



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



HON ROBIN CHAPPLE, MLC
(Member for Mining and Pastoral Region)

Legislative Council

Thursday, 19 May 2005

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CLOSE OF SESSION

Valedictory Remarks — Motion

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [3.34 pm]: Life for me has been a fairly incredible journey. It has been a series of really rather remarkable events. Being in this chamber has been simply one of the many events. It has been a very interesting time for me. I looked in the dictionary for the word “valedictory”, as I wanted to know exactly what I was supposed to do. It turns out that the word “valedictory” comes from the Latin word “valedicere”, which basically means “bid well to say”. Therefore, it is to bid farewell. I will not talk too much about what I may or may not have achieved; others over time will be able to judge that. I will talk a bit about those things that I feel I have not achieved in entirety and that I would urge the government to keep looking at.

I do wish to talk about one achievement though of which this house would not be aware. A number of years ago a colleague of mine and I, while trying to track down a crocodile, stumbled across a rock art formation, which latterly we named as Kariyarra Island. The island contained in our estimate some 200 000 carvings. On one of my first road trips into the electorate with my electorate secretary, Scott Ludlam, I determined to take Scott to the site and show him the rock art. When we got there we found that, unfortunately, somebody had pegged the whole area for a limestone mine. For approximately three years Scott, on my behalf, and I have been in the Warden’s Court fighting to save and protect that rock art. It is not in the annals of the media or anywhere else, but after three and a half years we achieved it. The mining corporation itself determined that we were right and it was wrong, and it voluntarily withdrew its tenements over that area without any legal pressure. Currently the rock art, which I consider to be some of the most amazing rock art in existence in Western Australia, is now free from the activities of the mining corporation. The rock art at the site contains carvings of crocodiles, dugongs, initiation rituals and women’s sites, but also interestingly enough it is one of the few places where I have seen carvings of hoofprints and shoes. There are actually early descriptions of shoes by indigenous people. The indigenous people had obviously gone out from the site, seen somebody’s footprints, come back and carved them on the rock. It therefore reflects a real interaction and coming together of societies as Dampier moved up the coast. That was, therefore, one of my personal achievements.

There are many people I wish to thank but I will move on to those issues in which I feel I have not had complete success. The first one is most probably the issue of the Derby herbicide workers. We have been able to progress the debate on those workers. At last we have received some recognition from the government that there was a problem and that a compensation package is needed for them. I feel that my parting from this place will leave those workers without a champion and that the government’s package for them is less than satisfactory. I wish the Derby herbicide workers well and I sincerely encourage the government to continue to be heavily involved in the welfare of those 90-odd souls who inadvertently handled chemicals in an inappropriate manner and which has led to a range of medical problems.

Another issue about which I am concerned and which still has not come to fruition is Barrow Island. It is the most significant biodiverse area in Western Australia. The original WAPET agreement on the island was to be finite. The moment WAPET had finished on the island, the island was to be rehabilitated and returned to the pristine state that existed prior to the oil company going there. Unfortunately, this government has seen fit to allow the establishment of a gas processing plant and attendant facilities on the island. I am still hopeful that the corporations involved in the Gorgon project, with the advent of cheaper piping and better accounting procedures, will see fit to bring that plant onto the mainland, as BHP Billiton has done. BHP Billiton had the option to place its gas processing plant on the islands or on the Burrup Peninsula but chose, in the end, to go to Onslow, because it was economically viable and a good social outcome. I urge Gorgon to reconsider.

As I mentioned in my adjournment speech last night, I have also become concerned once more about uranium mining in Western Australia. Not only was I research officer for Hon Giz Watson, but also I was the coordinator of the Anti-Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia, which dealt with the whole issue of Pangea coming to Australia. By the time ANAWA had finished that campaign, we had seen 300 tenements for uranium mines in this state dwindle to three, and we felt we had done an effective job. The government was elected in 2001 on a platform of bringing in legislation to oppose uranium mining. It was re-elected in 2005 on that same platform. What is of concern, and what will probably take up a great deal of my time into the future, is the fact that, as of yesterday, we have established that 17 of those leases that were covered before I took my seat in 2001 have been reallocated to the uranium industry. It looks as though, in the future, I will have my work cut out for me in that regard.

