

M. McGowan; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr F.M. Logan; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Terry Redman; Speaker

VINCENZO LA GALIA — TRIBUTE

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

On motion without notice by **Mr M. McGowan (Premier)**, resolved with an absolute majority —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable members to make statements on the passing of former Speaker's steward Vincenzo La Galia.

Statements

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [2.01 pm]: I wish to state my sincere regret at the death of Mr Vincenzo La Galia and I tender my deep sympathy to his cherished family and friends, including his beloved widow, Antonietta, and his sons of whom Vince was so proud—Daniel, Mark and David. Vince's family are in the gallery today.

Vince was always known for being one step ahead and I believe the lesson to always be prepared was something he instilled in his sons. It was a wise lesson from a man who lived his life well.

Vince's preparedness and genuine willingness to help, combined with his generous, hardworking and authentic nature, meant he was a person you respected and wanted to share time with; indeed, you were grateful to have him as part of your life. Vince was the sort of person that once you met him, he left an indelible and positive imprint on you.

Born in Italy, Vince was lucky child number 13 for his mother, Carmela, and father, Calogero. After leaving school at 14, he was keen to see the world and gather the skills he believed he needed to prosper and be successful. At the ripe old age of 16, Vince's adventurous spirit saw him spread his wings by travelling, working and living throughout Europe for some years. When Vince was 22, he joined his brothers and sisters who had earlier emigrated to Australia. After a couple of years in Darwin, Vince settled in Perth where he established, by all reports, a brilliant restaurant called Buonasera, and where he met and married the love of his life, Antonietta.

In 1989, Vince began his career with us here in Parliament as steward in the dining room, and in 1993 he became acting steward to Speaker Hon James Clarko. A year later, Vince was appointed permanently to the role of Speaker's steward, a role he kept for 20 years until his retirement in 2014. Vince loyally served five Speakers of the Assembly: Hon James Clarko; Hon George Strickland; Hon Fred Riebeling, who is here today; Hon Grant Woodhams; and Hon Michael Sutherland.

Vince served the people of this state through his roles here at Parliament House for 25 years. Anybody sitting in this house could only hope to serve as long as Vince.

Over the years, many of us have mentioned in the Assembly Vince's work ethic, humour, amiable character and our appreciation of him. Speaker Strickland said of Vince in 2000 —

If ever there was a loyal servant to this Parliament who wants to do the best job he can to help everyone, it is Vince La Galia.

In 2002, Speaker Riebeling said —

I know nothing about wines, but he —

Vince —

always makes me look good, because he has forgotten more than I will ever know.

A few years ago I acknowledged Vince on the floor of the Parliament, saying he is the most important person in government in Western Australia. When we all heard Vince was unwell, we willed his recovery. Vince is already very missed. We miss his friendship, his positive nature, his support and his dependability.

After WA Labor's success at the recent election and my appointment to the office of Premier, Vince sent me a letter of congratulations. Being the loyal Italian, Vince commended me for having such capable members of Italian descent in our cabinet and on the government benches. He also reminded me in the letter of the first time we met. I had been recently elected, back in the late 1990s, Vince had been here for some time already and I was attending a meeting of parliamentarians. Vince introduced himself to me and told me that one day I may—I think he said "would"—become Premier of Western Australia. I did not believe him. It was an auspicious first meeting. What Vince did not mention in his letter was that he had also put some money on me to become Premier one day. Every time I saw him over the last few years he always said that he wanted to collect on his investment. I certainly hope that he did. I thank Vince for his confidence, support and friendship.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 8 August 2017]

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M. McGowan; Mr Mark McGowan; Dr Mike Nahan; Ms Mia Davies; Mr David Templeman; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Ms Margaret Quirk; Ms Lisa Baker; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr F.M. Logan; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Terry Redman; Speaker

I met Vince at a number of the community events run by the Associazione Nazionale Famiglie degli Emigrati, which is an organisation of Italian migrants who came to Western Australia years ago and holds functions in Balcatta. Vince was always very keen to organise people who might be older to make sure that they kept their connections with families and had outings and the like. He was always very accommodating and he wanted to make sure people were happy. He provided support for people who might not have that support. At Vince's funeral mass last week, which I attended along with many hundreds of people, the stories of Vince's care and concern for others, particularly those who might have come to Australia like he did without strong connections, were told. We were told of his entrepreneurial spirit in setting up his restaurants and working in other people's restaurants, and his strong commitment to his family and his friends. The attendance at the mass, at which there were not enough seats for the hundreds and hundreds of people there, showed the important legacy of generosity, service, kindness and support that Vince has left.

