

Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dave Kelly; Mr David Templeman; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Chris Tallentire; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Peter Watson; Ms Janine Freeman

HONOURABLE EDWARD GOUGH WHITLAM, AC, QC — TRIBUTE

Statement by Premier

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [2.04 pm]: It is appropriate that this Parliament and this house in particular mark the passing of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. He has a unique place in Australian politics and, indeed, Australian history. I begin by extending the sympathy of the Western Australian government to the family and friends of the late Gough Whitlam.

The 1972 federal election saw Gough Whitlam lead the Labor Party to government after 23 years in opposition. It was probably the most famous election in Australian political history—the “It’s Time” campaign election; I remember it well. It was an election campaign that was different from anything that came before it, and there is no doubt that it captured the minds and emotions of Australians, particularly the then young generation of Australians—the baby boomers, of which I am one.

It was a time when emotions were running high in Australia. This was after the 1960s, and all that the 1960s represented in post-war Australia to a new younger generation. It was a time in which there was high immigration to Australia by people from all around the world, the time of the Vietnam War, the moratorium demonstrations and, indeed, the time of conscription.

Gough Whitlam was certainly a conviction politician; he said what he believed, he stood for what he believed in, and there is no doubt that he changed Australia. In my mind, reflecting on those times, he changed Australia from a postcolonial mentality and took Australia into a modern, contemporary society. He brought us into Asia and gave pride to our nation. It was an extraordinary period in Australian history—economic history, but particularly social history.

Many people today, particularly in the federal Parliament, have talked about Gough Whitlam’s achievements, and they were many. In thinking about that, I have listed what I see as his seven most important achievements, not necessarily in order. Certainly, the introduction of universal health care, through what was then known as Medibank, was a transformational policy and gave health care to all Australians.

Free university education was important in itself for both students and universities, but it also gave equality of opportunity to Australians who did not previously have it. I remember that when I first began at university, it was a fairly exclusive institution; not many people came from, if you like, the wrong side of the tracks to get into university, which at that time in Western Australia meant only the University of Western Australia. Whitlam changed that and gave people the aspiration and opportunity of a tertiary education.

The diplomatic recognition of China was immensely important, particularly for Western Australia, where we dominate the Australia–China trade relationship.

Promotion of the arts and, indeed, arts identities, was very visible during the “It’s Time” campaign; some of us can remember those ads running almost continuously on television during that era.

There was the recognition of Aboriginal land rights and, more particularly, recognition of the place of Aboriginal people in Australia’s society. That was an important social reform.

There was also recognition of the contribution made by migrants to Australia—again, a real feature of that period of the Whitlam government—and making all Australians understand their contribution and respecting a multicultural Australia.

Equal pay for women was also a major reform within the workplace, and there were other reforms.

It was a government that was led with an idealistic and inspirational approach for a new and modern Australia. Unfortunately, that idealism, aspiration and optimism was progressively replaced by a number of scandals and failures within government. The Whitlam government was in office for only three years, and they were turbulent years; I remember them well. There were a whole series of scandals of various sorts, none more infamous than the Khemlani affair, which ultimately probably brought down the Whitlam government.

From my recollection, and from thinking about it this morning, I do not think those problems were created by Gough Whitlam himself; I think he was let down by ministers who had maybe been in opposition for too long, had become too impatient, and did not have the experience to manage their agencies, and it was a period of instability in Australian government and Australian politics as result. Unfortunately, Gough Whitlam was unable to restore stability to his government, and the demise of the Whitlam government is probably the most infamous episode in Australian political history. There was the chaos in the years towards the end of the Whitlam government, including the blocking of supply. People will argue whether it was appropriate or not for the then opposition to block supply in the Senate. Then, of course, there was the dismissal of the government in

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November 1975. That is without a doubt the most controversial episode in Australian political history. I believe that Australia still does not feel comfortable about the dismissal. I do not think Australians felt comfortable at the time, whichever side of politics they were on, and to this day I think many Australians, myself included, are not convinced that that was necessarily the right course of events to have taken place.

Whatever one may conclude about Gough Whitlam and his government, there is no doubt that in every respect he was a huge figure in Australian politics. He was a brilliant person—a conviction politician who had his agenda for Australia, and maybe had he been surrounded by stronger ministers and more capable people, he may not have been restricted to just three years as Prime Minister.

I conclude by acknowledging that Gough Whitlam changed Australia. He changed Australia from postcolonial thinking into a contemporary country and a more tolerant society. Again, I extend my sympathy to his children, family and friends.

Statement by Leader of the Opposition

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [2.10 pm]: I am pleased to stand here as leader of the state Parliamentary Labor Party to acknowledge a great Australian. Edward Gough Whitlam was a man who transformed this country. I have admired him virtually since I can remember. Although I do not remember the Whitlam government, I have a vague recollection of the dismissal of his government and my father's unhappiness on that particular day. I have met him and I have read a lot about the Whitlam government in the time since. One of the biographies I read was by his speech writer, Graham Freudenberg—himself a great writer and a great Labor icon as well. He described Whitlam in his biography as “the greatest living Australian” and “the greatest Australian to have ever lived”. I think many of us believe that; I certainly believe that he was a wonderful, transformational and important historic figure for this country. Although I think his last few years have been unfortunate and unpleasant in many ways for him, and so therefore his passing for many and perhaps even himself is a relief, I am still sad to be standing here today acknowledging that event. He was asked what he wanted to be remembered for. Although he was flamboyant and had a lot of flair, and had a unique media savvy in the days before “media savvy” was commonplace, he wanted to be remembered as an achiever. When he was asked, “What do you want to be remembered for?” he always said, “An achiever—someone who actually did things in life.” If one ever wants an example of someone who fulfilled their ambition, Gough Whitlam is one of those people.

Gough was guided by a range of principles, but equality of opportunity was always the one principle that he quoted most of all. At his 1972 campaign launch and in all of his speeches he would say “equality of opportunity for all Australians”. When he was asked, “What does that mean?” he said, “I want every kid to have a lamp on their desk”, which basically meant people had the opportunity to study and do something educational with their life. Equality of opportunity, democracy, and fairness for all meant an Australia that could hold its head high in the world, and an Australia that was independent and took its proper place amongst the nations of this planet. I believe that if Gough Whitlam had been born in Britain, he could have been Prime Minister. If he had been born in the United States of America, he could have been President. I am pretty confident that he believed that too! He was the sort of person who could mix it with world leaders. He met and mixed on an equal basis with Mao Tse-tung, Lee Kuan Yew, Zhou Enlai, Lyndon Baines Johnson and Harold Wilson, and he had the respect of them all. During his time as Prime Minister and, for a period, Minister for Foreign Affairs, we, as Australians, knew that we could hold our head high because we had a Prime Minister who could mix it with world leaders and represent this country properly.

I will go through his life briefly. He was born in Melbourne on 11 July 1916, which was the eleventh day of the Battle of the Somme—that is for how long he had been alive. He was elected to Parliament in 1952 in a by-election for the outer Sydney seat of Werriwa. He became Prime Minister in 1972 and left office on 11 November 1975, eventually leaving Parliament in 1978. Prior to his election to Parliament he was a very good and successful barrister; he was a father and also a husband to the much-celebrated Margaret, who was a very substantial figure in her own right; and he was a navigator in the Royal Australian Air Force. He did not make much of his war service; he was not someone who played on it.

