

ALBANY WELCOME WALLS

Grievance

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough) [9.24 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Culture and the Arts and regards the long-promised Albany welcome walls which, after many years, have yet to materialise. This matter was brought to my attention by Scarborough stalwarts Sid and Carole Breeden who, like many other Western Australians, decided to honour their relatives by commemorating their arrival in Australia at the Port of Albany by including them on the Albany welcome walls.

Carole and Sid had already commemorated Sid's mother, Norah, and Carole's parents, George and Audrey Hardwicke, by including their names on the original Fremantle Welcome Walls because those relatives had first stepped off the boat in Fremantle. Interestingly, Sid's great-great-uncle arrived in Fremantle in May 1851. However, his arrival is not recorded on the Fremantle Welcome Walls because, having arrived as a 23-year-old convict—he was number 250 on the third convict ship, *Mermaid*—it was recorded in Fremantle Prison. When the Albany welcome walls were announced, Sid and Carole thought that it would be a great opportunity to recognise Sid's father, Sidney Arthur Goody Breeden, who was known as Arthur, and his grandmother, Alice Maude Breeden, who was known as Maude, both of whom arrived in Albany on 23 January 1904 aboard the *SS Runic*.

My colleague from Vasse may recognise the name Breeden as both Sid's parents settled in Busselton where they rose to prominence because of business interests throughout the south west. In his early years, Sid's father, Arthur, worked for a professional fisherman at Flinders Bay in Augusta before joining the 16th Battalion in World War I. He was severely wounded at the Somme, France, but survived and returned to post-World War I Australia. After the Great War, Arthur was a mailman who took mail by horse and buggy from Busselton to Augusta three times a week. This included mail by horseback from Augusta to the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse. They were long day hard days with 3.00 am starts.

With the rank of captain during World War II, Arthur was Adjutant of the 19th Garrison Battalion based in Geraldton. His role included leading an army survey patrol up the Dampier Peninsula north of Broome during the dire days of the feared Japanese invasion of 1942.

Arthur was a respected member of the Busselton community being involved with the community and as a successful businessman. He passed away suddenly at his home "Cool Waters", which was opposite the banks of the Vasse River, on 20 May, 1979, aged 81. The northern bank of the Vasse River in Busselton between the causeway and railway bridges is named Arthur and Norah Breeden Park in Sid's parents' honour.

Given Arthur's remarkable story, it is no wonder that Sid and Carole wish for his memory and that of his paternal grandmother to be commemorated as part of the Albany welcome walls. That brings me to the essence of my grievance. In March 2007, after paying the required fee, Sid and Carole received confirmation of registration for the Albany welcome walls with a request to reconfirm the spelling of their relatives' names prior to 6 April, 2007. They were confident that, having paid their money, things would progress. The letter advised that construction was anticipated to be completed in late 2008 and that Carole and Sid would be advised of the completion date so that they could attend the unveiling ceremony.

In early 2009, two years after they had received confirmation of registration, Carole and Sid became concerned that the walls had been unveiled without them knowing. They decided to visit the site at which they anticipated the walls would be built. Being the thorough people that they are, they decided to check first. It was lucky that they did because a trip to Albany would have been wasted had they made it. After several unsuccessful attempts to get information about the progress of the wall, Sid and Carole were finally told by members of the department that the situation was "most embarrassing" and that the construction authorisation process had yet to be completed. Some 42 months after the government happily took their payment towards the Albany welcome walls, not a single brick has been laid in the construction of this important monument for families who wish to commemorate their Western Australian history.

While Sid and Carole and their surviving family members are thankfully healthy, there is genuine concern that the project will not be built in the lifetime of Sid's older sister Bet, who is aged 83, or his brother, Rob, who is aged 82. My constituents Sid and Carole Breeden and their family—and many other Western Australians—are keen to know when the Albany welcome walls will be completed and why in the world the construction process has taken so long. They acted in good faith and made a contribution to preserving the history and memory of their parents. I look forward to the minister's response.

