



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



HON BARBARA SCOTT, MLC
(Member for South Metropolitan Region)

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 19 May 2009

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL — RETIRING MEMBERS

Valedictory Remarks

HON BARBARA SCOTT (South Metropolitan) [8.12 pm]: I would like to begin my comments tonight by thanking most sincerely the members who have spoken earlier today: our leader, Hon Norman Moore; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Giz Watson; and Hon Wendy Duncan. They made very generous comments about all the retiring members, and I thank them for that.

I have been reading with interest some of the valedictory speeches that have been made in this place and in the federal Parliament. I noted that when Senator Chris Ellison made his speech, he made the comment that a member's maiden speech and valedictory speech are like bookends to the time that that member is in this place. I thought that was quite a nice analogy. However, having been in this place for 16 years, I do not intend to fill that space between those two speeches with every detail of what I have done in that time. Nevertheless, as the longest-serving female member in this chamber at the moment, I must say that it has been a great honour for me to be here for 16 years, and I thank the many Western Australian people who placed their trust in me to represent them. For those who were there 16 years ago and for those along the way, I hope that I have been able to fulfil that trust.

I will begin my thanks tonight by firstly thanking the members of the Liberal Party in the divisions that I represent in the South Metropolitan Region—that is, Brand, Fremantle, Swan and Tangney. Many of those members have been there to support me in four bouts of preselection. They have been a great support in many other ways along the path—for example, as volunteers on polling days helping out wherever required. They have also had great generosity of spirit in helping me to get to know and understand their communities. I would like to nominate some people who have done that. I will begin at the bottom of my electorate, in Rockingham. Of course, there is always a risk, when a person starts mentioning people's names, that he or she may leave some people out. However, Rick Palmer is one of those leading people in Rockingham who introduced me to the chamber of commerce. He was responsible really for making me the patron of the first women's entrepreneurs group down there. Alison Gibson was a lawyer down there who was involved in many things. A number of people, all from those areas, have helped and assisted me throughout my time in Parliament by helping me to get to know the groups that they work in. I appreciate that and I thank them. I thank Frank Parker and Anne Hector. They are two divisional presidents in Brand who have been particularly helpful.

In Fremantle, I thank Brian Christie and Madeline Khuen Kryk. Some people may not know Madeline Khuen Kryk, but she is a little American lady who smokes cigars continuously. She does not even vote in this state. However, I do not think I have ever met a more committed Liberal. When I was making one of my many overseas trips, I said to Madeline, "What would you like me to bring you back, Madeline?" She said, "Just a carton of cigarettes." Somewhere along the way in a duty-free place, I found some cigarettes that were labelled "Parliament". For Madeline, that was the best gift I could ever give her, but, as a true friend, I probably should not have done so. However, she enjoyed them.

In Tangney division, I thank Cameron Schuster, John Corser, Lorrie and Rob Slater, Margaret and the late Grant Palmer and Peter and Patsy Douglas. Those people stand out. In the Swan division, I thank the late Maurie Daw, Con Ryan, Phyl Morris, Sandra Brown, Colette Wiltshire and John Gleeson. All of these people are so devoted to the Liberal cause that they would do everything in their power to assist in any way. Their devotion and commitment are just amazing to see.

I thank the Liberal Women's Council of Western Australia—which was previously known as the state women's council—for its support of me for all those years and for bestowing upon me the honour of being its patron for the past six years. Many outstanding women in the Liberal Party have been mentors to me and supporters of me. I name June Craig, who helped me to write my very first preselection speech and encouraged me to stand; the late Daphne Bogue; Bridget Faye; Elaine Dacre; and Judith Orr. They all gave me enormous support, and others have followed them. Currently, there is a very special group of ladies in the Applecross section. They have been a huge support to me. I thank Lois Bracewell, Maureen Court and Lady Doris Brand. I had morning tea with that group at Parliament House last week. I took the liberty of showing them the parliamentary secretary's office where there is a desk that was made for Sir David Brand when he was the Premier of Western Australia. Now I share an office with Brian Ellis. I said to Brian, "Do you know the history of that table that Ray has been sitting at for the past few years?" For anyone who does not know, it is worth a little visit to see. I called Ray, but he was not there. Lady Brand was really thrilled to go into that room and see this beautiful desk, a big jarrah desk with ornate wood carving of gumnuts all around it that was made for Sir David Brand when he was Premier. She thought that it had been made by the Cullity family. Someone told me it was on the way out and Hon Bill Stretch had rescued it!

I refer to that group of people: Bobby Porter, now Bobby Craig, who was a business person in Fremantle, Betty Bishop, Lorraine Ellard, and others, all of whom have given me great encouragement over the years to pursue my passion for making life in Western Australia better for children, families and women. Their support has given me the courage to pursue the issues for children—there have been many—and to fight against the abuse and exploitation of women and girls in prostitution. I would go every month to the branch meeting, and they would really appreciate a detailed parliamentary report—as I did with other branches; they really enjoyed that feedback. They are wonderful fundraisers as well.