I met him maybe half a dozen times. One of my fondest memories of him was meeting him in 2003 when he came across to Western Australia for John Cowdell's fiftieth birthday party. I had the opportunity to sit with him at a table and question him for a time about his life. He told me stories about Robert Menzies and said that he actually had a good relationship with him. He told me side-splitting stories about how, as a younger member of Parliament coming through the ranks, he got under Robert Menzies' skin. He also told me about his war service as a navigator. He was six foot four inches and had to squeeze into the front of an American-made Ventura medium bomber. During the Second World War, from 1942 until 1945, he flew missions out of

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Arnhem Land and, I think, Bougainville, against Japanese shipping. Anyone who does that is a very, very brave individual indeed.

After the Second World War he came back to Sydney, settled in Cronulla and ran for the Sydney city council but lost. He then ran as the state Labor candidate for the seat of Cronulla and lost. Then in 1952, he was preselected for Werriwa and became a federal member of Parliament. He often said that had circumstances been different, he could have been either the Lord Mayor of Sydney or the Premier of New South Wales, but he ended up being the Prime Minister of Australia. His life experiences shaped his views. He grew up in Canberra when it was a small country town and experienced country life. It was not the Canberra of today, but the Canberra of the 1920s and 1930s. He settled with his family in outer Sydney, where he experienced the lives of people living in the outer suburbs and the deprivations of education and health that they endured. He and all his neighbours lived in houses that had no sewerage, which is so much less commonplace today. That prompted him to say at one time that Australia was “the most effluent nation on earth”! His view was formed by his experiences of living in, essentially, a country town, living in the outer suburbs, and also living with Aboriginal people in Arnhem Land when he was a navigator in the RAAF during the Second World War. His view was one of compassion and social democracy. He believed that there is a role for government to assist those less fortunate, there is a role for government to guide our country and there is a role for government to enforce and ensure that we have strong democratic institutions in this country.

His first speech to Parliament was in 1952. He had arrived at Parliament via a by-election as a tall six foot four urbane Sydney barrister. As one can imagine, he was somewhat unusual amongst his colleagues at that time. He arrived and delivered his first speech to the house, which is ordinarily heard in silence.

His opponents in the then Liberal and Country Parties were there watching. The speech was of such quality that they all realised that here was a person to be reckoned with. The then leader of the Country Party interjected on him, which was unheard of. After the hubbub had died down, he responded and quoted Disraeli, a former British Prime Minister, saying —

... Disraeli said ... “The time will come when you shall hear me”. Perhaps I should say, “The time will come when you may interrupt me”.

That was his off-the-cuff response to the then leader of the Country Party.

He spent 20 desolate years in opposition. He refined his ideas: the role of the national government in health and education and in providing equality of services across this country. He worked his way upwards through the party. Whilst his colleagues were in bars and hotels—on both sides, I might add—he was in the library, researching. His talents were eventually recognised by suspicious colleagues, and by the time of the 1961 federal election he became deputy leader. He provoked such a violent response from his opponent for that deputy leadership role that Eddie Ward, the then member for East Sydney, tried to punch him in the corridor, missed and hit the door, and when asked about it said that the “young broilga” had escaped him.

He became party leader in 1967, the year of my birth, after the disastrous 1966 federal election and decided upon a course of action. He had to reform the party. He had to create the policies. He had to win the people. His view of Labor was that it had to become more democratic, include the leader in a primary position, recognise the importance of that role and become more mainstream with progressive mainstream views and values. He lost in 1969—just—and won in 1972. Then came a flurry of activity. The greatest transformational economic decision in the history of this country—the recognition of China—was Gough Whitlam’s achievement, and all else in his economic record pales into insignificance. We in Western Australia, of all places, are the beneficiaries of that decision. He created Medibank, the forerunner to Medicare. He ensured that higher education was available to all—I am sure that when I arrived at university in 1985 I was a beneficiary of that. He introduced school reforms and land rights. He withdrew Australia from Vietnam, and I expect many people are alive today as a consequence of that decision. He introduced the Racial Discrimination Act; ended the White Australia policy; introduced equal pay for women; ensured that we had our own awards rather than the Imperial system, and our own national anthem; introduced the Family Law Act and trade practices laws; and, as I said earlier, brought sewerage to the suburbs. In many respects he was a very practical but visionary man.

He was dismissed in 1975 in circumstances that I think most people recognise today were a bad day for Australian democracy. He was too trusting of his Governor-General, and his Governor-General misled his Prime Minister. He then cemented his place in many ways in history. I expect he would rather have gone on for another two years in government and fought an election; and, if he had lost at that point in time, he would have been remembered as a Prime Minister. But, now, for many people, he is remembered as a legend because of the way that he was dismissed and the way that he conducted himself during that campaign. He came out with some of the most memorable phrases in Australian political history: “Maintain the rage”, and “Well may we say

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‘God save the Queen’ because nothing will save the Governor-General.” He was resilient. From 1975 to 1977, despite a shock of proportions most of us would have never recovered from, he kept the parliamentary leadership and kept working. He lost again in 1977, in many ways in a more disappointing way than in 1975, and he then left the leadership and left the Parliament. He then went and undertook roles in UNESCO and the not-for-profit sector, travelled, and did various other things for the rest of his life; indeed, apparently he was turning up to his office a couple of days a week until recently, at age 98.

He was a very hard worker. He came up with some of the greatest quotations in our political history. He reformed this country in ways that are now regarded as mainstream, but at the time were controversial and opposed by his political opponents. For many people, time has mellowed their impression of Gough Whitlam. I think many Western Australians now look back fondly on his style of leadership and the things he achieved for this country. He had a band and a song named after him, and it is a very good song. As far as I am aware, he is the only Prime Minister to have had that honour. I have not heard of another band called the McMahons, the Menzies or the Howards. It might happen in time. He has had more books written about him than any other Prime Minister. He has had libraries and institutes named after him. You name it—he has had all sorts of accolades. He remained, in my experience, a decent man, a friendly man and a man who would listen when I met up with him. He is loved by his family and friends and he had a great many supporters across the community.

I want to close with two quotes. Graham Freudenberg said that one of Gough Whitlam’s greatest accolades was grace under pressure. No matter how hard it got, he was always a man who was in command and could command himself when times were tough. The great American author Gore Vidal, who knew Gough Whitlam, said that in 1972 Australia engaged in a unique experiment: it elected its most intelligent person as Prime Minister. I doubt we will see that happen again.

Gough Whitlam was a great man. I am sure we will all miss him.

Statement by Leader of the National Party

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood — Leader of the National Party) [2.26 pm]: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the chance to talk to the motion moved by the Premier. A lot of things have been said by members on both sides of the house. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I was a very young man during Gough Whitlam’s era as the Prime Minister of Australia. I recall that when I was a student at Goomalling District High School in the mid-1970s, some controversial issues came out at the time. I had limited background knowledge at the time, but it came out in later years, and I will refer to that in a second.

It is important to respect anyone who seeks out public office and, in particular, those who seek and aspire, in this case, to hold the highest public office in the land—that is, the position of Prime Minister of Australia. No matter what side of politics they come from or their creed or colour, anyone who takes on that challenge needs to be respected. It is interesting to look through his history. Today the Leader of the Opposition described his commanding physical presence. I remember watching a documentary at some stage about Gough Whitlam’s tailor. Apparently the tailor used to make his shirts. Gough Whitlam had particularly long arms and he was not able to simply buy a shirt off the shelf; his tailor had to add a bit to each of the arms to make it fit. A few other comments were run at the time about the tailor, but I will not mention them here. Clearly, he had a commanding physical presence, which added to his skills as a public speaker. He had great intellect, wit and humour. We do not come across many people who have the whole package as a talent and a parliamentary performer, but clearly he was one of those.

