

HON KEN TRAVERS — VALEDICTORY REMARKS

Motion

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [3.31 pm] — by leave: I move without notice —

That this house expresses its appreciation to the retiring Hon Ken Travers for his significant contribution to the Legislative Council and the state of Western Australia over the last 19 years as the member for North Metropolitan Region.

On behalf of WA Labor, I thank my friend of some 30-odd years for his service to the good people of the North Metropolitan Region, to the Parliament, to the people of Western Australia and to the Labor Party.

The conventional public wisdom is that politicians are held in very low regard. Hon Ken Travers is an example of what is good about politicians—that is, a person who is deeply committed to public service. Public service is honourable and so is Hon Ken Travers, not only in the title he was given by being a member of this place. Public service Ken Travers style means this: he works hard, he does his research, he advocates strongly, he follows up the detail, he is pragmatic and realistic, he manages expectations, he looks after stakeholders and he brings people with him. He is a campaigner par excellence. The Labor Party owes him a debt. When he told me of his final decision last Tuesday, I told him privately, and I tell him now, that his leaving is a loss to the Labor Party, but we respect his decision to go at his choosing.

I wish that he could stay to be a part of what I hope will be a Labor victory in March next year, but I look forward to the role he will play. I know his commitment to a strong electoral outcome for Labor in Western Australia, particularly in the northern suburbs, means that he will be a campaign leader in the north despite doing so in a different guise.

I personally will miss Ken's assistance in the management of our business in this place. I will miss his confidence on matters relating to standing orders, although I am absolutely confident that he will be only a text or a tweet away.

If I have to sum up Ken in one word—although, as one of my colleagues quipped earlier today, we note that this is not something that Ken himself could do—it would be assiduous. He is his hard working in every task he sets himself. He is assiduous in making sure that the process and not just the outcome is right, which means that he understands that relationships matter. Numbers will get the outcome you seek, but sometimes if your relationships with others across the aisle are respectful and strong enough, you can achieve the same outcome. Ken's relationships, formed particularly in his work on committees, demonstrate just that. He is assiduous in his portfolio work. Some electoral cycles see members trying to save seats. For us, the 2013 election was partly about that. There is no doubt that Ken's baby, Metronet, saved us seats. We are grateful for that. When, if elected next year, we implement Metronet, that will be his legacy.

Hon Ken Travers is clearly not so assiduous about his fashion choices. I do not know what is worse today—the gold jacket or the grey knitted vest! He is assiduous in other matters.

Hon Ken Travers: You've got to get with the times.

Hon SUE ELLERY: My point exactly!

The team will miss Hon Ken Travers. I am confident that this house will miss him. I wish he and Jodie all the best for the future. I know that I will see him on the campaign trail and I know that our success in the North Metropolitan Region in 2017—and, I hope, widely across Western Australia—will be in no small part down to the work done by Hon Ken Travers.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [3.36 pm]: I stand to support the motion moved by Hon Sue Ellery acknowledging the contribution of Hon Ken Travers during his time in Parliament. I say most sincerely that I have great respect for Hon Ken Travers, whom I regard as a friend. I like to think that we will certainly see each other around the traps in the North Metropolitan Region post today.

In the adversarial nature of Parliament, in some instances it is very easy to lose sight of the nature of individual traits and qualities. I certainly have not done that. We have in that time, of course, had our moments both in committee work initially and in Parliament. But, as I said, in the adversarial nature of Parliament, that is inevitable. Above and beyond that, the relationship I have had personally with Hon Ken Travers has been overwhelmingly positive, and I doubt very much that too many people on this side of the chamber who would prosecute an argument to the contrary.

When I first came into this place in 2005, I found it, as most new members do, quite intimidating. One member I found quite intimidating was Hon Ken Travers. He is a very tall man, even from my perspective, and he has a booming voice. He has an extraordinary understanding of the parliamentary process and of everything related

to policy formation. I sat with Ken on the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations inquiry into the Balga works issue. Again, my understanding or opinion of Hon Ken Travers did not shift. He was quite formidable and very forensic in that process. Even though at times we had differences of opinion, what came out of the committee report was very positive and testament to the contributory work of Hon Ken Travers.

I regularly see Hon Ken Travers at events and functions in the North Metropolitan Region, a region we share as representatives. His knowledge of individual people and issues in the North Metropolitan Region is second to none. In my role as minister, I have had less time to spend in my electorate, which is an unfortunate consequence of the office of minister, but Hon Ken Travers has prosecuted arguments and advocated issues relating to the North Metropolitan Region with me in a very professional manner.