His most important legacy, of course, is the love bestowed upon his family—his wife, Antonietta, and sons, Daniel, Mark and David. I offer my sincerest condolences to Vince's family and friends.

Members: Hear, hear!

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Leader of the Opposition) [2.07 pm]: It is with sadness that we raise the passing of the long-serving and popular staff member of Parliament, Vince La Galia. Vince's greeting to members in the afternoon tea room and dining room will always be remembered. Sometimes we are here under duress, with tension and aggression, but when we walked out of this chamber, past the Speaker's chair and into the coffee room, Vince's smile welcomed us. He made sure that all of us, particularly the new members, were welcome and that all our visitors' needs were met. Vince's happy demeanour, whistling and humming will be greatly missed. His sense of humour, as evidenced by his convenient claim that he did not speak English well, will also be missed.

As the Premier indicated, Vince started as a steward in the dining room in 1989. After working as acting steward to the Speaker, he became the permanent steward to the Speaker in 1994. He served in the position for 20 years. As we heard, he retired in 2014. His hard work and dedication made all the difference. We applaud Vince for his 28 years of outstanding service to our Parliament. Vince continued to work in various catering roles and only stopped working when he became ill.

I met Vince repeatedly in my former role as Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, with not only the Italian communities, but also the wider community. In retirement he continued to be extremely active in the community. He was president of the Italian pensioners association and active in the WA Italian Club. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and send our warm regards to them in this time of mourning. As we know, Vince was a kind and good man who made an indelible mark on all he met, including in Parliament. May he rest in peace.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the National Party) [2.10 pm]: On behalf of the National Party I rise to make a contribution to this condolence motion. I would firstly like to express our sincerest condolences to Vince's family and friends, specifically his wife, Antonietta, and sons, Daniel, Mark and David. Vince was born on 26 August 1948 and passed away peacefully on 28 July 2017. The funeral was held on 3 August with a very large crowd in attendance to pay their respects, including my colleague the member for North West Central, Vince Catania. From that attendance it was clear that he had touched many people with his kind and endearing qualities.

As others have said, he worked at Parliament for 25 years and he was outstanding in his service, always welcoming staff and members with a smile. He was enormously welcoming with his warm and genuine nature. I had to laugh when I did a Google search on him and his LinkedIn profile showed his job as "boss at WA state Parliament", and I think that is certainly what he thought. He knew every single member in this house and every staff member in this place. He was a fixture.

When I became a member of Parliament in 2008, my father visited. My father was a member of this place for only three years, but Vince gave him the same warm welcome despite not having seen him for some years. He remembered his time back in the early days when dad was a member of Parliament. Vince had a memory like an elephant and he was endearing and genuine with everyone in this place.

Vince served as a steward to former National MP and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Grant Woodhams. I asked Grant whether he had any words he wanted to pass on to Vince's family and members of this place, and I would like to take the opportunity to present some of those reflections. I quote former Speaker Grant Woodhams —

In my role as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly I think I would have disappointed Vince immensely. It was probably obvious to Vince very early in my term as Speaker that I was not a big eater. He never gave up on enlarging the size of my suits, regularly tempting me with a startling array of wonderful food. In the main I resisted. The same must be said of drink, my usual request for a bottle of soft drink no doubt

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confirming for Vince my total lack of sophistication. I could imagine him asking himself, “How did this man ever become Mr Speaker?”

I was also a poor entertainer but those who dined in the Speaker’s rooms would invariably be impressed with Vince’s charm and manner. Nothing was ever too difficult for him. He was always thrilled if my wife or daughter were there, and both would always tell me that he spoilt them with attention while I was in here for a tedious third reading.

Knowing that I was from Geraldton and that I usually drove home on Thursday nights after Parliament, Vince calculated that I would need feeding before departure. Perhaps he borrowed from the old adage that an army marches on its stomach. He would be ready when Parliament adjourned and waiting for me with a box full of food to see the journey out. Vince brought an entirely different meaning to cheese and biscuits!

