



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



Hon Jim Chown, MLC **(Member for Agricultural Region)**

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 11 May 2021

Reprinted from Hansard

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 5 May on the following motion moved by Hon Pierre Yang —

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our most gracious sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural) [2.35 pm]: I am sure that most members struggle with the content of their valedictory address; I know I certainly have over the last few weeks. I have so much to say but, as always, relevance is important in a speech, so here we go.

Madam President, I will commence by saying that I am bitterly disappointed your tenure as President of this house will not continue into the forty-first Parliament. It has been my absolute privilege to be a member of this place with you as the first female President of the Legislative Council in the fortieth Parliament. Madam President, you have presided over a number of controversial and at times adversarial debates in this place, and you have conducted your presidency in a highly professional and nonpartisan manner. You are also President of this house when it is being challenged on what is the most fundamental requirement, whether spoken or written—that is, the basic democratic right of privilege. Privilege for members of Parliament allows them to represent their communities and issues within those communities as they see them, and allows them to do so without fear of legal retribution. Madam President, you have fearlessly represented the current rights of this house and have done your best to maintain over 300 years of tradition to uphold democracy as we know it today. On this matter, I will repeat the Governor's speech when he opened Parliament two weeks ago —

With your election, you constituents have put their faith in you.

That is a solemn responsibility. As we look around the globe, we see that faith in democratic processes is declining.

This is dangerous because the only alternative to it is authoritarian Government. The first step in the process is always an attack on the integrity of the democratic system. In Australia we protect that better than anywhere else.

I fully agree with Governor Beazley's comments; however, he omitted to say in his speech that democracy as we know it today is being challenged in Western Australia. It is my opinion that the barbarians are at the gates on the fundamental right of parliamentary privilege in this place. I fully comprehend the pressure Madam President must have come under on this matter, as I spent some time last year being publicly vilified by the Premier and the Attorney General for doing nothing more than carrying out my responsibilities, as enshrined in legislation, regarding the appointment of the Corruption and Crime Commissioner. These comments were inappropriate. They were lies and they have no foundation in fact and were unworthy of the Premier. I think it is absolutely abhorrent that any member of any committee of this Parliament should be

vilified in this manner because a government was unable to get its way. The Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission rejected the Premier's nomination not once, but twice—on two separate occasions. That rejection was carried out as there was neither majority support nor bipartisan support for the nominee. Parliamentary committees and their members carry out important work on behalf of the Western Australian community on a plethora of subjects, and they do so, on the whole, in a bipartisan manner that rises above daily political argy-bargy. This is the fundamental reason why committee deliberations remain within the committee. Once proven, a breach of these confidential discussions by a member of the committee is considered to be a contempt of Parliament, yet here we are. A member of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, which I belong to, took it upon himself to breach this convention and had the protection of the government in the other place during a motion that could possibly have put him before the privileges committee. As I understand it, he is to be rewarded as the new chair of the incoming CCCC. I remember an occasion on the farm when one of my young daughters, one of the twins, asked me how to tell the difference between a snake and a worm. My response was that snakes slither, they have scales and are completely untrustworthy. There is no such thing as a good snake, and the best policy is to give them a wide berth.

Madam President, I conclude this portion of my address by saying that you have been magnificent as President of this Council. I wish your successor the very best during these turbulent times. I believe that it is worth repeating: the barbarians are truly at the doors of democracy in this great state, and if all else fails, lock the doors!

I will now move on to more pleasant matters. A valedictory address is really a speech on self-reflection. Before I get to some of my achievements as a member of this place, I would like to share with members a couple of humorous moments made by members of this Council that have been in my memory for years and will probably forever remain there. One of the great things about spending time here is listening to members on their feet and participating in their conversations through interjections, when the time permits. The first interjection that I recall is from the late Hon Jock Ferguson. Jock became a member of the thirty-eighth Parliament in September 2008. Sadly, he was not with us for very long before he went off to that great trades hall in the sky. We all enjoyed Jock's company. I know I certainly did, although he had a very annoying habit of first addressing any Liberal member he came across as comrade. The occasion that I am alluding to is when Hon Norman Moore had carriage of a bill and during Norman's second reading speech, Jock interjected with a comment that I recall, to the best of my knowledge, went along the lines of, "This legislation is as useful as a glass eye that has a crack in it."