He is considered to be a reformer of both his party and the country. He was able to articulate and lay out a vision. Regardless of whether we liked that vision, his capacity to tell the story and articulate the narrative that supported that highlighted Gough Whitlam as a very, very good public performer and someone who was able to bring people along with him. He was so good that he convinced my dad to vote for the Labor Party for the only time in his life in the 1972 election. It is the only time my father did that—he has never gone back and done it again since—but clearly he respected the story and the vision that was laid out and the capacity of Gough Whitlam to articulate that in public office.

I think the previous two speakers have already mentioned Gough Whitlam’s great achievements. It is important to reiterate that list. Gough Whitlam established Medibank, provided free tertiary education, supported Aboriginal land rights, ended conscription, indexed pensions, campaigned for equal pay for women, reformed family law, boosted the arts and changed the honours system. He also changed the national anthem. As a kid in the mid-1970s, I would have supported *Waltzing Matilda*! However, on reflection, I am pretty happy that *Advance Australia Fair* was the one that came to the fore.

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I think the Premier and Leader of the Opposition mentioned that Gough Whitlam laid the foundations for our relationship with China, and nowhere is that borne more testimony to than in Western Australia, given the importance of that relationship to our local economy.

My first venture into the nature of politics and how it works was at high school in Esperance in 1980, when we studied *The Dismissal*, which is a film about what happened during the Gough Whitlam prime ministerial time, including his dismissal as Prime Minister. We studied the history behind that at school. I guess that was my first exposure to what had happened, the issues and challenges, and how someone was able to win the highest office but did not have the capacity to deliver—what played out is now a matter of history. But there is no doubt that he was a great statesman who believed in Australia. He also appealed to Australians' better instincts rather than material instincts, and it is appropriate that this house recognises his passing.

Statement by Member for Morley

MR I.M. BRITZA (Morley) [2.31 pm]: I hold the dubious honour of having had Mr Whitlam as my local member. Having spent 30 years in Liverpool, New South Wales, he was my local member and I remember him; this tall man could never be forgotten. I wish to share an anecdote with the house in memory of Mr Whitlam, and in deference to him I wanted to wait until he passed before I shared it because I thought that would be the most honourable thing to do.

My father was the local Baptist minister at Bayswater when he accepted a call to be the Baptist pastor in Liverpool; our family arrived there in January 1970. The local member—Mr Whitlam—and his wife, Margaret, were invited to my father's induction service. After the church ceremony, all my brothers and sisters were lined up and introduced to Mr Whitlam. I hasten to say, before I share this next part with the house, that this was my former life, not my current life. All my life my father had introduced me the same way, and he did not change what he said on this Sunday morning. He went through and said to Mr Whitlam, "These are my sons Murray and Ross and my daughters Joyce and Vivienne. This is my son Ian, and, Mr Whitlam, this is the man who will preach the gospel; and this is Karen." There was nothing made of it, and he just shook my hand. He walked about 15 paces, and then he came back to me; I was 15 years old, and I will never forget it. He bent down for what seemed like forever and took my hand and said, "My boy, God knows we've got enough principled preachers, we just don't have enough principled parliamentarians; you ought to reconsider." Then he walked away. Many times since I have been here in Parliament I have thought about contacting the man to say that his words may have been prophetic—I do not know whether he would have been happy about me being on this side of the house! However, I want to acknowledge that he played a significant and important part in my young life as my local member, and I saw him on many occasions. I have never forgotten those words, and I want to say to the house that I have never shared them with anybody because I decided not to until he passed; I now feel I can say them with a sense of honour for a man who deserves honour from the house.

Statement by Member for Kwinana

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.33 pm]: I am in large part a product of the Whitlam era. I do not remember a great deal about the process of government, but I understood and remember the excitement in my family, and the spirit of change and reform that the Whitlam government represented. It informed much in terms of my moral compass today about the lessons and principles that were alive in that government of the time.

I remember being told of the Whitlam sacking. I came in from playtime at school and the teacher, with somewhat of a smirk and a look of glee on his face—I did not come from a very well-informed school in that sense—said that the Whitlam government had been sacked. I was not aware of the processes of the sacking. At that point in my life—I was about 10 years old—I do not think that I was even familiar with the role that the Senate played. However, I knew that the bad guys had won, and that the good guys had taken a hit. My family was resolute in its sense of injustice about the sacking at the time. My parents were, I guess, classic middle-class socialists. They were middle-class professionals who at that time were imbued with all the change, the excitement and the opportunity that the Whitlam government represented, and everything that the Whitlam government did and said; in particular, the ending of the Vietnam War, which meant that my eldest brother was taken out of the ballot; the maturing of a national identity through things such as a new national anthem and so forth; the extension of universal health care; the abolition of tertiary fees and the great growth of our tertiary education sector—I went to Murdoch University, one of the generation of universities that grew strongly out of that time—and, of course, Aboriginal land rights.

These are all issues to which I have applied myself and fought to defend ever since. We need constantly to be reminded about these important reforms in our community and the need to continue to defend them. I campaigned in university, somewhat unsuccessfully, against the reintroduction of tertiary fees. I worked in

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native title out of commitment to the principles of Aboriginal land rights. Today I recommit myself to a public universal healthcare system at a time when governments are contemplating charging fees to see doctors or attend emergency departments. The Whitlam reforms were all very important and we should be cognisant of and very grateful for them, from a government whose vision was far-reaching and whose reforms were energetic and immediate, as a result of which our country has been changed forever. Today we have lost a great Prime Minister. Gough Whitlam's achievements will be remembered for many things. I want to quote the former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who I think said it very well this morning. She wrote —

He is alive in our universities and the many lives he changed by giving free access to university education, my life included in that count.

Alive in Medicare and the uniquely Australian health system we now take for granted.

Alive in our suburbs and in our family law.

Alive in our relationship with China and our multicultural society.

Alive in our embrace of land rights for Indigenous Australians and our hope for a truly reconciled future.

I met Gough Whitlam only once, at a function a few years ago. Even then, at his advanced age, I got a great sense of the charisma, the intellect and the power of a truly great Australian. He will be much missed.

Statement by Member for Cannington

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [2.38 pm]: We will never know how history treats us, because we will never be there to see it. However, we all know how history is going to treat Mr Whitlam, because we have already written it. Very few people in politics in Australia have had the impact that Gough Whitlam had. We are witnessing that today with the outpouring of warmth and gratitude for Gough Whitlam's service by such a wide spectrum of the community, regardless of political affiliation. I would like to say a few things about Edward Gough Whitlam. People may not know that he was a graduate of Canberra Grammar School. I did not go to that school—I went to a different school—but one of my friends went there, and when he finished year 12 and the valedictory ceremony was held, the principal never mentioned Mr Whitlam, which I found very interesting. He was the only Prime Minister of Australia to have attended Canberra Grammar School, yet the school was not prepared to mention him to its year 12 graduates. It is true that Edward Gough Whitlam became divisive in his life, but that is because he was trying to change the nation. When we try to change things, we are not always popular.