In the Parliament, I think all of us on this side of the chamber agree that Hon Ken Travers has been right up until today a formidable adversary. He is fastidious with facts, figures and his understanding of standing orders. His participation in debates is always extremely well researched and well presented and at times compelling. In addition, his committee work is second to none. His role as Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations over recent years is really commendable. In estimates hearings et cetera he is always fair, balanced and professional. I know that all of us on this side of the chamber respect that aspect of his character and the role that he has played. In policy formation, we are all very conscious of the profile that Hon Ken Travers gave to the transport portfolio. He raised the bar and we had to improve our act as well.

I am not one for regrets because we cannot really reconcile regrets, and I try to avoid them if I can. I guess the only disappointment that I have, and I mean this sincerely, as I said the other day—I am not sure whether Hon Ken Travers shares this—is that it is a travesty that he was never a minister.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I know. As I said, never regret it. You can look back on what you have achieved over the last 20 years and be proud. I think you would have ultimately made a good minister.

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Hon Ken Travers in the electorate. I have enjoyed working with him in Parliament. I have thoroughly enjoyed his company. I wish him all the best. I thank him most sincerely for the work that he has done over many years for the electorate, the Parliament and the people of Western Australia. This is just the start for you, mate; the best is yet to come.

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [3.41 pm]: I would like to thank Hon Ken Travers for teaching me so much in this place. I entered this place in 2001. My first observation was that I had to deal with a parliamentary secretary named Ken Travers. I think the first thing he taught me was how not to ask parliamentary questions. I used to come out and ask, “Why did you do this?” or something like that, and I would get this one-line answer. After studying the responses I got, I thought that this bloke knows what he is on about.

My father always said to me, “Always argue the point and not the person.” If anybody has been able to do that in this chamber in a way that I have really acknowledged and appreciated, it is you, Ken. I mean that. Whilst he can go after people on policy and detail, he has never gone after them personally. I find that a really admirable trait. As I say, I look up to him. That is nothing to do with his height or my shortness either!

I have been the butt of many of Ken’s jokes, and I have appreciated them and I have never taken any umbrage at them. I remember being called a watermelon by Hon Peter Foss—green on the outside and red on the inside. Ken has never stooped quite to that level.

I have watched Ken do many things. I am an ex-stockbroker. I originally had some training in economics but I decided to leave all that behind and forget that. Ken’s diligence and level of forensic ability and ability to investigate has always astounded me, and I have learnt a lot from that. Having recently served on the Standing Committee on Legislation with Ken and watched that forensic nature again, I stand in awe of you, sir. You are a real professional. Also, Hon Ken Travers is a parliamentarian before being a politician. Thank you, Ken. I have enjoyed the ride with you. It has been only 12 years. I know you have been here a little longer. I have appreciated you as a friend but also as a really important member of this chamber. There is one thing that we remember from time to time. I noted Ken’s comments about Hon George Cash when he said that there are people who stick in your mind and you remember over time for having been good parliamentarians; others disappear into the ether. Ken, I hope that this place will always remember you as a good parliamentarian.

HON COL HOLT (South West — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.44 pm]: I rise on behalf of the WA Nationals to lend my support to the motion. I am glad that Hon Ken Travers opened with a description of how many hours he had been in this chamber. I think he absolutely undersold himself on the amount of time he spent contributing to debates in this house. Although I have been here for only seven of his 19 years, I remember quite a few of his speeches in this place that contributed to those many hours of debate. Who could forget the long debate when we stayed here until 10 o’clock in the morning or 12 noon the next day? Although I cannot forget it, I cannot

remember anything he said that day. Even though it was repeated five or six times, I cannot remember any of the content but I remember the contribution.

Hon Ken Travers: I never repeated myself at all that night. There was no repetition.

Hon COL HOLT: I am sure there were a few points of order. He has made a fantastic contribution.

I would really like to quote from one of the member's speeches that I found to be an absolutely fantastic contribution. It was to the motion on the Anzac commemorations on 23 April 2015. That day the honourable member had been to an Anzac Day commemoration. He borrowed the speech from Flight Lieutenant Daniel Hodgson. I thought the contribution he made to the house that day was fantastic. With the indulgence of the house, I would like to read some of that speech that Hon Ken Travers contributed to the debate that day. He said —

... Anzac, which was initially a set of initials, changed from being initials to become a word. I will now quote directly from his speech.

