns. Those working closely with him found that they were trusted to get on with the job, and they were deeply loyal to him.

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His parliamentary career was ended by the electoral changes and redistribution of 1987–88 that replaced the two-member Legislative Council provinces with multi-member regions. Sandy Lewis was not selected to contest the new South West Region and retired. He remained active in his support for the Farm Machinery Dealers Association, worked in the travel industry and was executive director of Western Australian Regional Manufacturers from 1990 until 2003.

Sandy had a lifelong commitment to firefighting and fire prevention. He was a committee member of bush fire brigades, chaired the 1994 ministerial inquiry into prescribed burning and was a fierce advocate for rural-based fire services. While living in Baldivis in 2006, he actively supported the Liberal campaign for the Peel by-election. A few years ago, he returned to South Australia, living at Victor Harbor until ill health required a move to a residential care facility at Port Elliot, where he continued to take a firm interest in local issues until his passing on 9 May.

We convey our sympathy to his daughter, Bronwyn, who could not be with us today, and to other close family members, including his nephew, David Sands, who is in the gallery today with his partner, Jennifer Solomon. We also express our condolences to Mrs Tricia Lewis.

I knew Sandy. Although our parliamentary careers did not coincide, I certainly had quite frequent visits from Sandy to my electorate office in Cottesloe, when he would advocate very strongly for country fire services. It is somewhat ironic that that issue is before us today. Coincidentally, only two weeks ago, while I was in Toodyay, I went to pick up the morning paper and bumped into a colleague of Sandy's—that being Phil Lockyer, who many members will remember. I must say that Sandy Lewis and Phil Lockyer were probably the last of that generation of country members of Parliament who tended to be bigger than life and would say and do things that we would think would be politically incorrect and not acceptable today. I enjoyed half an hour standing outside the butchers shop in Toodyay hearing Phil tell me lots of stories about Sandy Lewis, which for obvious reasons I cannot repeat here, but he was one of the true characters of Western Australian politics. He was really committed to the party he served and to the Parliament, particularly most of his time in the Legislative Council. Again, condolences to his family and friends. Sandy Lewis made a very significant contribution to this Parliament and particularly to rural industry in Western Australia.

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.08 pm]: I join the Premier to pass on the opposition's condolences to the family and friends of Mr Sandy Lewis, a former member of both houses of Parliament. Alexander Ashley Lewis was born on 22 January 1931. He came from a very famous family. His father was quite well-known in Adelaide, his famous uncle headed up BHP and his brother, Thomas Lewis, became Premier of New South Wales in 1976 for a period of about one year.

He attended schools in Adelaide, St Peter's College and St Mark's College, which are quite prestigious schools. He arrived in Western Australia in the early 1950s and had a whole range of occupations—jackaroo, trade cadet, farmer, agent and machinery dealer. As the Premier outlined, he established a farm machinery business and kept a keen interest in that throughout his life. He started farming in Kojonup in 1955 and in that year married Patricia, with whom he had one daughter, Bronwyn, who is unable to be here today. He was subsequently remarried in 1978 to Tricia, and remained married to her for the remainder of his life. He served the Liberal Party as president of the Moberg branch and then the Forrest division. He was state vice-president and a member of the federal council. He was elected as the representative of Blackwood in 1972 until 1974, when he went to the Legislative Council and served the remainder of his parliamentary career. He served for a total of 17 years. He held a range of roles in the Parliamentary Liberal Party over that period.

I must say that he is someone I recognised, because I saw him around the building a fair bit. I think he came here for lunch and the like with former members of Parliament and would catch up with old friends in the dining room, as we often see former members from that era do.

He took an active interest in public life after his departure from Parliament and, indeed, lived for a period in Baldivis in the electorate of the member for Warnbro. He played a role in establishing a fire lobby group called Locals against Wildfires. He was very concerned about issues of fire management in regional Western Australia. In his speeches he expressed a great deal of concern about agricultural issues. As a former farmer, jackaroo and the like, he showed a great deal of interest in those issues. I saw him around the building. I do not recall ever speaking to him, but I certainly recognised him. He took a keen interest in public life, as I said, after his retirement. In an article in *Farm Weekly* in 2007 he decided to provide a scorecard on the ministers in the then government, and it is not pretty reading in relation to some of us! He gave my performance a mark of four out of 10.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** That was a high mark!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** He was very kind!

He gave me a mark of four out of 10 and I will not repeat the mark he gave to other members, but suffice to say that their marks were significantly lower than four out of 10! The top mark he gave was six out of 10, which he

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gave to then Premier Carpenter, then Deputy Premier Ripper and Minister Kobelke. For others he indicated he could not provide a score because their performance was too poor!

He was obviously a man of firm opinions who retained an interest in public affairs throughout his life. He served for 17 years in both houses of Parliament. He was clearly a very interesting man from a very interesting family. I pass on our condolences to his family and friends.

**MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin)** [2.13 pm]: I had known Sandy Lewis since I was a kid. Sandy and his wife, Patricia, farmed south of us at Ryansbrook south of Kojonup in the mid-1950s. Sandy and Pat were extremely good friends of my mum and dad in those early years on their farm. One of my first and very vivid memories of Sandy is him killing a big dugite near the outside toilet at their farm. As a young kid, it made quite an impression on me.

Educated at the well-known St Peter's College in Adelaide and the University of Adelaide, Sandy moved to WA to farm and later purchased a farm machinery business in nearby Boyup Brook. Elected MLA for Blackwood in December 1972, Sandy transferred to an upper house seat as MLC for the Lower Central Province in 1974, which he held until 1989. Sandy had a strong involvement with the Farm Machinery Dealers Association and was the first individual winner of the John Lynn Memorial Prize for his contribution to the farm machinery industry. He was also an active member of the Locals against Wildfires and had strong views on bushfire management. He chaired a ministerial inquiry into prescribed burning back in 1994. Sandy was also a member of a number of community sporting clubs and groups. Sandy was a real character and I remember fondly his visits to catch up with my mum and dad in Kojonup. They were always loud but enjoyable affairs. Sandy quite often contacted me as a parliamentarian, especially on bushfire and machinery safety issues. He always put forward his views very strongly but very fairly. He gave a great deal to Western Australia and particularly to country Western Australians and was well known and respected across the state. On behalf of my Nationals colleagues, past and present, I offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston)** [2.14 pm]: Sandy Lewis—what a large, outgoing and very, very outspoken country politician, of whom we could do with a few more in here today. My first recollection of Sandy was meeting him with Tom Jones, of whom he was a great friend, even though they were on opposing political parties. It is rumoured, and I think some of it is fact, that Tom and Sandy would travel to meetings near and far. That was the easy part. Getting home from those meetings was the hard part! I am sure he got into trouble a lot of times because of that! When Tom Jones spoke to me about Sandy Lewis, he spoke to me with the deepest of respect about how they worked together on country issues regardless of what they were—straight down the line. It was also rumoured that they went doorknocking together, even though they were on different political sides! I am not sure whether that is true, but that is how close a friendship they had. They worked very closely together, and, as I say, Sandy was well respected right through the mid–south west, and he made sure that the farming community was well represented. One of the first people to ring me when I was elected in 2001 was Sandy. He would also drop in occasionally and keep me informed of some of the issues that needed to be addressed in country areas by letter from time to time. The family of Tom Jones has asked me to say that they would like to pass on their condolences, because that is how close he was to them as well; he was not only close to Tom. It is with sadness that I note he has gone, but he certainly left a legacy for country politicians and country people to live up to. I again offer my condolences to his family.

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro)** [2.17 pm]: I want to rise briefly and join in sharing a short reflection on Sandy and how I came to encounter him. As members have heard from the Premier, Sandy was an experienced and active campaigner on behalf of his party after his departure from politics, and he was successful on many occasions. I was very fortunate that on the occasion he participated in the campaign for the by-election in Peel, he was not so successful. Fortunately, as a consequence, I was elected to Parliament for the seat of Peel; that is how I came to the Parliament. As an indication of the type of person Sandy was, very shortly after my entry into Parliament, he got in touch with me, partly to give me some instruction as the new member—as his new representative—and he invited me to his home. There were some constituent issues that he made me aware of with regard to himself and some of his neighbours, but he also just wanted to have a cup of tea and a chat. As an experienced former member of Parliament, he was very generous with his advice to me and I appreciated that very much at the time. He was always very friendly and welcoming whenever I saw him. As members heard from the Leader of the Opposition, he was quite regularly here at Parliament House having lunch with former members. Whenever I saw him, he would stop me, have a chat and give me the benefit of some further advice, which was always greatly appreciated. I would like to take the opportunity to join everyone else in extending my deepest condolences to the entire family, friends and loved ones of Sandy. He was a good man.

**MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Leader of the House)** [2.19 pm]: Very briefly, I also place on record my condolences to the family of Sandy Lewis. I remember him from my very early days of involvement in the Liberal Party in the 1980s. He was certainly a person, as we have heard, of very strong presence and views, but he was also very good company. As we have heard from the Premier and others, he had a strong interest in bushfire management in Western Australia and I remember him making those views known to me; in fact, he

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sent me a copy of a report he had been involved in preparing when I had responsibility for the emergency services portfolio in 1997 and 1998. Certainly, I know that interest on his behalf very much continued after that point as well. I extend my condolences in particular to his daughter, Bronwyn, whom I know and who is very much involved in the arts—in fact, previously in Perth, but now in the eastern states. I wish Bronwyn in particular and other members of Sandy's family the best.

**The SPEAKER:** I request all members to stand for one minute's silence in order to carry the motion.

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