I want to go through a few of the ways he impacted on me and my family in a personal sense to give members an appreciation of the contribution of Edward Gough Whitlam. Before I do, I want to make a comment about the 1972 election. That was the first election victory for the Labor Party in 23 years. The Liberal–Country government had become sclerotic. Everybody knew that it was time to change. It had nearly lost in 1969. Members may not realise that back then it was not common to do television advertising. The Premier has already remarked on the “It’s Time” campaign. People used to get their information from the free spots on the ABC. Members may not know that the Liberal Prime Minister at the time, Billy McMahon, the actor Julian McMahon’s father, gave one of these addresses to camera on the ABC and concluded by saying, “I hope voters will examine the government’s record and vote Labor.” I think that was a summary of the nature of that election. It was a landslide victory to Labor. Even though there was a landslide change in seats, it was still only a small victory in the chamber. Mr Whitlam was a genuine leader who has made a real difference to Australia.

The Premier mentioned the Khemlani affair. Members may not realise that when Gough Whitlam became aware of the Khemlani loans issue, he sacked the minister involved because that matter had nothing to do with Mr Whitlam. In fact, the seeking of the loan through Khemlani was done with the express opposition of and with the order from the Prime Minister not to go down that path. It was a different time. If we read the newspapers from the 1970s, we will see that the idea that governments could fix all problems was much more strongly believed. Now we know that governments are not often the solution, despite what any leader says.

I want to talk about what Gough Whitlam's time meant for me and my family. I was 10 in 1972 and 13 in 1975. This was the first time we had had economic reform in Australia. Gough Whitlam cut tariffs. It was the first chance to open Australia, having had what Paul Kelly describes as the Australian compact. Gough Whitlam was the first person to move away from the Australian compact. The next thing was free universities. My brothers and sisters, the children of a working-class Catholic family, became the first Catholics in history to attend university because they could attend for free. Although we no longer have free universities, the fact that the free university debate continues 40 years later shows the impact of the changes made by Whitlam.

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When Gough Whitlam was still the Leader of the Opposition, he ended the debate about funding Catholic schools. Members may not realise that there was no funding for Catholic schools in Australia for over 50 years. It was only in the 1950s, following the split in the Labor Party, that the then Prime Minister, Bob Menzies, introduced state funding of Catholic schools. This was a divisive issue at that time. When Mr Whitlam became leader in 1967, he put that debate behind us. All these years later, no-one debates the issue of support of Catholic schools with public funds.

Gough Whitlam ended conscription. On the day of the election in 1972, I was in Wagga Wagga. The reason I was in Wagga Wagga was that the next day, a Sunday, my brother was completing his basic training for national service. My family was at my uncle's house. My uncle had voted Liberal. He and his family retired to bed early while the Johnstons celebrated late into the night, because we knew that the next day when my brother finished his basic training and passed out at the parade ground at Kapooka outside Wagga, that would be it; he would be home before Christmas. If Gough Whitlam had not won that election, who knows where my brother would have ended up? Land rights have already been mentioned. Members should think about what was happening in the 1970s. Even into the 1980s we still had the black hands television advertisement about land rights. That is in the past.

Medibank came from the idea that the state would provide for people who could not afford health insurance. People do not understand that until Medibank came in in 1973, with Bill Hayden the health minister, a poor person did not have any health insurance, and hospitals were not free—apart from in Queensland. People do not understand the huge revolution that occurred under Gough Whitlam. It was sad that Medibank was later pulled apart and became a private health insurance fund, although later on the Hawke and Keating Labor governments reintroduced Medicare, and now both sides of politics back the approach of a national health insurance scheme.

Our national anthem was not introduced until the 1980s. *Advance Australia Fair* was, in fact, our national song. Even in the 1970s our national anthem was *God Save the Queen*. It was really good for Catholic school students, because at primary school my principal would never allow *God Save the Queen* to be sung. When our national song *Advance Australia Fair* became our national anthem, for the first time ever my principal allowed the singing of a national song at school. Members will understand how unifying that was. *God Save the Queen* was a song about the leader of a different church. We cannot run away from that unifying issue.

The introduction of a national honours system meant that Australians were reflected with Australian honours rather than with British honours.

Gough Whitlam increased support for the arts. Everybody who has ever been to the National Gallery in Canberra looks at *Blue Poles*. It was purchased for \$1.3 million and was criticised as a waste of money; it is probably worth hundreds of millions of dollars now. It also changed the nature of the debate about arts. I am no arts person; I am not a regular at any arts events, but the fact is that providing funding to give the arts a primary position changed the nature of Australia, and it is changing it today.

The nature of politics was changed. Politics went from being only about managing to being about reform. That is still being debated. Again, that was a complete change that only Mr Whitlam was able to achieve.

People do not realise that in New South Wales public housing was provided by the Anglican Church. Mr Whitlam convinced the Anglican Church to give its housing stock to the state of New South Wales and it became the public housing stock of New South Wales. Again, that was a major change to the way that Australian society was conducted. If members think about it, poor Catholics were staying in accommodation that belonged to the Anglican Church, which was wrong.

In a very personal sense, my mother worked for an organisation called the Government Conveyancing Office in Canberra; she was the receptionist—a low-paid job, answering the phone. This office allowed young families to do their conveyancing through a fixed rate scheme, rather than being caught up with lawyers.

We come to 1975, which had two important dates. The first was 16 October 1975, when the Senate refused to pass supply. As it happens, I was at Parliament House in Canberra on that day on a school excursion from year 7 Daramalan College; we were all there. It was amazing. We did the tour of Parliament House and we came outside to see all these people rallying in front of the steps—Bill Hayden, and Bob Hawke, who was of course the president of the Labor Party and also president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions at the time; and then Gough Whitlam, Paul Keating and few other leaders of the Labor Party came onto the steps of Parliament House to address the crowd. I was there as a little 13-year-old. I ran around and got a few signatures. I had a copy of the Australian Constitution in one hand and a notepad in the other. Stupidly, I got them to sign the notepad instead of the copy of the Australian Constitution. All my friends are not surprised that back when I was 13, I was holding a copy of the Australian Constitution. Then, on 11 November 1975, was the dismissal. I came

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home from school, a year 7 student. My sister was there, and I asked her where my brother Bert was. She said, “The Governor-General sacked Gough Whitlam. Bert’s gone to talk to his friend about it.” I said, “No, no; tell me the truth. Where’s my brother Bert?” She said, “The Governor-General sacked Gough Whitlam. Bert’s gone to see his friend John to talk about it.” That was how, as a 13-year-old, I got to know that Gough Whitlam had been dismissed. As the Premier says, in retrospect, we all recognise that it was an error. It is interesting that the member for Hillarys has something in common with Gough Whitlam; that is, they were sacked using the reserve powers. Jack Lang, Gough Whitlam and Rob Johnson were all sacked with the reserve powers.

I also lit a candle for democracy. As we all know, from the Wednesday before an election, election advertising is no longer allowed, but back in the 1970s, the electronic media were not allowed to report on elections either. The newspapers could continue to report, but not the electronic media. It was called the blackout from the Wednesday night before the election. The Labor Party had saved up its free time on the networks—it was not just the ABC that gave free time; it was all the networks—and it had a rally for democracy on the lawns in front of Parliament House in Canberra. People were asked to come to the lawns of Parliament House on the Wednesday before the election and light a candle for democracy. There was a massive turnout—I think there were about 40 000 or 50 000 people in a city of 200 000—and it is true that most of us in Canberra at the time thought that we were home; we thought that we were going to be okay on the weekend. But, of course, that was not to be and the government was ejected from office. The people of Australia never get election results wrong and that was clearly the right result, because that is what the people of Australia voted for, no matter how hard it was for supporters of the Labor Party to cope with the decision of the people. We can go through all that happened afterwards, but we can see that Mr Whitlam’s program from 1972 is still guiding Australia.