Another interjection that is indelibly etched in my memory was from Hon Sue Ellery who, as the Leader of the Opposition at the time, interjected on a government Liberal member who only on very rare occasions rose to his feet to address the Council. On one of those rare occasions, the member was on his feet giving a five-minute dissertation on what was wrong with the world when Hon Sue Ellery interjected with the pithy comment, and I quote once again from the best of my memory, "What a shame the member's political career peaked in opposition." We have some fun in this place from time to time. If the Leader of the House cannot remember who she said that to, I will remind her later.

I am sure that every member who arrives here does so with the intention of achieving positive outcomes for the electorate that they represent. I know I certainly did. I will now touch on some of the achievements that I successfully accomplished as a member over the last 12 years. When I first arrived as a member, I was a very nervous Nellie. I did not sleep for the first nine months, especially after the house sittings, because my mind was in turmoil trying to catch up on what had happened. I will move forward to what I was going to say. On 29 December 2009, in the early years of the Barnett government, a massive bushfire raced through the town of Toodyay and its surrounds, totally destroying about 28 or 29 homes. Toodyay was closed off. No-one

was allowed in and only residents were allowed to remain in Toodyay. The day after the fire, one of the Premier's principal advisers, John Hammond, called me. He said that the Premier was going up to Toodyay and asked whether I would like to come. I said I certainly would but that I was in my shorts and thongs. He said that I needed to get changed and they would pick me up in half an hour. The Premier arrived at my house and off we went to Toodyay in the morning. On the way up there, we were discussing what had happened. I had had a bit of feedback from people up there already and I said to Colin, "You understand that at this stage over 20 homes have been burnt to the ground. Most of those residents are actually left with nothing but the clothes on their backs. They are living in the town on charity from friends and relations or anyone who can help. Wouldn't it be good if we could give them some of their dignity back and give them a cash grant so that they could have some independence over their life going forward until they re-establish themselves? They've lost their bank accounts, their wallets and have no identity at all, other than the people who know them. They could then buy a meal somewhere and repay their hosts in this terrible time." There was silence and then he said that it was a good idea and he asked me how much I would suggest. I thought that was above my pay grade—you're asking me how much! Quite conservatively, I thought about \$2 500 per home would be more than adequate. He thought in silence for a minute and said to make it \$5 000, and that is what happened.

We arrived in Toodyay the day after the bushfire and attended a town hall meeting packed with Toodyay townspeople, many of whom were in severe distress. The emergency services and police got up and talked. The town hall meetings occurred on a daily basis for more than a week so that the people were informed of what was happening, what was going to take place and on how the government and the emergency services et cetera were going to come to their aid and help re-establish their lives. The Premier got up and said a few words and then he made the announcement that we would be allocating a \$5 000 grant to anybody whose house had burnt to the ground. He pointed to me and he said, "You're the man. You'll have to come up and do this." I was appointed as the Premier's coordinator to deal with the community issues up there. At the town hall meeting the next day, the town hall was again absolutely packed with people and the emergency services went through the process again. I sat down with the shire clerk at the time, who had the deeds of all the houses. We knew exactly who the residents involved were and I signed \$5 000 cheques for those unfortunate people. That was a Saturday morning, and I had arranged for Bendigo Bank to open its doors so that those people could go across and either cash their money or open an account and put the excess into an account, and that is what happened.

