

CHRIS MAJEWSKI

Statement

HON HELEN BULLOCK (Mining and Pastoral) [9.41 pm]: I rise tonight with a heavy heart to pay tribute to Mr Chris Majewski, the former principal of Leinster Primary School, who died on 4 October 2011 while trying to save his son from falling over a cliff during a holiday at Karijini National Park. I met Chris last year during one of my regional trips. I was surprised when he came out to meet me; I thought I had the wrong person because he looked like a body builder rather than a primary school principal. He was very tall and well-built. I suspected that his leisure time hobby might have been body building. He spoke very well and showed me around his school while he briefed me about it. During the conversation he said that he had been on the job for only 12 months and was from the beautiful seaside town of Albany. Naturally that became part of the conversation and he agreed that the move from the seaside town of Albany to the mining town of Leinster was a complete change for him and his family. Luckily, his family settled in, the whole family loved the change and everything was going very well. We also talked about the town of Leinster. Many people who live in a small mining town do whatever they can to make a contribution to the community in which they live. Chris was one of those people. He volunteered for a number of community-based committees and tried to do his best to help the community.

Mining towns such as Leinster have particular issues to deal with, including education. Sometimes education is not highly valued because most of the kids are guaranteed a job with the mining companies and they can potentially earn six-figure salaries if they hold a high school certificate. Some parents take their kids out of school for two or three weeks during the school term because mum and dad want to take a holiday during the off-swing. That conversation led to a discussion about education on responsibility in schools and role models for young people.

Looking back, it was an interesting conversation and covered a range of topics. I enjoyed the conversation. I hope he did as well.

Western Australia is a rich state as well as a beautiful state. It has so many hidden treasures. Karijini National Park is one of them. I had a quick visit two years ago while I was passing through during another one of my regional visits. It was as beautiful as a postcard, but that beauty often overshadows the danger. I remember I made a descent of about 10 metres at one of the gorges and decided to turn around and go back. There were two reasons for that. One of them is that each of those steps along the cliffs was quite high and steep as well. They were covered with sand and dust, which made those steps very slippery. There were no basic protection railings along either side of the cliffs. It was a very steep and very winding descent. I was a bit scared. That is why I decided to turn around. The other reason I turned around is that I remember at the time I was quite tired because I had been on this trip for a while. It was towards the end of my trip. I was not in the mood for sightseeing. I was well aware of these facts. At that point I decided that the sensible thing was for me to turn around and go back. In my mind at that time I was thinking that an accident would one day happen. That accident did happen and it happened to someone I know. How strange life is.

At this moment words cannot help convey much of my heartfelt condolence, which extends to Mr Majewski's wife, children, family, students, colleagues and community. My thoughts are with them. He will be remembered.