I want to finish with a story from Kerry Sibraa, who was the President of the Senate. Kerry Sibraa told me and a group of people this story about when he was an organiser for the Labor Party in the lead-up to the 1972 election. He was just a young guy, working for the New South Wales Labor Party. He was told that the leader was in the boardroom and that he should not disturb him, but there was going to be a national executive meeting. Kerry Sibraa’s job was to put out the glasses and pour the water. He sheepishly went into the boardroom to do his job to set up for the national executive meeting and Gough Whitlam was there reading a story in the newspaper about independence for some African country. Kerry was trying to sneak in the side. He said that Gough Whitlam put the paper down and said, “Comrade, they’re making countries faster than I can visit them!”

Whether or not people supported Gough Whitlam and whether or not they thought he did a good job, there is absolutely no question that, along with a small number of other people such as Edmund Barton and John Curtin, Gough Whitlam changed Australia forever. The Australia in the 1960s, when I was a little kid, will never be again, and that is good.

Statement by Member for Bassendean

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean) [2.53 pm]: Before I say a few words about Edward Gough Whitlam, I thank the member for Cannington; I now understand why I never heard *God Save the Queen* during my school years. The penny had never dropped with me either. Gough Whitlam was a great Prime Minister. I want to mention a few things that he did that particularly resonate with me. I started university in 1982, so I went to university during the time when university education was free. I am quite confident that, had university education not been free at that time, I would never have gone to university, and I think my life would have been very different. My brothers, sisters and I were the first generation in our family I am aware of who went to university. It had a very profound impact on me. My time at university taught me a lot about not only Australia, but also the world. When I think about what I learnt at school about economics and the history of Australia and what I learnt when I went to university, they were like chalk and cheese. Australian history was all about white explorers discovering an untouched land where the local inhabitants were noble savages and there was a very romantic view of their life, if they got a mention at all. When I went to university, one of the first essays I wrote was on the 1905 so-called Aborigines Act here in WA. My paper referred to the horrendous set of laws that had been passed by this Parliament to control Aboriginal people in Western Australia, supposedly for their own benefit. That law was a complete revelation to me. I had gone through 12 years of schooling and had no inkling that life for Aborigines was the way it was here in Western Australia. I had been taught at school that the Third World was that way because people in those countries were backward and lazy. When I got to university I realised things were a lot more complicated than that.

The fact that, because of Gough Whitlam, I had a chance to go to university profoundly changed my life and the way I viewed life. For that I will be forever grateful, as will many other Australians who would never have got a tertiary education had it not been for Gough Whitlam’s view that education should be available to all. That was an intrinsic part of having a fair and open Australia, and I thank him for that. Yes, access to free education has

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been wound back to some extent now and its achievement is a constant battle, and we are in one of those battles again as we speak, but Gough Whitlam marked some territory there. He said university education should be open to everyone and, because of his vision, I do not think that debate will ever be the same.

The very notion that poor people in Australia did not have the right to go to a hospital unless they could stump up the cash would be abhorrent to most of us now, but that was the situation until the Whitlam government introduced Medibank, now Medicare. To get elected, it is now necessary for people on both sides of the debate in federal politics to say they are a friend of Medicare. That was not the case only a few years ago. Prime Minister Whitlam changed the debate around that issue. Every time I have gone to a public hospital or have taken my children to an emergency department when they have needed to be looked after, I have thought how lucky we are to have a public health system in Australia that is free primarily because of the wisdom of his government.

In the 1970s there were certainly no votes in land rights, if there have ever been. There certainly were none in the 1970s, but that is something that Prime Minister Whitlam pursued because it was the right and fair thing to do. The image of Gough Whitlam, as Prime Minister, handing back the land to the Gurindji people, symbolised by his pouring sand through Vincent Lingiari's hands, is a powerful and special one for me in Australia's history. He did that for no other reason than that it was the right thing to do. It certainly was not because it was going to be politically popular. That issue has always been difficult. Children's books and songs have been written about that episode in Australia's history. One of the great pleasures with my two small children when I bought them that book called, I think, *From Little Things Big Things Grow* was telling them that story. It is a story of a powerful person in Australian political life who took the time to concentrate on an issue that was never going to win him any votes, but he committed to it because it was the right thing to do and Australia will forever be the better for it.

As shadow Minister for Water, I have to say something about Gough Whitlam's love of sewerage—the deep sewer. Although some people will say that he was interested in the arts and the finer things, he was also deeply aware of what working-class Australians needed. One of those things was to live in a house that had access to sewerage. Gough Whitlam was interested in not just the finer things. Indeed, whether it was delivering free health care, free education or deep sewerage, he was very much a Prime Minister who was about delivering for ordinary working-class Australians.

Some people try to diminish Gough's achievements during his time as Prime Minister by saying that it was a turbulent and controversial time and that he was divisive. From the moment he was elected and he began to do things such as recognise China, end conscription and provide free health care and free education, there were those in this country who opposed him, and some opposed him with great vitriol. Far from being the error of one individual—the Governor-General of Australia—the Dismissal was part of a strategy that Gough's opponents pursued for many years to destabilise his government. No politician operates in a vacuum; indeed, all politicians deal with what those who oppose them throw their way. Although neither he nor his ministry were perfect, his government was brought down as part of a deliberate strategy by those in this country who opposed his progressive agenda. Anyone who does not say that the Dismissal was completely the wrong thing to do is not a true democrat in the sense of someone who believes in democracy. We in Australia are lucky to have democratically elected governments. Those democratically elected governments should not be brought down before their time—that is, before they go to the people in the time frame that their mandate would ordinarily give them. His term was brought to an end. Many governments would have never been re-elected had their terms been shortened. The mid-term blues is pretty common and many governments and many politicians organise their agenda around what they do mid-term and what they do leading up to an election.

Gough Whitlam was a great Prime Minister. His government has left an indelible imprint on Australia's history and Australia is much the better for it. I thank him and his government for what they did for our country.

Statement by Member for Mandurah

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [3.03 pm]: On 13 November 1972 in the Blacktown Civic Centre, the then leader of the federal Labor opposition, Gough Whitlam, stood to deliver his policy speech for the election that was to be held less than a month later. He started with five words that will be remembered for a long time to come. He said simply, "Men and women of Australia". His speech delivered the program that would see Labor elected less than three weeks later. It is important to reflect on that program, of which there were three key aims. The first was to promote quality, the second was to involve the people of Australia in the decision-making processes of their land, and the third was to liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people. It is the view of many Australians today, as we reflect on the life and contribution of Edward Gough Whitlam, that he achieved those aims for this country. As has been said and will be said over the coming hours, days and

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weeks, Gough made a number of enduring contributions, but I will reflect on one that has had a major impact on so many Australians—namely, his policy announcement during his policy speech on 13 November 1972 in which he said —

The inequality which begins before school has become entrenched and inescapable by the time a student is ready for tertiary education. Fees represent less than 5% of university income but a very large percentage of parents' or students' income. From the 1974 academic year, fees will be abolished at universities, colleges of advanced education and technical colleges.