After that meeting, I went outside, and had a cigarette, as all members know is my habit, and a lady came up to me. I will not even try to guess her age. She told me that she had been nominated to thank me. I asked her what for. She pointed to a group of people and said that they had all lost their homes and that for the last three days she had nothing with her but the clothes that she was wearing and that she had been living with people whom she did not know. She told me that I had given her and the group their dignity back and that they now had some individual freedom in regard to what they could do. She said they felt like they had been brought back into the community at large. That particular \$5 000 grant was carried out throughout the whole of the Barnett years, especially for homes that were lost in bushfire disasters. I am very happy to see that this government has something similar in place. I know that a \$5 000 grant is now being allocated to those poor, unfortunate people who lost their homes during the recent cyclone Seroja.

There was another occasion that I was highly involved in. A good friend of mine Graham Nixon was the chair of the McCusker Charitable Foundation at the time. He contacted me and asked me if there was any way I could get some money out of the new government to give to the McCusker foundation. I had no idea what the foundation was about. I looked into the McCusker foundation and met Professor Ralph Martins, AO, for the first time. The foundation does a fantastic job with its research into Alzheimer's disease. We are all growing older, we are all

living longer and Alzheimer's is becoming more prevalent in our community. If we look at the figures going forward to 2030, 2040 and 2050, the number of people who will succumb to this disease is mind-boggling.

Troy Buswell was the Treasurer at the time. As always with these matters, I tried to be highly professional. I understand that ministers and Premiers are extremely busy. I prepared one page of the relevant points that needed to be discussed and set out why I was pursuing a particular outcome. I badgered Troy on a number of occasions for some money to be donated to the McCusker foundation. I did not get a response. When the budget was brought down in 2011, I think, Troy came to me and said that there was some money for the McCusker foundation in the budget. It turned out to be \$2.2 million. That money was sourced from moneys in the Carpenter government's science and innovation fund. I was very grateful to Troy. I could not find it in the budget. It was not a line item. The McCusker foundation was very grateful for that money. It triggered another substantial donation from the commonwealth. In turn, as Ralph told me on a flight back from Queensland, when I happened to be sitting next to him, it also triggered substantial funds and donations from the United States of America. I wish the foundation all the very best. I know that it will continue doing fantastic work, especially in trying to find a way—it is nearly there, if not already—to make an early diagnosis of this particular disease.

At that time, Terry Redman was the Minister for Agriculture and Food. I had been down to Katanning and met with people from the Shire of Katanning. It had an issue with its saleyards, which were located in the middle of town. The saleyards did not meet animal welfare requirements. Access to the saleyards by modern transport was tight, if not totally inadequate. When over a million sheep are put through a particular saleyard, anyone anywhere in the town would know when it was sale day because they could smell it. It was as simple as that. The shire wanted to move the saleyards to another location and make them more modern. In the meantime, I had been to a briefing in the Liberal party room, which was organised by Terry Redman, the Minister for Agriculture and Food at the time. He also wanted to build new saleyards but he wanted to move them to Arthur River, which was some way from the town site of Katanning. Once they were built, he wanted the new Muchea saleyards and the new Katanning saleyards—a combined value of around \$80 million has been spent on them—to be leased to a superannuation investment company called Palisade Investment Partners, which was leasing and administrating saleyards in the eastern states. I did not think that was a great idea, considering that we had only two large saleyards in the state. I was not happy about it, and I walked out of the briefing.

Once again, I went to work and put a briefing paper together. I went to the Premier's office and spoke to one of his advisers. I said that I had been to Katanning and said the shire believed it could build new saleyards, once it found an appropriate place for them, for \$20 million, but it would like \$17 million from the government because it can find the rest. I heard nothing back. If you are persistent and professional and until somebody says, "No, go away", you will not get rid of me. After a few more weeks, I repeated that exercise. I went back to the Premier's office. One of his people sat down with me. They were very respectful. I spent half an hour going through it again. I still heard nothing. One day, probably three or four weeks later, I got a phone call. Timing is important in life and in politics, believe me. This particular person from the Premier's office said, "What are you doing at three o'clock this afternoon, Jim?" I thought that nobody from the Premier's office would ring up and ask that question without a good reason. I asked why. They said, "We'd like you to meet the Premier at three o'clock to discuss your proposal of a grant for the Katanning saleyards." I said that I was happy to meet the Premier. I asked why it was suggested that we meet at three o'clock. They said, "He's meeting Terry Redman at four o'clock and we want him to say yes to you first before he says no to Terry's proposal." That is exactly what happened. A grant of \$17 million came from the Barnett government. Those saleyards are state of the art. It is the largest undercover area for sheep in the southern