As a last comment I discovered after a few weeks of being Speaker that Vince was an inveterate collector of badges. One of the small ways I was able to show my appreciation of his work and service was to bring him various types that I found while travelling. I still have a small collection put aside that I had intended to give to Vince when I came down to Parliament. Sadly, that day never happened. To me, Vince was a co-worker in this place. It was a privilege to be here and a privilege to have known Vince. Vale, Vince La Galia.

There is no doubt that Vince has left a significant mark on those who had the privilege and pleasure of knowing him. He will be sadly missed and fondly remembered.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [2.13 pm]: Quite often being elected to this place can be a very daunting experience. We look for that welcoming and smiling face and for many new members, that smiling face was Vince. We all pass on our deepest condolences to the La Galia family. It is very important that his family knows how much Vince was loved in this place. For all members, his cheeky smile, shining eyes and effervescent personality were tremendous things, particularly for those who were newly elected to this place. Vince was a much-loved staff member. He was cherished by the people he worked for in this Parliament. His wonderful manner and the way that he carried out his duties were a wonderful part of this Parliament, which can sometimes be very sterile or a place of adversity, as the Leader of the Opposition highlighted.

Those of us who were elected in 2001 remember Vince with great fondness. I always remember Vince when he had his little office just behind the chamber. It was his den—his special little sanctum—that he adorned with a range of badges and anecdotes, little cuttings from newspapers, photographs, little things that people had given him, little messages that were a reminder of a range of things, and pictures of his beautiful family. His little den was a place that we quite enjoyed visiting because he would welcome us in his very special way. For me, he always welcomed me as “member for Mandurah” in his beautiful Italian accent. He would be very welcoming, but he would do that for everybody. The great thing about him was that we thought that we had known him for a long time—almost all our life—because he had that effect on us.

We normally pause to remember former members who have passed but this is a special occasion for a very special person who was part of all our lives—those who knew Vince and worked with him—to remember him with great fondness. I would also like to express my sincere condolences to his family. Thank you for allowing us as members of Parliament to share in his life journey.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland — Minister for Police) [2.17 pm]: I, too, would like to pass on my condolences to Vince’s family—Antonietta, Daniel, Mark and David. Unfortunately, because I was in regional Western Australia last week, I was unable to attend Vince’s funeral at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, something that I would have liked to have done. I think Vince epitomised all that is absolutely beautiful about Italy and Italians. It was an absolute joy to have him around this place. I knew Vince in a number of capacities over a 30-year period. He did not just have an infectious smile but he had a bit of a cheeky grin. Sometimes he made a risqué joke, which was sometimes totally politically incorrect. Some people say that life is too short not to be Italian. I think he thought life was too short not to have some fun. That really made him a breath of fresh air around Parliament House. He was someone who did not take everything quite so seriously, someone who was able to make light on occasion and have a little joke and sometimes share a little treat with people. He was certainly well known for grabbing a few chocolates out of the Speaker’s suite and sharing them with any children who happened to be up at the house. He did that for my children since they were very young.

Vince loved his work. He loved the people that he worked with and I think that showed. Even if they only visited Parliament House occasionally, most people would know of the steward who generally had a flower in his lapel, generally a red carnation but sometimes a rose. He was also pretty well known for acquiring carnations and roses from places and handing them to ladies and bringing a little joy to people’s lives. I think he brought a lot of joy to a lot of people’s lives in the role that he had here.

Extract from Hansard

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Nothing was ever too much trouble for Vince; nothing put him out. It did not matter what the request or issue was, he would go the extra mile to help someone at any time. As people know, Vince called a lot of people “numero uno”, meaning “number one”. Occasionally Vince and I would chat in Italian, and occasionally he would ask my kids to say something in Italian before he would hand them a chocky, but he was always a lot of fun. It is without doubt that there has been only one numero uno at the WA Parliament over the last 20 years—that was Vince La Galia.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [2.20 pm]: It was my absolute pleasure to know Vincenzo La Galia for more than 16 years. My sincere condolences go to his family: his beloved wife, Antonietta, and his children, Daniel, Mark and David, of whom he was extremely proud.

It goes without saying that it was a privilege to have known Vince. He touched many lives and, as we have heard, he will be both sadly missed and always fondly remembered.

Much has already been said about Vince. He had a wicked sense of humour; he never did anything by halves and his hard work behind the scenes and his acute observation of human nature was always evident. On the latter, we would often have a good conspiratorial laugh about the rather peculiar way that things are done around this place.