That is, the speech of Flight Lieutenant Daniel Hodgson. He continued —

The actions of the first Anzacs forged what has become known as the Anzac spirit. It is the Anzac spirit that is the driving force behind all Australian servicemen and women ever since.

He then went on to point out to the students in the audience that it is not to just the serving men and women that we can apply that Anzac spirit. He identified three compelling qualities of the Anzac spirit. The first one was —

The Anzac spirit represents a sense of purpose and direction. The original Anzacs knew what they had to do and also understood how dangerous and difficult it would be. Yet, they got on with the job and did not let the difficulties stop them ...

...

Secondly, he identified that the Anzac spirit represents an acceptance of responsibility. Again, I want to quote Mr Hodgson, who said —

Take responsibility for everything you do. It is easy to say "I did that" or "That's my work" when everything goes right. However, we all know that sometimes, things don't go right. Sometimes you do something which is against the wishes of your parents and teachers. Remember the Anzac spirit and take responsibility for what you are doing. Don't play the blame game!

... Finally, the third Anzac spirit that he identified for the Currambine Primary School students was a sense of compassion, and that this is summed up in the Australian experience as mateship. He went on to talk about how they should treat their fellow students. He encouraged them to follow the Anzac spirit and said —

If you do this, not only will it make you a better person, but you will be keeping the faith with those who put the word Anzac into our language. That way, you will be helping to make sure that the Anzac spirit is always a part of life in Australia.

While we do not always agree on the content of the speech, I say to you, sir, that I admire your Anzac spirit, I respect your Anzac spirit and I think your Anzac spirit has shone through in the Australian Labor Party, the North Metropolitan Region, the Parliament and all of Western Australia. I wish you and your family well. You should be proud of your contribution in this place and your family should be absolutely proud of the contribution you have made in this place.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [3.49 pm]: I want to briefly place on the official record my appreciation to Hon Ken Travers. We started in this place on 22 May 1997. In the ensuing time, we have had many experiences, as members can well imagine. I simply want to say to you, Ken, that I am enriched as a result of our interaction over the years. There have been times, of course, when we have disagreed about matters. But you are entitled to be mistaken about things, as anybody is, and I forgive you!

Hon Ken Travers: Please use a cliché!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Heaven forbid!

I wish you all the best. I must admit that since Tuesday or whenever, when you surprised us, I have contemplated whether I want to make a bolt for it and beat you out the door. I will not be doing that. I sincerely offer you my very best wishes. I know how hard you have worked. The fact of the matter is we do not last long in this game without acquiring scars. Indeed, if we have not acquired any scars, we probably have not been a player. I am sure that you, Ken, and I for that matter, have scars, but they are to your credit. Wear them with pride—and please

give my regards to Malcolm when you crack that bottle of champers that you alluded to earlier in your remarks! See you next time.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): Members, I rise on behalf of all members and staff of the Legislative Council to add some comments and acknowledge the service of Hon Ken Travers to the Legislative Council and to the state of Western Australia for slightly more than 19 years. Much has been said today by various people about the contribution Ken has made to this institution and the community, and you can be rightfully proud of your contribution to this institution, the Parliament in general, the state of Western Australia and your electorate.

I particularly recognise your comments today on the erosion of private property rights. That is a journey we shared on the Standing Committee on Public Administration for about eight years. That culminated in the tabling of our report in 2004. Regrettably, there has been very little positive response from government to the findings and recommendations of that report. However, you made some very wise and astute observations on some other elements of that issue that are consistently cropping up here in Parliament and in the community. That is an issue that as a free society we need to take seriously and address.

You have obviously put a lot of thought and work into your valedictory speech, too, and I congratulate you on that. Often history is written about members of Parliament by people who refer to our inaugural speeches and our valedictory speeches. I am sure that the content of both your speeches will provide a very good analysis of your positive contribution to this place. Congratulations on your contribution and your legacy.

Congratulations also on your contribution through your representation of the North Metropolitan Region. To be a member of Parliament in public life is a unique privilege. It can be, and often is, satisfying and rewarding. But we all know that at times it can be very challenging and frustrating, and often harsh and depressing, in terms of what is said by people and elements of the media about people in public life.

We all do well when we leave this place—sometimes at a time of our choosing and sometimes not—to have the respect of others and our own credibility, and you certainly have that. So I congratulate and thank you, Ken, and wish you all the best for the future.

Question put and passed.

The PRESIDENT: That was passed unanimously!