hemisphere. It cost \$26 million, which is virtually half of what the Muchea saleyards cost. It was built by locals. It is still managed by the Katanning shire. If members are ever down there, I suggest they look at the saleyards. They have done a fantastic job. When the saleyards were opened in May 2014, Hon Ken Baston was the minister. I went down with him and the Premier.

Another matter that I became involved with was the year 7 transition. All members know that that is when the year 7s go off to middle school. The Leader of the House would certainly know that. It was a proposal adopted from the eastern states. It was going to have a pretty negative effect on a number of schools in my electorate. I wrote to every P&C president in my electorate. I was told what was likely to happen and that I was happy to receive feedback on how this matter could be resolved. Members from the Agricultural Region would certainly be aware that a number of small primary schools in WA are quite isolated. To use their year 7s in a cliff face arrangement would take the student numbers in some schools down to critical levels. The Standing Committee on Public Administration looked into the matter. It had hearings, wrote a report and made recommendations. I never read the report because I knew exactly what I was going to do about this matter.

Every year, I conducted a tour of the Agricultural Region with the Premier. These tours would be held over one or two nights. They were timed to the minute. Public meetings were always held in places of interest. They were highly successful. I am pretty sure that Colin enjoyed them. We would start at seven o'clock in the morning and we would not get to bed until 10.30 at night. On this particular occasion, I decided to take our tour from here to Geraldton. I organised a large public meeting in the Shire of Coorow, at which over 100 local people turned up. I knew that the local John Deere agent was a very good orator. When Colin gave his address, the agent said to the Premier, "What's this year 7 transition thing about? Don't you understand that, firstly, if these children suddenly have to go to a high school or boarding school somewhere else, it is at great expense to the parents, and most of them have not saved for that expense? Secondly, you are cutting into my workforce. A lot of these children who go away, if they had stayed in the community, they would become my apprentices." Once children in rural communities leave, they rarely come back. We stopped in Geraldton that night. I think Colin got the message. Over dinner and a bottle of wine, he said, "I know you've been on about this year 7 transition. What's your solution?" I said that it obviously could not be stopped but I suggested we have some sort of gradual process, so that people could get used to it and families could make their own arrangements over a period of time.

That is pretty much what happened. It was decided that this transition would be voluntary for certain small primary schools on a parent's application. A number of schools adopted that. I think the transition period finished in 2017. Now year 7 students go to middle school somewhere else. My daughter's child will soon be going from Kalannie to Dalwallinu, which involves an hour and a half bus ride in the morning and an hour and a half bus ride in the evening. That is three hours on a bus, five days a week, for a year 7 student. He will not be the only one. This is replicated throughout the region in a number of small primary schools.

I am, and always have been, a believer in competition. I think competition gives the best service. It will also give the best price and the best product. I refer to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd in this state. I was involved at a commonwealth level with some great people, including Ian Bradley, who is no longer with us. I went on trips to lobby the Howard federal government to take the monopoly away from the Australian Wheat Board. In the end, it was a Labor government that did that. The outcome is beneficial to Western Australian growers by millions of dollars a year. However, we now have a similar monopoly in CBH. I am not decrying the fact that CBH is the monopoly grain handler in this state. I am not saying that CBH is inefficient, but I know that it can do better. Bunge, the second largest grain acquirer in the world, came to me when it wanted to start exporting grain out of Bunbury port. Once again, Troy was the Minister for Transport and ports. There was not going to be a lot of public moneys involved. It just wanted the licence