I want to make special reference to Vince’s service in my electorate. As well as his extensive work with Associazione Nazionale Famiglie degli Emigrati over many years, Vince was actively associated with Italian Aged Care and Villa Terenzio hostel in Marangaroo. I asked Chris Roberts, the CEO of Italian Aged Care, for his observations about Vince. Chris said, according to my notes —

Vince was an Association Member of Italian Aged Care since 2014. The role he undertook at Villa Terenzio was over 6 months where he worked closely with myself and my exec team in changing the kitchen into a culturally authentic and efficient service.

He did this voluntarily despite not only overseeing catering functions anywhere between Wanneroo and Albany, and despite his becoming unwell.

His greatest voluntary service was the much bigger role as President of ANFE ... for many years ... which is unrelated to us, but serves the wider Italian community in Perth. Vince was loved by everybody in the Italian community and wouldn’t get drawn into petty squabbles between others.

On a personal level, in the short time I knew Vince he gave rise to more funny anecdotes than some people I have known all my life. A story that possibly highlights the occasional problem with a Sicilian working alongside an Englishman, was that due to his distinct pronunciation of the word “lamb”, he led me believe for 3 months that he had caught and roasted a llama for a function near Denmark!

Che la sua anima riposi in pace.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands — Deputy Speaker) [2.23 pm]: I am going to be very quick. Vince La Galia is an old friend and I will miss him dearly. It is becoming obvious that the longer I remain in this house, the more dark secrets I let out. My first meeting with Vince dates back to the Sorrento Restaurant and the many nights I spent there, having a great meal and a lot of red wine in the company of one of Vince’s dear friends and one of my close friends, Jo O’Dea. I often do not remember this, but there was a third person at the table—I think it was Mr Satterley. We had many, many fantastic nights at Sorrento, Sabatini’s, La Tavernetta and Buonasera, and I had no idea that he worked at Parliament. When I came to this place in 2008, I walked down the corridor and turned right and saw him. He just grabbed me in a big bear hug and his words were something like, “I can’t believe you’re still here!” That really was a show of his sense of humour. We used to live life pretty hard and fast in those days and he was certainly a joyful part of my late teens and early 20s.

He was a wonderful man and he will be sorely missed. You have heard about the wonderful achievements he brought to this place and his restaurant and catering honour award in 2007.

I would just say that the only time I ever saw him a bit aghast or downcast was at an Associazione Nazionale Famiglie degli Emigrati lunch one year when I was asked to rep for someone there. I turned up to that wonderful room full of hundreds of beautiful Italian people. He came up to see me and to give me a meal and I looked at him and said, “You realise I’m vegetarian?” His whole face just went, “Oh, no!” In that whole room full of people, he had forgotten one lunch and he was so concerned about it. I will miss him and his presence around the Parliament. He was a joyful man. Vale, Vince.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport) [2.25 pm]: I pass on my condolences to Antonietta, Daniel, Mark and David, to the entire family and to the ANFE community on the passing of Vincenzo La Galia.

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Everything I want to say has been said about his welcoming nature, his ability to make you feel a part of this place, his brightness and his happiness every time you saw him in the corridors. I want to really highlight his contribution to the Italian community and the ANFE community. The one thing he would always mention to me was, “The ANFE Christmas lunch, Rita—first Sunday of every December. Put it in your diary now.” That was probably in July! I never missed the ANFE lunch because he was such a big supporter of the Italian community.

He will be missed greatly, not only in this place but also by the Italian community. It is with deep regret that we lost him so, so early, and I pass on my condolences to the family and to the community. He is not someone we would want to lose. He was such a sensational person who contributed so much to this place.

I particularly pass on my condolences to Carmelo Genovese, Mr Terranova, and the rest of the community. I know they will sorely miss him. Rest in peace, Vincenzo. Ripose in pace.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Tourism) [2.26 pm]: I, too, rise to reflect very briefly on Vince’s passing and to pass on my condolences to Antonietta, Daniel, Mark and David.

In many ways I can only mirror what has already been said by most people today. Vince was an incredible presence in the Parliament and a beautiful man. He welcomed everybody and, regardless of what was going on in his life, he made you feel special when you met him in this place. My experience of him reflects a little of what the Minister for Transport said with regard to Vince’s campaigning on behalf of the Italian community in Perth and his incredible work with ANFE. I also refer to and acknowledge the support he gave this place in 2012 when we prepared and passed a motion to acknowledge the Italians interned during the Second World War. He was of tremendous assistance at that time and was incredibly welcoming to some of the families of those interned. He made it a special moment for them.

