



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**VALEDICTORY SPEECH**



**Hon Peter Charles Tinley AM, MLA**  
**(Member for Willagee)**

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 13 November 2024

# Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 13 November 2024

---

## VALEDICTORY REMARKS

*Member for Willagee*

**MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee)** [5.33 pm]: Madam Speaker, before I commence, can I first acknowledge your long-enduring service and contribution to this place in a career well done. From one veteran to another, well done.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Valedictory speeches have the difficult task of attempting to group together all your achievements, ambitions and relationships in one 30-minute burst. I am afraid my summation of 15 years will fall well short of my intent, but it forced me to reflect on some special moments or themes that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I like to visualise my life journey in the form of a pyramid, where the base has created the foundation that has allowed me to rise. A pyramid is layered, if you like, and that layering is made up not only of experiences, good and bad, but also mostly of people. My relationships with those people, stacked and interlocked on every layer, have allowed me to push up and achieve the ambitions I set for myself. It is a monolith, rich with joy and sorrow in its own measure that has shaped my judgement and actions, good and bad. I am always reminded when assessing my life choices of that old saying: good judgement comes from experience, and experience, well, that comes from bad judgement.

My professional adult life started with military service, as most here know, with 25 great years in the Australian Army, 17 of which were with my beloved SAS regiment here in Western Australia, a true institution of the Western Australian community. I am often asked to compare the SAS regiment with political life. People seem to think they are opposite to each other. I can say they are actually very similar, less the guns, of course. Political campaigning was the basis on which I learnt to apply my military experience to politics: a red team, a blue team, a green team and the rural guerilla fighters all competing for the same piece of turf to win the aspiration and expectations of those they wish to serve and the votes they want to attract.

Politics for me, though, has been service in a different uniform, adding a new layer to my pyramid. My political engagement started in 2001 with the deployment of the SAS counterterrorist squadron to Christmas Island to stop the Norwegian container ship the *Tampa*, containing over 400 refugees. In my view, the use of the Army in this way created a moral fault line in the Australian Defence Force that was further exacerbated with the invasion of Iraq three years later based on the lie of weapons of mass destruction and which cost over 600 000 lives. This sparked an interest in understanding how these political decisions are made and in politics more broadly. The ADF is truly apolitical and serves the civil authority at all times, so I had to contemplate where I truly sat on the political spectrum. The SAS regiment is an unconventional unit and does not observe the status quo but, rather, seeks improvement through questioning and acting to change how it achieves its tasks through novel solutions. The Labor Party best sits in this frame of not protecting the status quo and is brave in challenging the shibboleths of the conventional in favour of the risks of change. This is very much how I find myself in the Labor Party and the labour movement.

I have thanked many people along that journey as well, not least of whom was Alan Carpenter, who started the political layer of my life with one phone call one day, giving me early warning

that he was stepping off. It is to him that I am most grateful for the opportunity to stand in. I, too, as a retiring member, am very thankful to have found a worthy candidate to hand the baton on to in Sook Yee Lai for the seat that will be known as Bibra Lake. She is the best that we as a movement can produce. I am convinced she will make a great contribution here.

It is the privilege of service in this place for my constituents that has driven me. I learnt quickly that we are mere leaseholders of these seats. Every seat in this place has been continuously occupied by an elected member. The names of the seats change as much as the names of the members change, but the constituents of Western Australia are continuously represented in this place, which makes the heritage of this building quite unique in terms of lived heritage as much as built form. We are anything but permanent, and it is not lost on me that I get to make a valedictory speech when so many do not. There are 59 seats in this house representing three million Western Australians. The privilege is to say that I am one of them and will have been one for about 15 years at the next election. I have found such unexpected joy as a member, moving around my community through the different clubs, associations, individuals—challenged and thriving—families and the whole community. So much goes on in our electorates that is noble and grand, but people will never, or rarely, read about them in the newspaper or hear about them on the news. Good people are making a contribution to their community, street by street, suburb by suburb: sporting coaches, managers, club secretaries, residents associations, small charitable groups too numerous to mention in one speech. They are the silent fabric in the collection of dwellings called a suburb—the warp and weft of the interconnected tissue binding a suburb to make a true community. In their service, I have found the greatest satisfaction.

One small example exemplifies my experience as a local member. Very early on, as a newly minted MLA in 2010, I was standing in my office in Hamilton Hill one day with the redoubtable Sue Hearn, who is known to so many in this house, and this older woman came in. She was an older Italian woman in black—classic—five foot four, and she had in her hand a bill from the Water Corporation for \$1 100. She was shaking, stopped in that very moment trying to understand what happened or how to fix it. It was at this point that I realised that she had no resource, no agency and no capacity to actually deal with an issue that any one of us would simply take as an administrative nuisance. Sue grabbed the bill, got on the phone and sorted it out in 20 minutes. She had a revised bill of about \$200 to hand over. The look of relief on this woman's face was all it took for me to understand the privilege of the role we play when we bring agency to those who have none.