and the land allocation at Bunbury port to set up a receival point. After some lobbying, that actually happened. Bunge eventually had a receival point at Arthur River and another one further inland. It spent \$90 million building a state-of-the-art receival point at Bunbury port. Its handling charges were less than CBH's by a good number of dollars. One grower in the area said that he would save \$50 000 to \$80 000 a year by going to the competition. I was involved in that at a very high level. The minister made the final decision, but it would not have happened unless Bunge had come to me and I had gone through the process. One of the great things about being in government is actually being able to achieve things.

To cut a long story short, it was an absolute failure for Bunge. CBH met the local marketplace. It lowered its handling fees. That was fine; that is what competition is about. Bunge could not sustain its commercial interest because it had started to lose tonnage. I understand that it is now on the market as a non-operating entity.

I was not a student at Muresk, but as a member for Agricultural Region I certainly believe Muresk has a lot to add from an educational perspective, and it has in the past for agriculture. There was a time when Muresk—I cannot remember what it was combined with locally; it was one of the universities.

Hon Sue Ellery: Curtin.

Hon JIM CHOWN: Curtin University, yes. After a few years, that arrangement went by the bye, and the Muresk Institute virtually closed down. Then it started up again in partnership with the University of Queensland. I went up there and became a little involved and encouraged them. At the time, 22 students had enrolled in a two or three-year course. I asked, "How can I help you?" They said, "We need more students. We need some encouragement. People have lost a bit of faith in Muresk because it has been irregular." I said, "If I can arrange a scholarship program and you guys could advertise that there is a scholarship program, it may encourage other people to become students." They said that was great. I came back to the Liberal party room and put forward a proposal. It was to be a \$5 000 scholarship called the Sir David Brand scholarship program. The Premier said that was fine. I spoke to all members and they approved it. The Premier said the only caveat was, "Things change in politics, Jim. The best thing to do is only make this a four-year or a government-term contract because there may be fewer members after the next election," and there were. That program commenced and that is what happened.

I will not bore members any further with some of my achievements, but the list is long.

Hon Nick Goiran: It certainly has not been boring, honourable member.

Hon JIM CHOWN: It has not been boring at all; it has been quite exciting.

One of the most satisfying aspects of being a member of Parliament is the opportunity to help individuals with difficulties that they are experiencing. Most of the time it is listening to their grievances or helping them to gain access or find the right direction for departmental inquiries and resolutions. It is my experience that most people access a member's office when the wheels have truly fallen off the matter they are struggling with. I am sure we have all had similar experiences. I wish that people would utilise the services our offices provide more often and earlier, when the wheels start to wobble and the problem is easier to overcome, rather than trying to rectify something at its terminal stage.

We have all helped, and we continue to help, individuals from our electorates on a whole range of subjects. I find getting positive outcomes for people most gratifying; I am sure we all do. At times, it takes a great deal of work and more work than the person you are trying to help actually realises. One of the most gratifying incidents my office has dealt with took place in the dying years of the Gillard federal government. One of my girls received a call as I was leaving the office. She said, "Jim, you need to take this call." When my staff say that, I know that they are serious. I took the call from a young lady. I will not mention her name.

She is from quite a large country town in my electorate. She said, “Mr Chown, I’m just ringing you because I hope you can help me. I am being deported within two and a half weeks.” I asked her how long she had been here. She replied, “I’ve been here for over five years. I fled the UK. I now have a partner; I’ve integrated in the community; I’ve got a job; I love being here; but the problem is, if I’m deported, my life will be in danger.” I said, “Why is that?” She said, “I have my daughter with me in this country as well. When I was 21 and my daughter was less than 12 months old, my partner tried to stab me to death.” She was attacked and was almost killed. She said, “I recovered from that and left the UK.” She had lived on an island off the mainland. She said, “This deportation order will put me in jeopardy because the perpetrator of the crime is due to leave prison at about the same time I will get back home. I only have one place to go, which is back to my mum on this island.” I said, “How do you know this?” She said, “He has tracked me down through social media. I have emails and messages from him that are all subtly threatening and I am very concerned.” At this time Sue, my wife, was working for Senator Mathias Cormann in his Canberra office. Part of her role was liaising with the department of immigration. In fact, she had such a good rapport with the department that for at least two years after she left Mathias’s office she would get calls from people seeking help or thanking her. Some of the calls were from Europeans trying to find out how they could become Australians. She went in to bat for this lady with the department.