To the staff of Parliament House: thank you for everything. From the beginning they have been extremely helpful—every one of them—and very polite and at times very forgiving, which I really appreciate. I hope they are able to forget some of the naive requests made to them over the years, particularly when one is a new member and asks, “Which floor am I on? There are three floors on one side of the house, and two floors on the other but where is my office?” To the switchboard ladies, who are the public face of this place and who give Parliament House and members of Parliament a friendly, professional image owing to their thoughtfulness, efficiency and graciousness: thank you. So, too, to the security staff, the staff of the dining room and bars and, of course, the staff of the chamber: thank you all. You make our lives so much easier because of your knowledge and willingness to assist. My thanks also to the library staff, who have been so efficient and obliging with every request. I was up there the other day with a group of visitors saying how the library had moved from this side of the building into the old ballroom. Some of the library people said that the only downside of that is that not as many members use the library as they used to. For me, having my office on this side of the building all of the time, the library has been very convenient. To Malcolm Peacock, who leads the team in the chamber: it has been with great admiration and pride that I have watched Malcolm progress from the position of Usher of the Black Rod to Clerk of the house. To you and your team, Malcolm: congratulations, and thank you.

Often when I have been addressing students or other people I have been asked to speak about my experiences since coming into this place, what drove me, how I got here, and how I found the whole ambience of Parliament House. As a new member, the closest analogy I could think of was to compare entering Parliament House to that of my experience when I was a young 12-year-old, a shy country girl coming down to boarding school in Perth. The buildings have similarities: the wood panelling, the lead lights and the bells — bells, bells and bells ringing! At school it was for study, chapel, recreation, meals and vespers. For me, coming from the back of Burracoppin, it was hard enough getting used to the formal school uniform with lace-up shoes and brown bullet-proof stockings and suspender belts, when I had been used to going to school mostly barefoot in a one-teacher school. That was the similarity. Here, people were terribly polite and everybody seemed to know me; just as when I arrived at boarding school—Notre Dame des Mission in Mt Lawley—everybody seemed to know who I was, because I had two older sisters go before me. There was an expectation that if one’s name was Barnett, which mine was—no relation to the current Premier—one would be a safe bet for the swimming team, the diving team and for tennis for starters. To arrive here as a new member of Parliament, it was the staff and their assistance which impressed me most.

To my family, my husband, my children and my extended family I extend my special thanks for their support in my pursuit of a challenging political career as a woman. I will say a little bit about that later. I am sure that there are many occasions when my family have not been all that thrilled that I have been a member here because being a member of Parliament places family members under some scrutiny. They also have to live with the preoccupation of our duty to our communities and our lives that are diary-driven and often do not allow very much time for them. But I have been lucky. I come from a big family, so it was no trouble ever to fill polling booths, and everyone in Fremantle said, “Can you bring all the family, Barb?” We would go to Parmelia and to lots of Labor-held seats at which I had to fend off some comments. Some of the comments that were directed at the kids when they asked, “Would you like a how-to-vote Liberal card?” I do not know that I can repeat in this chamber. “Not very likely!” with a few expletives was tame!

Our children have moved on since I came here. When I first came here we had three children at university and one at school. Those members who have been here for some time will know that we sat often till two and three in the morning passing legislation such as the industrial relations bill, so it was not at all uncommon for me to arrive at our home in East Fremantle and find a 15-page assignment on the kitchen table with a note on it saying, “Dear mum, this has to be in by nine o’clock in the morning, could you please proofread?” I have always been a good proofreader, and I am sure lots of staff on committees have looked at me when I said, “That sentence doesn’t have a subject” or “You don’t start a sentence with that.” My kids relied on me to do their proofreading. I think that over the years I probably could have qualified in law, in science, in journalism, and perhaps even wine science, because I helped them all through their studies.

Our youngest son, John, who is practising law in Sydney, and is a great lover of the surf, combined his law degree at the University of Western Australia with a colourful blend of sporting pursuits, including many trips to Rottneest Island in our little runabout with his friends to catch a special surf break. We have, as a security for our sons out at sea, taken up membership of the Fremantle Volunteer Sea Rescue group, and I pay tribute to them for the number of times that they rescued our sons between here and Rottneest. One memorable occasion was when John took off with some mates aboard the boat, and they put the anchor rope short—I think that is the way to describe it—and headed out to surf. While they were surfing, the boat capsized with the motor and sunk to the bottom of the ocean, along with all their

personal gear, including wallets, car keys and the lot. A Channel Nine spotter plane started circling looking for the surfers, who were blissfully unaware of the upturned boat. But all got back to Fremantle safely. Of course, reporters—as they do—rushed to these kids and said, “Can we have some comments? What happened?” John was most adamant and said to his mates, “Say nothing—no names; no details. My mum will kill me if I end up on telly!” My kids have had to live forever under the threat of not embarrassing mum, and I am sure every member in this chamber can relate to that. I have to say that our annual membership over 20 years or so would not cover the cost of the number of rescues that the Fremantle Volunteer Sea Rescue has actually undertaken!