Although my thanks rest with the privilege of serving those constituents in Willagee, it was the opportunity to serve every Western Australian that added another rich layer to my pyramid. Of the 95 seats that make up the Parliament of Western Australia, only 17 are chosen to go into a special room. From three million people, 59 seats in this house, 36 in the other and only 17 people get the privilege to serve in cabinet. It was this that I found one of the most significant and enjoyable periods of my working life. I was given the Mines and Petroleum portfolio following the successful 2017 election. Now, I like to think I was the best mines and petroleum minister we ever had in the history of the state—for about four days! I had it until we realised that my wife, Vicki, who worked in the industry, may have given rise to the perception of a conflict. Conversely, my dear friend Bill Johnston probably thinks he was the best housing minister we ever had in the history of the state for four days, too! Becoming Minister for Housing was something I embraced as a proud Labor man. The idea of doing social good with an economic portfolio containing a \$4.2 billion asset and a \$5 billion bank in the form of Keystart was a genuine thrill and one I will hold dear forever. In this portfolio, I was able to increase Keystart lending limits to make them more relevant to the current state of the housing market and keep pace with it. It was the simple things like making sure the progress payments for construction reflected industry standard of five per cent not three per cent, and allowed more

constructors into the market. John Carey has taken on the portfolio with enormous energy and focus and delivered in the most difficult of market circumstances. I will watch with equal parts admiration and envy on what you come to do in the next term, John.

As the second Minister for Veterans Issues in the state, I started to position the portfolio into a more relevant space by moving it to Defence West and increasing the funding envelope. Sometimes the seemingly small things as a minister are the hardest to achieve. Getting a question about Australian Defence Force service in the national census was a knotty challenge that I now count as a significant achievement. It has created a deeper understanding of veterans in our community. I am also very happy about the contribution I was able to make to the Anzac Day Trust and increase its capacity to support ex-service organisations. We can do a lot with a little in the service of our veterans and I thank Tony Carter, chair of the Anzac Day Trust, and his team for what they have been able to do for veterans' needs. I also thank my old SAS mate Paul Papalia for his continued support of these initiatives and bringing his own new and exciting ideas to book. He's not bad for a clearance diver!

Ministerial life can change very quickly, and when I was given the responsibility of the fisheries portfolio, I came to understand why difficult conversations are called difficult! I want to record my thanks to Dave Kelly—a man who has had a career in difficult conversations—for the work that he did in establishing a boundary, if you like, between what government should do, could do and would do against the expectations of the industry. I benefited from your hard work, Dave, with the lobster industry in particular. When Chinese trade, which was 95 per cent of our lobster exports, crashed overnight I was able to work very closely with the industry to help it navigate its way through that without losing too many participants. I am encouraged to see Don Punch pick up the work on issues like sharks, recreational and commercial fishers and the restoration of the lobster trade in such an even-handed and consistent manner.

One of the prouder moments I had as minister was as the inaugural Minister for Asian Engagement, something that Bill Johnston and I developed in opposition to create a cabinet-level representation of the ambition of Western Australia into our time zone where 60 per cent of the world's wealth will reside, creating an outstanding opportunity for Western Australia. Key achievements in the Asian engagement portfolio were the establishment of a government strategy that allowed a memorandum of understanding with the Vietnamese province of Bai Ria–Vung Tau, to renew the sister-state relationship with East Java and to look for practical outcomes on specific issues of relevance rather than superficial “grip and grin” activities.

It will be clear by now that my pyramid is made up of people rather than experiences and they can be characterised as personal relationships. I believe you can have friends in politics but respect that we operate in, and indeed need, a competitive environment, but being friendly can be dignified while still competing for the same objective. I could not imagine 15 years in any organisation without creating lifelong friends and I have done that here. Friendships and camaraderie have fuelled me this far and will remain a strong part of my life, including many, many of you. Personal relationships are important to me as someone who believes in teams. The collective will always be stronger than the individual. As part of my team, I am very proud to be sitting here in this chamber with my very dear friend David Michael, who came out of my office, and is now an outstanding minister in the magnificent Cook Labor government. Similarly, the member for Bateman, Kim Giddens, who was also a colleague with David in my office, has seized the opportunity of this role and, through it, has come to understand only the start of her true capacity. Her advice in the ministerial office was often the difference between success and failure. Kim and David were balanced very well with two chiefs of staff over my time in Simon Ward and Tim Fraser. Simon, so unfairly dealt with in his time, has been restored to the office of my mate Tony Buti, and I thank him for that effort. Tim Fraser was an outstanding replacement who knew how to annoy the public sector just enough to get the outcome I did not

know I needed! Of course, my team was rounded out with Julian Hilton and Brendan McShanag who knew how to do politics, policy and humour. In the other place, there is Dan Caddy, a mate who I have had a long association with both within and outside this place. I am so glad you made it into the room, mate, and watch with interest your next moves.

Of course, like many here, my first party-political conversation was with my very good friend Bill Johnston, with whom I share the back-left pocket here in the exit lounge. Bill has always given me the benefit of his experience and insight. I wish I had listened to more of it! Speaking of great political operators, I would like to mention Lenda Oshalem, who in my opinion is the best campaigner in the state. I count her as one of my closest friends. I am proud to call you a friend nearly as much as I am for introducing you to your partner, David Michael, all those years ago! The wedding will be a fundraiser!