In the meantime, we needed to verify that what this girl was saying was correct. We tracked down the perpetrator’s court case on the internet and found that everything she had said about the knife attack on her was correct. We had the dates. The immigration department, through Mathias’s office, told us that we needed to verify that her life would be in danger if she returned to the United Kingdom, and we were given a two-week time frame in which to get this done. The court case detailed that the first responder to the incident had been the local sergeant, so I found out where he lived on this island and contacted him. He remembered the case. He knew both people involved in it well. He had just retired. I explained the situation to him and asked him to please write a letter giving his opinion on whether this lady’s life would be in jeopardy if she returned. That letter came back within 48 hours and backed up everything she had said. In fact, he was explicit: he said that if this young lady returned to that place, he had no doubt that once the perpetrator was released from jail, he would find her and certainly try to finish the job that he had nearly succeeded in doing on a previous occasion, because he knew him very well. That letter went off to the immigration department. The commonwealth minister has the ability to change deportation orders, and that is what happened. This lady was given permanent residency and is now a citizen of this country. She has remarried and has another child. Quite frankly, for me, as a humble member of this place, that was a really great occasion and a very positive outcome.

I am proudly standing here as a supporter of the voluntary assisted dying legislation. The young gentleman beside me, Hon Tjorn Sibma, and I were the only Liberal members to support that bill. I also supported a number of the amendments to the bill that were put forward by Hon Nick Goiran and others in this place. If the McGowan government achieved anything in the last term, that is one achievement that it needs to be proud of. I think the community at large is most grateful that we now have that sort of legislation in place in this state of Western Australia.

I was quoted in the press on more than one occasion as being undecided on the bill. I had a reason for that, I might add, which I might get into. One day I had a phone call from my mum—she is 96 years old—saying, “Jim, what are you doing?” I asked her what she was talking about. She told me that she had just read in the paper that I was undecided about the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill. I said, “Yes, that’s right, mum.” She then said, “Don’t you realise I may use it or need it at some time?” I explained to her that she was in great health and that I doubted very much she would need it, but I thanked her for the phone call! I was undecided, and I put forward a motion in this place about palliative care. Hon Nick Goiran and others have done a great deal

of work on that subject. My motion was supported. I was undecided because I believed that if this government wanted to go forward with the VAD bill, it needed to put more money into palliative care. I made public the deplorable state of palliative care in this state, and certainly in regional Western Australia. Of course, the government has now spent nearly \$40 million over and above its normal expenditure on palliative care and there are programs in place. I am very happy to have been part of that process. I still do not believe that palliative care is at the level it should be in Western Australia, so I encourage government members to remind the Minister for Health the next time they see him, regardless of whether we are in a crisis, that there should be programs in place for palliative care and certainly increased funding going forward, as we have an ageing population.

I will now move on to a series of thankyou's. I would like to thank two of my longstanding staff in my electorate office, Marion Lehman and Kylie Watkinson. They are two highly professional ladies. I would like to thank them sincerely for keeping both of my feet on the ground. I thank them for the many robust discussions we have had on all sorts of matters. I certainly do not thank them for all the occasions they ganged up on me and won when I decided to put these discussions to a vote—two to one does not work!