From that moment, and with the passage of the enacted legislation, Gough changed the way that Australians looked at their aspirations. He provided an opportunity for many young Australian men and women to aspire to study at a university, college of education or technical college. We now see, and will see into the future, the benefits of that policy decision. The third aim of the program was to liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people. I think he did that in a range of ways. Culturally, he did it with the recognition of our first people—the Indigenous people of this country. Creatively, he did it for the men and women of this country who are artists, artisans, performers, actors and writers. He also did it in the way we see ourselves and where we want to be. He lifted the horizons of all Australians. Despite what some people have said today and what some people will say tomorrow and into the future, Gough was a great Australian. He was a great Australian Prime Minister; he was a man who served his nation during war; and he served his nation in an enduring public life, and it is appropriate that we remember him in that way.

Statement by Member for West Swan

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [3.07 pm]: I rise to make a short contribution to this motion. It is a great privilege to stand today to recognise the life and passing of Edward Gough Whitlam. It is indeed a very sad and significant day in Australia's history. It is a day on which we should pause to reflect on the significant contribution that this man made to Australia—indeed, that is the right thing to do. It is appropriate that we acknowledge the significant contribution that Edward Gough Whitlam made to Australia. No matter which side of the political fence one sits on, no-one can underestimate what he did for Australia and for all Australians.

I was born in 1972, so I never experienced life before Gough, but I recognise what he did for Australia. Indeed, one of my earliest memories is being in the lounge room of our Roleystone home and jumping up and down on the couch singing, "We want Gough! We want Gough!" I remember my father looking at me with surprise but also a bit of pride. Although we were never a highly political family, my father and other family members recognised what Gough did for Australia. He changed Australia for the better. Much of what we are proud of in Australia was introduced by Gough Whitlam. That is not something that can be said for many Prime Ministers. He changed Australia for the better. He modernised Australia into what we are today. The list is massive, but I want to put on the record universal health care, the scrapping of university fees, Aboriginal land rights, the establishment of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Racial Discrimination Act, the giving of equal pay to women, the reduction of the voting age to 18 years of age, the ending of conscription and, of course, the recognition of China. He took Australia forward with vision. Many people have wanted to lead our country and they have done so by dividing, in a sense—by creating division and fear. Gough Whitlam created a vision for a better Australia, and Australia was going with that vision. Of course, when someone challenges authority and the status quo, there will be criticism when they actually want to change, and there was. However, reformers do that, and Gough Whitlam set forward a path for Australia that most governments after Whitlam have adopted.

I believe the dismissal was one of the most shameful, undemocratic things that happened in Australia's past. People can try to justify it by talking about chaos and dysfunction, but if every government earmarked by chaos and dysfunction since then had been sacked by the Governor or the Governor-General, not many governments would have stayed in power. If every government that has done deals or wrecked a state's finances was dismissed by the Governor or the Governor-General, there would be changes of government all the time. Anyone who believes in democracy cannot accept what happened in 1975.

As I said, I am grateful for Gough Whitlam and for all he did for Australia. In the car this morning, I heard a comment he made on his eventual passing. He said —

I've never said I'm immortal. I do believe in correct language. I'm eternal; I'm not immortal.

Statement by Member for Girrawheen

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [3.12 pm]: We have heard a lot today about Gough Whitlam, and I think it is a testament to the man that we have heard about so many different aspects of his long and very productive life. We all know that he was a tremendous orator, and a few of us here are old enough to actually remember some of those speeches firsthand. He was a wit and his wit was quite wicked on occasions. He lived to 98 years of age, and I consider him a model for active ageing.

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One thing he was not was modest, but he did not have a lot to be modest about. I want to talk briefly about three manifestations of Gough Whitlam's reforming zeal. The first of those was giving legislative effect to the elimination of the White Australia policy; the second is the ratification of the Racial Discrimination Act; and the third is his pioneering steps for Aboriginal land rights. Those are the sorts of measures that I think single out statesmen from leaders, and Gough Whitlam definitely was a statesman.

On the White Australia policy, Gough Whitlam is quoted as saying —

I was profoundly embarrassed by it and did all I could to change it.

I worked in the Department of Immigration in Canberra in the early 1980s and certainly heard many stories from the old-timers there of the application of the White Australia policy even a decade before. I was told stories, for example, that there were different coloured cardboard files, depending on a person's race. For example, the manila folder for a Caucasian might be blue or green, and those folders got processed. The folders for non-Caucasian applicants for migration might be red or orange, and there would be periodic bonfires in which those applications for migration would be just torched. I think the unambiguous actions abolishing the White Australia policy was very important for us to mature as a nation. As I said, the vestiges of that discrimination were certainly present when I worked in the department some 10 or so years later.

For the next area I want to talk about relating to the Racial Discrimination Act, I will use Gough Whitlam's own words. I will quote from *The Whitlam Government: 1972–1975*, which is one of the many books that Gough Whitlam wrote. He was a prolific writer, and that is something that has not been mentioned today. I quote —

As Prime Minister, I was deeply concerned that Australia had failed to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which I have already mentioned in the chapters on International Affairs and Aborigines. The UN General Assembly had adopted this Convention on 7 March 1966. Australia had signed it on 13 October 1966. It had entered into force with the accession or ratification of 27 states by 4 January 1969. When my Government was elected the Convention had been ratified by 87 countries but still not by Australia.

The Convention outlawed all forms of racial discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic background, place of birth or descent.

...

My Government determined that Australia should join the majority of the countries of the world in outlawing racial discrimination ... I appointed Grassby —

This was Al Grassby —

Special Consultant to the Government on Community Relations and gave him a brief, *inter alia*, to work with Attorney-General Murphy in drafting the Bill to outlaw racial discrimination and to enable Australia to ratify the Convention.

The Bill was introduced into the Senate on 31 October 1974. Following the appointment of Murphy as a justice of the High Court of Australia, Kep Enderby was appointed Attorney-General and took the carriage of the Bill in the House of Representatives. It was introduced there on 13 February 1975 and debated on 6 March and 8 and 9 April. In the Senate it was significantly amended by the exclusion of safeguards which we had sought in relation to prohibiting racial incitements against groups as distinct from individuals ...

Steps were taken immediately to lodge the instruments of ratification with the Secretary-General of the UN. After the mandatory 30 days of waiting ratification was effected and the *Racial Discrimination Act* 1975 was proclaimed on 31 October 1975.

Some might say in the nick of time! The book continues —

Grassby had been appointed Commissioner Designate on 29 July 1975 ... he became Australia's first Commissioner for Community Relations ...

The high objectives of the *Racial Discrimination Act*, the culmination of years of effort, I spelled out at the modest ceremony which launched the Office of the Commissioner for Community Relations ...

The new Act writes it firmly into our laws that Australia is in reality a multicultural nation, in which the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Aboriginal people and of peoples from all parts of the world can find an honoured place. Programs of community education and development

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flowing from that Act will ensure this reality is translated into practical measures affecting all areas of our national life.

We cannot underestimate the significance and the foundation that that laid for our multicultural country and our maturity as a country with issues relating to racism and multiculturalism.

The third and final area I want to mention concerns land rights and the steps that Gough Whitlam took. The member for Bassendean has already referred to that very historic moment when Gough Whitlam handed back land to the Gurindji people. Vincent Lingiari, the leader of the Gurindji people, had led a strike at Wave Hill station of stockmen who were paid a risible amount of wages. That strike had gone on for many, many years. It was a real culmination of a struggle by the Gurindji people that the big man from Canberra came. He met with the Gurindji people and made the symbolic gesture of handing over the freehold title of the lands by putting sand into Vincent Lingiari's hand. In so doing, he said —

“Vincent Lingiari, I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof, in Australian law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji people and I put into your hands part of the earth itself as a sign that this land will be the possession of you and your children forever.”

