

IAN “ROBBO” ROBERTSON

Statement

HON COL HOLT (South West — Parliamentary Secretary) [9.44 pm]: I rise briefly to talk about a man who is part of the National Party and to whom we awarded life membership a couple of weeks ago at our annual conference. I want to touch on the service of this man to the Nationals as an indication of the sort of person he is, and to recognise his efforts as a member of our community in Western Australia. I want to do that by highlighting some of his activities and what he has brought to the National Party of Western Australia. The name of this person is Ian “Robbo” Robertson, and he is a sheep farmer from Kojonup. Robbo has been involved in our party since the early 1980s. Robbo is a unique man. I am sure that if we say that Robbo is a sheep farmer from Kojonup, most people would have an image of what a sheep farmer from Kojonup does and is. Robbo has a degree in philosophy. That is not something we would match up with a sheep farmer from Kojonup. But Robbo brings a unique perspective to whatever he does. He has been heavily involved in sheep breeding and wool quality throughout Australia. He often travels to Sydney to take part in research studies and to put his views about what sort of direction agriculture, and especially sheep breeding, should take in regional Western Australia.

I have worked closely with Robbo during the number of years that I have been involved with the Nationals. I have been on the National Party state executive since 2006. Robbo has also been on the executive for that whole period. Robbo is the sort of man whom, when I was president of the party, I could call on to take on a special role, and he would always step in to do it on behalf of what he thought would be the best outcome for the Nationals. More importantly, I guess—this is where I want to highlight what sort of man Ian Robertson is—it would not matter whether it was the Nationals, the Liberal Party or the Labor Party, or sheep breeding in agriculture; it is the approach that he takes to it. Robbo has never been afraid to stand up to anyone with his beliefs. He has never been afraid to challenge the leadership of our party and whether we are going in the right direction. He will question us continuously about our motives and the outcomes we are seeking. There is no better person to have around than a person who will challenge us and ask the questions that we may be afraid to answer or to ask ourselves. Robbo puts up the mirror to us and stands by his principles and asks those questions. Robbo is a valuable of not only our party, but also the Kojonup community, the agricultural community and, I believe, the Western Australian community in general.

Despite the fact that Robbo might disagree with the direction that we are taking or question some of our policy, once we have made a decision, he is 100 per cent behind us. In political parties, we all go along rocky roads and not everyone agrees with everyone else. I am sure every member of Parliament here today can recognise those moments. Robbo is one of those persons who may disagree with something that we are doing, but once a decision has been made, he will line up behind us with complete confidence and complete backing. So I would like to say thank you to Ian Robertson for his service to not only the National Party, but also the people of Western Australia through a number of different avenues, and to recognise that he is a great bloke who portrays a lot of the values that I think we as Australians value in people who contribute to our community.