My family will always remember events in a very specific manner. On the occasion of my first being elected to this place, coming from no experience of politics or Parliament, like everyone I was a little overawed and unsure. It was also a by-election, so I was the only one elected at that time. We were the beneficiaries of an invitation to the Speaker’s chambers for a special dinner with Hon Fred Riebeling—whom I am very happy to see here today—along with his wife and, of course, Vince. He hosted us that evening. Although my boys are now taller than me, at that time they were only six and eight, so they were in awe of the place and a little bit bored with the dinner conversation. About midway through the main course, they disappeared with Vince, not to be seen again until well into desserts. We wondered where they had been all that time and what they had been up to. They reappeared with the famous lollies that the Minister for Police referred to! It was not until we were heading home later in the evening that we found out Vince had taken them into the bowels of the building, to the fridge in the kitchen where the ice cream stash was located! I have no idea how much ice cream they consumed that night, but they will always remember Vince for his incredibly generous nature. Every time they came to Parliament they looked forward to seeing him. We reflect sadly on his loss. All I can say is thank you very much to his family for sharing him with us. It was a great honour.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Emergency Services) [2.30 pm]: First of all I thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing this debate to take place because it is very unusual for basically a staff member of this Parliament to be honoured in such a way by this chamber. That is testament to Vince himself and how much he was loved around the house.

It is a pity that new members in this chamber did not know Vince because they too would have loved Vince as much as we did. He was a really nice guy. We loved coming back to Parliament because one of the first people we saw was Vince, smiling and laughing and asking how our break was, where we had been and what we had done. He made it a pleasure to be around the house. Vince had a number of endearing, charming and funny characteristics. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, Vince was always happy. He always appeared to be happy, but sometimes he would be furious with people around the house, people in this chamber, and particularly members of management of Parliament. He would be furious with them over particular issues, but he never gave it away that he was furious. He always appeared to be happy, singing, smiling and even dancing around the corridors of Parliament House! Vince also had great insight into people in this house. He was a people person throughout his life. His interactions with people, either in the Italian community or at work, gave him the characteristic that he could actually see right through people. No matter what front, image or ego people put on in this Parliament, Vince would see straight through it. He knew exactly what a person’s real character was. Vince was also great at insulting people, but he did it in such a way that they did not realise they were being insulted! In his Italian English and expressive characteristics, he would always say the insult in such a way that if you were anywhere around him you would go, “Oh, my God”, but the person who was being insulted did not realise they were actually being insulted or had been had a go at. He was absolutely fantastic at doing that.

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Member for Midland, it was not just the lollies that Vince was helping the house to from the Speaker's chambers. Former Speaker Fred Riebeling is in the Speaker's gallery today. Fred did not realise that most of his cakes from afternoon tea disappeared after he decided he was not going to eat them and made their way on the trolley around the house to be distributed to Vince's favourite people! Vince had many secrets. He was a wonderful man. Sincere condolences from me personally, my wife and my children, who have known him all their lives, to Antonietta, Daniel, Mark and David.

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central) [2.33 pm]: On behalf of the Catania family, I want to say to Antonietta and the boys that we are very sad for the loss of Vince. Vince knew me for about 40 years, since the day I was born, and he also had a long friendship with my family, the Catania family. Dad first entered this place around the time that Vince La Galia started. He was fortunate to know someone with Vince's knowledge. I think he was the most powerful person in Parliament. All the valedictory speeches we have heard in this place, and members' comments today, show how much influence Vince La Galia has had on the careers of people in this place. He is probably the only person who has been thanked in speeches from both sides of the house. Some of the stories are interesting, and we could probably speak a lot more about Vince and the things that he used to do and say, and how he made everyone special.