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I will take some time to thank the President; Hon Norman Moore, the Leader of the Opposition; and Hon Kim Chance, the Leader of the House. I wish that we had been able to hold more business management meetings because the place might have run a tad more smoothly had we done so. I extend my thanks to the Leader of the House for his involvement with the Greens in the parliamentary process, but I urge him and the Leader of the Opposition to facilitate more business management meetings, which would help the progress of legislation through this chamber. I also thank those Greens candidates for the various lower house seats in the Mining and Pastoral Region, who assisted my campaign in the last election. They were Kelly Howlett in Central Kimberley-Pilbara; the inimitable Pat Lowe in Kimberley; Peter Burger in Kalgoorlie; Scott Ludlam, who also sometimes doubles as my research officer, in Murchison-Eyre; and Peter Shaw in North West Coastal.

I will go on to thank some other people at a personal level, but, first, I tried to think of some words that I can say about this place. Knowing that there is a member in this house who likes clichés, I thought that I might proffer some. This is not the end, it is a new beginning. I will cherish these days. We came into this place as strangers and we leave as friends. I look back and say that these years were the best of my life. We will all go our separate ways. This is a new chapter in my life. To me, however, this is just another milestone in what has to date been an exceptionally exciting life. I have been very privileged to do everything from working on a pirate radio station to spending some time with Jimi Hendrix and doing all kinds of odd things in my life.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

CLOSE OF SESSION

Valedictory Remarks — Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [4.43 pm]: I will be brief, as I wish to finish with some roses to colleagues and others with whom I have served. Before I do so, I should say that my father taught me always to argue the point and not the person. In this chamber I have grown to respect a number of people who I believe operate with that integrity; others seemingly do not stick to that principle. Those members whom I respect know that full well. In that regard I wish to leave members with the comment that I believe this place operates much more effectively when members deal with the issues at hand rather than the personalities.

I want to thank some members of staff: obviously the Clerk and the Clerk's assistants; the staff in this chamber; Ken and his staff for keeping us safe at night; Andrew and his staff for ensuring that we will all go to Jenny Craig; my colleague Hon Lynn MacLaren, who is new to the chamber; my former colleague in this chamber, Hon Jim Scott; my colleagues Hon Chrissy Sharp and Hon Giz Watson; and the colleague whose accommodation I have shared for the past four years, Hon Dee Margetts. Members can read into that what they like, but -

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: I want to go on further and thank my colleagues for entrusting me with the job of Whip in the past couple of years. It has certainly caused my staff and me a degree of grief from time to time, but I thank them for their trust in me to fulfil that role.

I thank a number of people external to this place. They are my daughter, Sara, in Kalgoorlie, who has worked tirelessly for my benefit and who has given me a great deal of support; Karl Drysdale in the Kimberley, with whom I have had a great relationship and who has been a tireless worker on behalf of the Derby herbicide workers; Maria Mann in Broome, who has been of great value to that community and a great friend; Dianne Mills in Kalgoorlie; James Pilsbury in Derby; and my friend Anne McKenna, who has always been around for me when I needed a shoulder to cry on.

Finally, I thank Scott, who is in the chamber at the moment. He has been an inspiration to me, a very good friend, somebody whose judgment I value implicitly and somebody who I hope I will be able to hold into the future as a long and dear friend. I thank my former electorate officer, Rebecca Park, who I shared with Hon Dee Margetts; Nuala Brown, who was until recently my electorate officer; Anne Marie Hindinger, who has come in whenever we have needed extra support and who has been a bastion of help in our library; Marie Wynne, a pensioner who has come in regularly and for whom apparently working in our office has meant getting a new zest for life, which is marvellous; Barbara Sourbutts, who has been doing quite a lot of our accounting work; and Judy Ludlam, who has also been coming in to assist. Notwithstanding what my colleague said about her utilising my staff, I also wish to thank Elize Steynberg and Bridget Blackford, who from time to time have assisted me.

With that in mind, I take heed of my colleague's comments that this is her second valedictory speech. This is my first and we have a sign on the door that says: "Out to lunch. Back in 2009".