I will tell just a couple of little anecdotes about these ladies. When Mike Nahan was Leader of the Opposition, we went on a charter flight to Esperance. Mike had a staff member with him, Senator Brockman had a staff member with him, and Kylie was with me. We had a great day in Esperance. Kylie had organised where they went, helped them with their baggage and gave them directions et cetera. I was talking to the pilot when the others got off the plane and I noticed that she had grabbed their bags and then had stood at the end of the wing. Everyone lined up in a queue and, as they walked past Kylie, they took their bags, shook her hand and had a bit of a laugh and giggle before they moved on. That had never happened before; it was very strange. On the way back in the car, I asked her what it was about. She said, "They were thanking me for the assistance during the day, and they were also wondering how I put up with you!"

Here is another anecdote. Marion is a great person. She is great at her job and great with people, but she is very, very shy. During debate on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, Andrew Denton came to our offices. I was in my office and I think Kylie was momentarily away at a medical appointment when Denton came and knocked on the door. Marion went to open the door but was overcome with shyness, so she ran off to the kitchen, leaving poor Andrew standing there looking through the glass and wondering whether he had just grown another head! I was sitting there wondering when she was going to open the door and bring him in, so I got up and went out. Andrew was still standing there, so I let him in. She did not come out of the kitchen until he had left! I had a great discussion with him on VAD et cetera.

I thank both of you sincerely, from the bottom of my heart, for being such great people.

I would also like to thank Peter Collier. For the past eight years, Peter has been Leader of the Liberal Party in this house. As a leader, he has been completely inclusive, generous in his remarks and generous with his support to all of us, including me. He has shown great leadership skills. In opposition, those leadership skills, along with those of Hon Michael Mischin, came to the fore as he harnessed the sentiment of the crossbenchers in this place. To my colleagues here, I think you are a bunch of wonderful people. We do have some good times together. I cannot remember what bill I was talking about, but one of the Greens members came into the house as I was saying that during a discussion over our dinner break, we had decided that a particular course of action was the best to undertake. She asked, "Do you really discuss things at dinner?" It was you, Hon Alison Xamon. I said, "Yes, we do, and we have a lot of fun as well!" That is what real teamwork is about: it is about trust in each other; it is about giving each other a leg-up; and it is about supporting each other when the occasion arises. I thank you for all of that.

I would like to thank my wonderful family: Sue; my twin daughters, Aleca and Rebecca; and my youngest, Tiffany, who has been in London for a couple of years now doing fantastic things over there; their spouses, Doug and Edward; and the five grandchildren. I thank you for your support. I will not say too much because I will get too emotional! I will now have more time on my hands and I am prepared to undertake any task that you may push my way, but I will draw the line, Edward and Aleca, at walking Oscar. He is too long, his legs are too short, he is too old, he is too grumpy and it is just embarrassing when his tummy gets caught on the kerb as he is crossing the road. You will see more of me, for better or for worse. I am very proud of you. I am proud of what you have achieved as young people. You are great citizens of this great state in this magnificent country. Just before COVID, we were very lucky because, as a whole family, we went to the United Kingdom and had Christmas with Tiff over there. We travelled around Europe; there were 14 of us. When we got back, three weeks later, COVID broke out. I hope we can do it again at some stage in the near future.

To the staff of this Parliament, from the Clerk to the chef, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your professionalism, how you make people feel welcome and how you discharge your duties is quite outstanding. As a new member when I first came here, I thought: the staff know my name! How can that happen? They knew the names of all the new members. They knew everybody's names. I thought that they either went to a special school to rehearse or they had fantastic memories. A number of years later, I happened to be in the kitchen just after the 2013 election. There, on the kitchen wall, were photos of all the new members and their names. I thought: there is the secret. They will eventually remember who is who! I think this place would be nothing but a hollow shell if it were not for the staff. Once again, thank you. Keep up the good work. I am sure you will be adequately rewarded by the members voicing their gratitude on occasions such as this.

I wish all members of this place the absolute best into the future. I thank them for their tolerance in having me as a serving member in this place.

[Applause.]