Can I also give special mention to our Premier, Roger Cook, who has shown enormous courage to not only seek the role of Premier, but also bring to it poise and good humour that instantly builds goodwill amongst his team. This is how you do leadership, and the party reaps the dividend of your style every day. Your vision to create a diversified economy and progress our society places you squarely in the definition of what Keating called “an enlarger”. I am privileged to call you a mate. I would also like to mention Rita Saffioti, who has been an important part of my political knowledge, and has been at the centre of everything this party has been doing since opposition in 2008. I have long admired her intellect and tenacity, and also her dedication to the labour movement. She is leadership in action. While her achievements are deep and significant, I think her best contribution will be in front of her as we attempt a rare third term.

Away from this place, we operate out there in our little electoral fiefdoms, and we rely on the staff who support us. To this end, I thank Kylie Thompson, who is here in the gallery, my outstanding electorate officer who came to handle tough constituents and a belligerent member in the same breath, such is the power of a redhead! Every team needs a ranga! Kylie is joined by my colleague Peter Feasey, who has been on my political journey since we opened the shop on Simms Road, Hammy Hill in 2009. The office curmudgeon who always cared for people but would never let you know it. Peter will see the end of his electorate officer days with me at the next election and will be able to focus on his new role as the Mayor of Kwinana. Make sure you give your local member a hard time! Again, I take some reflected satisfaction in being able to help you do that, mate.

The industrial wing of the labour movement has been very supportive of me in various ways, both in policy and in kind. Of course, Peter O’Keefe, the former secretary of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees’ Association of WA, is a magnificent supporter of this party and the members in this place. He is succeeded by an equally outstanding individual in the SDA, my friend and fellow Rabbitoh sufferer, Ben Harris, who has brought calm, strong and forthright views around the idea of what it is to be progressive Labor.

As I have supported others, I, too, have been supported, not just by those I have mentioned along the way, but of course by my family. We often talk about the price that is paid for being a member of this place—for having a public profile of any kind. It is often that my children joke that whenever we travel both in this state and around the country, they have bets about how long it is before somebody recognises me and we end up in some esoteric chat. I lose that bet without fail every time but running an impromptu street corner meeting in the reticulation aisle of Bunnings is not something any of my kids actually warmed to. I am really pleased that my father, John, and my stepmother, Lucy, have joined me here this afternoon. Dad is 92 years old and evidence that if you do not let the old man in, you, too, will have a full and rich life. Dad, thank you for all you have done for me. It is great that you and Mum can be here to share it with me.

Of course, like the continual renewal in this place, the next generation of Tinleys joins us the gallery. To our eldest son, Oliver, and his partner, Erin Davies, along with Elliott and his partner, Emily Parker, thank you for being here. I am so proud of your journey so far and look forward to watching you achieve your goals, like my father is watching me. Our third son, Angus, our 18-year-old, cannot be here today; he is on his own journey with the Australian Defence Force as a cadet at the Australian Defence Force Academy, and enjoying his best life, getting paid for a free degree and to play sport! Finally, Ava Ruby, our 14-year-old, and our last. You are the best of everything that I can be and more, because you have the best of your mother in you.

To my wife, Vicki, who has been on this journey, this shared experience with all of life's battle scars and rich layering, joys and tears: your partnership is the base and centre of my pyramid. Vicki, I cannot thank you enough for the support that you have given me and for your understanding of who I am and, more importantly—most importantly—who I am not.

I reserve my final comments now to reflect on the concept of belonging to a movement. I joined the Labor Party, as I said, following the experience of the Iraq War and wanting to have a life of purpose. What I have come to understand between service in that uniform and in this place, is that we are at our very, very best when we stand in the service of others. In living this role, I have cause to confirm that this mighty team I am a part of is not a brand. We are not a brand; we have never been a brand and we will never be a brand. We are a movement. The industrial and political wing of the labour movement has created so much change in this country. The industrial and political wing of the labour movement has transcended generations and circumstances to create change in Australia, and here in Western Australia—change that delivers successive opportunities to this generation and all those that come after it, by creating a future we can believe in.

Many people talk about coming to politics to make a difference. I did not join the labour movement to make a difference; I joined the labour movement to be the difference. It is the difference of somebody getting an equal education regardless of their postcode, the difference in receiving world-class health care as a human right and the difference in enjoying the dignity of work in an economy that serves people and is not their master.

To all my dear colleagues: when you are being brought low by petty human behaviour, the impossible task of making your idea into policy, the challenge of the bureaucracy or the fear of trying to convince the electorate of the worthiness of your endeavour, lift your eyes and look back on what has gone before you and what is to come after you. This great movement can do that for the people it has lifted up. Let it bind you to each other in the service of all. It is because of you people and this ideal that I am proudest to be in this place, and to be part of this movement. Thank you, and good night.

[Applause.]