The member is right that sometimes he criticised people without them knowing. People say that he was Italian, but he was actually Sicilian. There is a big difference between the two. He did not speak Italian; he spoke Sicilian, which only a few people could understand. Even with my own Sicilian descent, I struggled with it, and I had to listen intently because I know that he sometimes took the mickey out of me. He was a very special person, and one of the characters of this place. It will be very hard to replace Vince La Galia, and everyone who knew him will feel the same way. It is sad to lose the historical knowledge he had of the people who came and went in this place. It is a sad day for Parliament, and for all members, past and present, to lose such a wonderful human being who gave his all to his job. His job was to look after Speakers of the house and members, and he was a professional at it. He was born to integrate and serve, and to make people feel special. To the La Galia family, I am sorry for your loss. Whoever replaces Vince in the future has very big boots to fill. I do not think anyone else who works at this place can be like Vince La Galia.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren-Blackwood) [2.37 pm]: I want to make a few comments as one of the older members of Parliament. Having been elected in 2005, I have spent a fair chunk of my time here, during which I crossed paths with Vince. I support all the comments made about Vince today. A special part of our relationship was that my wife is actually Italian-Sicilian, in fact. If members can imagine that big, long corridor alongside the dining room, when I came here with my wife and Vince was down the other end of that corridor, he would open his arms and welcome her with his broad Italian accent. For some of our partners, this place is not necessarily seen as friendly. It is a place where people have a shot at us and our names end up in the newspaper. It is fantastic that Vince could make what has been described today as a fairly sterile environment as friendly as it is, and that is his legacy. My wife had a fantastic relationship with him, to the point at which I think I was probably second fiddle when she came here. Vince made her feel particularly special, and that was fantastic.

It is great to see Fred Riebeling in the chamber today. A number of us have had the chance to dine in the Speaker's suite. When Grant Woodhams was the Speaker, I had the chance to dine there. As the Leader of the National Party mentioned, Grant was not a big one for food and wine, but Vince was. I am sure Vince did not see it as a natural environment to work in. I remember thinking one night that Grant must have picked out the wine on the table, because it was pretty average. Grant ducked out to do something, and I said, "Vince, what can we do about this wine, mate?" Vince ducked out and had a look around the corner to check that Grant had gone, and then he came back inside and opened the little cupboard down the bottom and pulled out what might have been a bottle of Moss Wood or something. It was pretty flash, anyway. He put it on the table and opened it, and Grant was none the wiser when he came back. Vince certainly looked after us there. I was not going to mention that, but there have been a couple of other occasions, including the ice cream the member for Warnbro mentioned, when Vince has supported people who have come into this house. Those anecdotes reflect Vince's character and the contribution he made to this place. He made a tough environment really warm, for not just members but also our extended families. For that, we will be eternally grateful. I extend my condolences to the family for the loss of a great fellow.

THE SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): I have a few little anecdotes and sayings from Vince. I never knew what Vince's second name was; it was always "Mr Vince". When I first got here, I had my three children with me and he said, "Just call me Mr Vince." When I was down in the gym in the morning, I would hear the name Vince on the PA calling him to the phone and I would think: "That's Mr Vince." I never ever knew his name. When my eldest granddaughter, who is 12 now, came in when she was six months old, the first thing that Mr Vince did was put a little chocolate in her bassinet. Of course, my older children wanted a chocolate, too, so they all got

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a chocolate. Now I know where all the chocolates disappear to from the Speaker's suite. When my granddaughter found out that Mr Vince was retiring, she sent him a lovely letter. She said, "You are the kindest man I have ever met. Every time I came to Parliament, you made me feel special. I especially liked the chocolates, too." That was something from a young girl who had known him for 12 years. It probably reflects what everyone has said in this debate. The Minister for Police mentioned "number one". I remember that Mick Murray—the minister for whatever he is now—the member for Collie–Preston, and I used to get around a bit. I would be walking down the corridor and Mr Vince would say, "You are the best member of Parliament in the world." I said, "Thanks, Vince." Mick would be about 10 metres behind me, and I would hear the same thing. "Mr Murray, you are the best politician in the whole world." He was right the first time!

I am talking on behalf of all the staff—the kitchen staff, the dining room staff, the security staff—and everybody in Parliament. Everyone I have spoken to wanted me to thank his family for sharing him with us for all those years; he will always be missed. I used to come in early and go down to the gym. I had my gym bag over my shoulder and Vince said, "Skinny boy, don't go down there. Come to the kitchen and I will feed you up!" Whatever he did, his memories will be going down those corridors. His singing, his laughter and his kindness to everyone will be remembered forever. To his family, we thank you very much for sharing him with us. On behalf of everyone in Parliament, we wish you all the best for the future.

If all members could stand now, we will have a minute's silence.

Members and officers standing as a mark of respect.