As I said, the Gurindji people went through a great struggle, so this was the culmination of many years of that struggle. I will always recall Vincent Lingiari's gracious reply to Gough Whitlam —

“Let us live happily together as mates, let us not make it hard for each other ... We want to live in a better way together, Aboriginals and white men, let us not fight over anything, let us be mates ...”

This is the true legacy of Gough Whitlam, and I feel privileged to have been able to say a few words today.

Statement by Member for Gosnells

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [3.20 pm]: It is a sad honour to be able to mark the passing of Gough Whitlam today. Gough Whitlam was somebody who believed in a strong, independent Australian identity. He also believed in the value of international institutions, and in the environmental area we saw the coming together of Gough Whitlam's vision of a strong Australian identity and his belief in international institutions. In 1974 Australia signed the World Heritage Convention, which we have used so successfully with the listing of various World Heritage sites. That convention enabled the Hawke government, in the 1980s, to protect the Franklin River when there was talk by the Tasmanian government of damming it. It was Gough Whitlam who enabled us to protect the Great Barrier Reef by passing the commonwealth Seas and Submerged Lands Act 1973, when the Queensland state Bjelke-Petersen government was intent on exploiting the Great Barrier Reef for oil production. The Whitlam government also passed legislation to enable the creation of a national parks service, and he led the way with environmental impact assessments. As other speakers have already said, he recognised Aboriginal people's land and water rights. There were other international conventions as well, such as the protection of wetlands through the Ramsar Convention and the passing of the Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement. Gough Whitlam understood that working with other countries was essential to the protection of the natural Australian heritage values that form such a key part of our national identity.

Gough Whitlam also understood the importance of Australia as a multicultural society. He understood that having people in Australia who maintained strong cultural links with their cultures of origin was a great way of internationalising our country, and I am sure that Gough Whitlam would be delighted to see in the Speaker's gallery here today Brother Abdullah Khan, executive principal of the Australian Islamic College, and other colleagues from the Islamic community. Australia's growing multiculturalism is one of our great strengths, and we have Gough Whitlam to thank for that.

Australia's identity today and the values that the Australian Labor Party has developed are so strongly connected with the vision of Mr Whitlam that we are deeply in his debt. I feel saddened by his passing, but I rejoice in the great achievements of a life so well lived.

Statement by Member for Armadale

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [3.23 pm]: It is with a sense a great honour that I also rise to speak to this motion. Hon Gough Whitlam has to go down in Australian political history as the greatest reformer in respect of social and cultural issues; whatever side of politics we come from, it would be hard to deny that fact. He opened up Australia to the world in many respects, he made Australians more confident, and he allowed us to believe that we could be an independent nation. Many other speakers have gone through his list of achievements, so I do not think there is any need for me to repeat them, but I would like to say something about land rights and conclude with a quote that I think says a lot about Gough Whitlam, the politician and the person.

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Who could forget the first two weeks after the 1972 federal election when Gough Whitlam and Deputy Prime Minister Lance Barnard held 27 portfolios between them for two weeks until the cabinet could be decided by the Labor caucus? Gough Whitlam did not rest on his laurels during that time; he sought to implement commitments that he had made during the election campaign, and he implemented a number of them that did not require legislation, including the diplomatic recognition of China. Western Australia has been a great beneficiary of that diplomatic recognition made by Gough Whitlam during the first two weeks of his new government.

A number of people, including the member for Girrawheen, have mentioned land rights; the member for Girrawheen also mentioned the famous photograph of Vincent Lingiari and Gough Whitlam, which will probably go down as the greatest Australian political photograph we have ever seen. In the photograph, Gough Whitlam is passing some soil into Vincent Lingiari's hand. As he did so, he said —

“Vincent Lingiari, I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof, in Australian law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji people and I put into your hands part of the earth itself as a sign that this land will be the possession of you and your children forever.”

Gough Whitlam was sacked before he could implement land rights legislation; Malcolm Fraser, to his credit, later implemented that legislation, but it was Gough Whitlam who started the debate about land rights and Aboriginal rights in Australia. As my friend the member for Kimberley has told me, Gough Whitlam goes down in history as Australia's greatest Prime Minister in the eyes of many Indigenous people. Both Bob Hawke and Malcolm Fraser did many things in respect of land rights, and Paul Keating introduced the Mabo legislation; but that was in response to the High Court of Australia's Mabo decision. Gough Whitlam decided, without having to be pushed by the High Court, that Australian Indigenous people, the first peoples of Australia, deserved to have land recognition.

Before I conclude with a quote from the 1969 federal election campaign, I should mention that I have been fortunate enough to have met Gough Whitlam twice. On one occasion I sat at his table at a dinner, and prior to that, in the mid-1990s when I was an academic at Murdoch University, I met him at a function there. He came up to me and saw that I had an Italian-sounding name and, without blinking an eye, started speaking to me in very fluent Italian—far more fluently than I could converse with him, and I am sure the member for Bunbury would have enjoyed that very much and would have thought that Gough Whitlam was a native of Italy!

This quote comes from the 1969 federal election campaign which was, of course, unsuccessful, but laid the groundwork for the success of the 1972 campaign. I think it says a lot about Gough Whitlam the person, and I think it is what drives many people on this side of politics —

“When government makes opportunities for any of the citizens, it makes them for all the citizens. We are all diminished as citizens when any of us are poor. Poverty is a national waste as well as individual waste. We are all diminished when any of us are denied proper education. The nation is the poorer—a poorer economy, a poorer civilisation, because of this human and national waste.”

Statement by Member for Willagee

MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee) [3.28 pm]: It is with great pleasure and solemn pride that I rise to add to the already significant contributions of other members in honouring the life of such a great Australian. I also thank the government of Western Australia for having the good grace and respect for a great Australian to bring on what is effectively a condolence motion, when there was absolutely no requirement to do so. As we all know, Gough Whitlam was not a member of this Parliament, but he was a grand figure in Australia. It is good to see that some elements of the Liberal and National Parties are very focused on what it is to be a contributor to our community and to our society. I thank those members opposite who brought on this motion for their graceful approach. I also acknowledge that this great man in Whitlam was also a great leader inside his own team. Often we hear the mantra about leadership that a leader should be judged not by how many people follow him but by how many leaders he creates. I believe that is an unknown hallmark of the Whitlam era; he created a significant number of leaders—or should I say that he allowed the expression of those around him in a political policy sense to flourish. Many members have stood in this place and talked about the grand contribution of the Whitlam government and the Whitlam vision as expressed in free education. I remind members that free education was ushered in by a significant figure in support of Gough Whitlam—that was Kim Beazley Sr. Twenty-eight years of Kim Beazley Sr's professional and political life was devoted to the single policy tranche of universal free education, but it was only under Whitlam's vision that he was able to deliver that. Kim Beazley Sr is a grand West Australian.

Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dave Kelly; Mr David Templeman; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Chris Tallentire; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Peter Watson; Ms Janine Freeman

I want to focus on one part of the Whitlam legacy—that is, as members might think it appropriate for me to talk about the ending of national service in the very early days of the Whitlam government. It was one of the very first acts of the Whitlam government. Gough Whitlam and Lance Barnard, the two-man cabinet, were owners of every government portfolio within the Whitlam government for a period of time, and one of their first decisions was to extract the troops from Vietnam and to end the national service that was not necessarily in the Australian character. Great conscription debates of the First and Second World Wars gave rise to the militia finally in the Second World War, and played out long and hard in the socially divisive environment around the Vietnam War, and it affected our population and communities through national service or compulsory service. Conscription was established in 1964 under Prime Minister Menzies, not as a contribution to the Vietnam War, but to provide a greater army to resist communism in South-East Asia. The first deployment of conscripted Australian troops was to the Konfrontasi between Indonesia and Malaya. There was an ambition to increase the army's strength to 33 000 by 1966, but, between 1965 and 1972, when national service was abolished, over 800 000 people were in the ballot, of whom 63 000 were conscripted and 15 381 national servicemen served in Vietnam. Of course, if servicemen serve in war, there are always casualties. Over 200 national servicemen lost their lives in Vietnam. This all happened with the backdrop of significant social upheaval in the Australian community through the 1960s and into the early 1970s. Those who are old enough to remember and those who have studied the great moratorium marches and so on will know that it was extremely divisive.

Unfortunately, the dark thread of national service that pervades even to this day is the way that servicemen and women of that era were seen as the protagonists of everything that was wrong with the way that we went about our business in Vietnam. Unfortunately, they were the focal point of much of the community's vitriol. Similarly, the Vietnam veteran community also felt quite detached, dispirited and alone. Often the rotations of those returning from Vietnam were on aircraft in the dead of the night. There were none of the welcome-home parades that people might be familiar with from the First and Second World Wars. The Vietnam veterans did not get the recognition that they so richly deserved for serving their country without question. It is a dark thread. Today, those veterans, who survived the Vietnam War with all their attendant issues blame Gough Whitlam personally and the Labor government of the era for the way that they were treated. However untrue and refutable by the facts that that is, it is something that governments of all persuasions, both state and federal, have learned from. Governments have learnt that they cannot treat returning soldiers or soldiers going into harm's way in the way that they were treated in that era. It was completely understandable in relation to it. I remember, as a young soldier on the Gold Coast in the annual march past commemorating the Long Hai battle fought by the 8th Battalion, which was the first battalion withdrawn from Vietnam, that we had beer cans thrown at us. That was in 1980. So it lasted and continued to last. People might remember Anzac Days in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the enmity towards service personnel. Then the Anzac march up and down St Georges Terrace was so poorly attended that a cannon could have been let off on the pavement—in contrast, today, we treat returned service personnel with crowds 10 deep on that same pavement. Unfortunately, the Whitlam government and Gough Whitlam were held personally accountable for the social environment of the time, which is grossly unfair; it is something that needs to be recognised. I want to say to those Vietnam veterans that with the passing of a great Australian, who they hold so poorly in their esteem, may it give them some rest and the capacity to move on and enjoy the remainder of their lives. Of course, his visionary contribution is something that is far greater than anything for which we might hold him accountable.

Statement by Member for Albany

MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [3.36 pm]: I will say a few words about Gough Whitlam. Everyone else has said the great things that he did. I met Gough Whitlam only twice. When I was captain of the athletics team at the Commonwealth Games in New Zealand, we had the choice of meeting the Queen or Gough Whitlam. I was not really politically motivated then when the opportunity was given to me, and I was not really a royalist, so I thought, "I will try this Gough Whitlam bloke." He was one of the few people that I have seen in my lifetime who had a presence when he walked into the room. The Queen walked in, and a few people looked up and around, but when Gough Whitlam and Margaret walked in, what a dynamic environment it became. We sat down and had lunch, and I walked around and introduced myself. He looked at me and said, "You're a good-looking rooster; you should take up politics one day. Not for those Libs—be a Labor man." I never thought about it until later. In 2001, I had only just been elected, and I went to a Labor Party function in one of the big hotels in Perth; I think Simon Crean had just been elected and Gough Whitlam had a book launch. Gough Whitlam was sitting over in the corner with his big presence and everyone was too scared to go over to him. I walked across and said, "G'day, Gough. Peter Watson." He said, "I told you you would be a politician." He had remembered that from 1974 until 2001. He had not only a tremendous wit, but a great memory. He was a true Labor man, who had Labor values; he looked after his people and was concerned about his community. He wanted to get things done, but he was not worried about getting re-elected at the next election as a lot of

Extract from Hansard

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Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Ian Britza; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Dave Kelly; Mr David Templeman; Ms Rita Saffioti; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Chris Tallentire; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Peter Watson; Ms Janine Freeman

politicians are; he just wanted to get social values done. A little bit of Labor died with Gough Whitlam. I was very sad to hear of his passing and my deepest sympathies go to his family and to all the true believers throughout Australia who think he was a great man. He will be sadly missed.

Statement by Member for Mirrabooka

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka) [3.39 pm]: I also would like to honour Gough Whitlam. He was a visionary and a reformer. I was lucky enough to first meet him in 1985 and I thanked him, as I am a product of Gough's education reforms. I am the first person in an extended family to attend university. I am probably someone from the wrong side of the tracks, as the Premier would say. Gough Whitlam gave me the opportunity to attend university, which changed my life forever. I still very much believe in free education because of the benefits that I personally have had because of that. My father still wonders why I went to university and does not know what I made from it! He is a tradesman and he questions it somewhat. However, I believe that receiving a free tertiary education was my absolute chance in life and I thank Gough Whitlam for that. I celebrate his achievements with Aboriginal land rights, the Racial Discrimination Act and the concept of a multicultural Australia; I get to celebrate our multiculturalism on an ongoing basis in the electorate that I represent.

Like the member for Kwinana, I want to recommit to the fight for Gough's legacy of free universal health care. In particular, I want to talk about his great contribution in a time that was progressive for women; the 1970s was a feminist era of which I would have been proud to be a part, but I was just a young woman. However, it made a difference to me with how I saw myself in the world. Certainly, Gough Whitlam ensured that women's participation in society was embraced and enhanced, and changes were put into action. Indeed, he was the first Prime Minister in the world to appoint to a Prime Minister an adviser on women's affairs, Elizabeth Reid, and he established the women's affairs section within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, headed by Sara Dowse, whom I recently heard speak. We can imagine someone going into the bureaucracy in Canberra in the 1970s and talking about implementing women's policy in the commonwealth public service. He ensured that half a million female workers became eligible for full and equal pay through the 1972 equal pay case and he saw an overall 30 per cent rise in women's wages. On 2 May 1974, he ensured that women were included in the definition of the adult minimum wage through amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. He funded women's health centres. We would not have women's health centres and women's refuges and crisis centres today if it was not for the great reforms of the Gough Whitlam era. He removed the luxury taxes on contraceptives, thereby making it available to many in the community. He passed the Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1973, which gave 12 days full pay and 12 months unpaid leave for commonwealth employees. He also outlawed pregnancy-related discrimination. My mother worked for Australia Post as a telephonist in the telecommunications section. When she married, she was promptly told that as a married woman she could no longer work because other people needed her job. He outlawed such things and that was never to be seen again. He and his government introduced the supporting mother's benefit for single mothers in 1973.

Gough Whitlam was a great reformer and a great man, and my sympathy goes to his family. I thank the house for allowing us to take these moments to celebrate a man who changed many of our lives; he changed mine. Following his dismissal, he said, "Maintain your rage and enthusiasm." I am still enraged at what happened to him, but I am enthusiastic because of people such as Gough Whitlam and I am enthusiastic to see further reform in Australia in the future.

[Members stood and observed a minute's silence.]