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Minister for Culture and the Arts) [9.28 am]: I thank the member Scarborough for raising this issue.

Mr P. Papalia: And for waking me from my two-year slumber!

The SPEAKER: Although only one member has made a grievance about this issue, I am sure that this issue will directly affect other members in this place. I would expect that those members might like to make a contribution. However, for other members this is not their time to grieve, nor is it their time to offer a response.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I thank the member for Scarborough for raising this important issue on behalf of the Breeden family and many other families who are awaiting the completion of the Albany welcome walls. Similar to stage three of the Fremantle Welcome Walls, the project has taken far longer than has been desirable. A lot of responsibility for that falls at the feet of the previous Labor government.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: Members opposite do not like the truth!

In relation to the Fremantle Welcome Walls in particular—I am not sure whether this is specifically the case for the Albany welcome walls—information from the Western Australian Museum was sent to the office of the previous Premier in March 2008. Nothing was received from the Premier’s office prior to the change of government. There was a lot of talk but very little action during the term of the previous government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: I am sure that the member for Scarborough is actually interested in the substance of the information. I make the observation that it was interesting to hear the history of the Breeden family, and I am sure that Arthur Breeden in Busselton would have had some contact with, and probably knew, my own grandparents—my mother’s parents—who were active in business in Busselton around the 1920s, prior to relocating to Northam; it is interesting to have that link.

Since the former government announced the Albany welcome walls, the Western Australian Museum has been working with a range of stakeholders on the project. Delays have occurred in several instances, initially due to the previous government’s mismanagement of the budget, which meant that insufficient funding was allocated to the overall project, including Fremantle, and this government has had to deal with that aspect; and more recently, as a result of the processes involved in seeking the appropriate approvals for the location and design of the walls. It is important to note that it is a requirement that the location of the walls fits in with the City of Albany’s objectives, which include taking into consideration the location of the Albany waterfront redevelopment and the 50-kilometre Kinjarling heritage trail.

However, I am pleased to say that, under this government, real progress has been made and the location of the walls has been determined, at the site of the WA Museum in Albany. To provide more specific information about the most recent progress on the project, on Tuesday, 20 July 2010, the City of Albany unanimously endorsed the final design for the Albany welcome walls.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr J.H.D. DAY: It is certainly very pleasing that it has happened. That stage has been addressed, and the final stage of approval has been through the Heritage Council of WA, and on Tuesday, 10 August 2010, the WA Museum received written notification that this approval has been granted.

The design of the walls was created by a local Albany firm, Howard and Heaver Architects. It incorporates a boardwalk stretching from the museum’s residency building over the water of the Amity precinct, and it references the original waterline and location of Major Lockyer’s first landing place at Point Frederick. The complete welcome walls will overlook Princess Royal Harbour, the Amity precinct and the Albany port. The design is symbolic of the journey many migrants made when they disembarked in Albany. The boardwalk includes timbers from the original town jetty, which is the very same jetty the migrants would have walked along as they made their way onto Australian soil.

I am pleased to say that the time line for the completion of this project is the end of this year. I can assure the member for Scarborough and the constituents she represents that the Albany welcome walls have been very much escalated as a priority project for the WA Museum and, indeed, for me as the Minister for Culture and the Arts. I can assure all members that I have taken a personal interest in the Albany and Fremantle projects ever since we have been in government and ever since I have been made aware of this issue. The processes have been complex and have taken longer than I would have liked, but there has been very strong interest from me and members of staff in my office in getting both these projects completed. They are actually finally happening, including the Fremantle project.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Thursday, 19 August 2010]

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Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr John Day; The Speaker:

From the member for Scarborough's address, it is clear that Sid and Carole Breeden and their family have contributed much to the community of Western Australia. It is certainly very much my desire and intention to see the Albany and Fremantle welcome walls completed as a tribute to migrants, such as the Breedens, who arrived in Western Australia and played a pivotal role in our state's social, economic and cultural development.

To reiterate, this project and the Fremantle project are underway and my understanding is that both will be completed by the end of this year.