I turn now to my electorate staff. Diane Goodman has been with me for all of the 16 years, and I will never be able to repay her for her loyalty and commitment to me and my family, and for her devotion to my constituents. Thank you, Diane. Diane has been particularly generous in her time to Monica McGhie, who adopted me under the adopt-a-politician scheme, and to an endless number of elderly constituents. She will leave the office after work or at weekends and take them shopping and do things that I do not hear about until later. To Chris Burger, who has worked with me for many years, thank you. Chris has worked alongside me on issues that we have both been passionate about.

To Anna Gossman and Gaby Holdsworth and to Rhonda Johns, my bookkeeper, who has been challenged by all of us in the office to keep on budget, thank you. Members of Parliament of longstanding can only be as good as the team behind them—along with Madeline, who I mentioned previously—and I thank all of them for their hard work through good and bad times. I thank them for being with me on this unforgettable journey. I have many personal friends who have given me great support and I thank them.

I move now to my colleagues in the house who have been helpful. Firstly, I thank Hon Norman Moore for his support over the years and his belief and trust in me. From the first time I came into this place Norman invited me to chair a task force to investigate early education in Western Australia. I had been a lobbyist in the community before then and I guess I came in here known as the kindergarten lady. That task force resulted in the kindergarten year and preprimary year for all Western Australian children, and I am very proud of that. To past ministers Eric Charlton and Murray Criddle, who both gave me specific tasks to do with traffic calming and the rail line into Rockingham, I thank them very much. Out of Eric Charlton’s task, the 40-kilometre-an-hour zones around schools were put in place at my recommendation. I have a friend who says, “I drive around the suburbs, Barb, and every time I see a 40-kay zone I think of you. Sometimes I curse you, but sometimes I praise you.”

I thank Hon George Cash for his wise advice over the years. Many people have mentioned George’s experience in this house. He has been very generous in helping many members. I thank him for the help he gave to me. To our Premier, Hon Colin Barnett, I thank him for his belief and trust in me on the issues that I took to him over the years—early education, children’s commissioner and mandatory reporting of child abuse. Colin has a wonderful ability to travel through an issue with people and I thank him for the support he gave me, especially in the private members’ bills on mandatory reporting of child abuse leading up to the 2005 election and the children’s commissioner.

I give special thanks to a previous member of this house Derrick Tomlinson. Derrick and I shared an office for 12 years and I am very grateful for his wit, wisdom and wise counsel. His ability to be a political analyst fascinated me all the time. When Derrick left I was privileged to have our very new young member Hon Donna Faragher move into my office. Much to my amusement, and in some sense it made me feel younger, when she introduced me to others she would say, “This is my roomy.” This term is commonly used in the federal Parliament where Donna worked for eight years. “Roomy” is not a word that I would dare use when referring to Derrick. Rather I would say, “This is the man with whom I shared an office for 12 years.” I thought that was much safer. To my roomy of four years Hon Donna Faragher, thanks for your friendship and congratulations on being the youngest member of this house to be appointed to the cabinet. That is great. I will say more about the other women who have achieved in this way later.

I thank many colleagues on the opposite benches—there are a number with whom I have built strong connections—in particular Hon Kate Doust with whom I have worked closely on a number of issues. Kate had the carriage of the bill for the children’s commissioner. Kate and I have worked in the background with a group of cross-party members of Parliament on a number of issues, loosely termed life issues, such as the stem cell, surrogacy and living wills legislation, all those issues on which members had a conscience vote. We did a lot of that work with our colleague Hon Phil Pental, who led that group. We have missed his support in the past year or so. There have been strong bonds across party groups and factional groups within the parties.

I would also like to pay tribute to the people from the University of Notre Dame who would come here at two or three o’clock in the morning—Terry O’Connor, QC, Greg Craven and Mary Macommish and others. They gave us enormous support during the debate on those difficult bills.

I will dwell a little on some of my observations of the women in this house and a bit of the history. Here I have relied very much on the people in the library. When I came into this chamber I was just the third Liberal woman in the Legislative Council. I find that a bit scary. The first was Hon Margaret McAleer who was the Whip. She left when I came and Muriel Patterson was here. It is great to see the number of women in this place increasing. I particularly commend our two women ministers and two parliamentary secretaries, Hon Robyn McSweeney, Hon Donna Faragher, Hon Helen Morton and Hon Wendy Duncan. It is pleasing that we have moved forward in giving positions

to women in this house. Other women who have been ministers have been Hon Kay Hallahan and, of course, Hon Sue Ellery and Hon Ljiljana Ravlich. Members can see that in 16 years there has been enormous change.

I will talk briefly about one of the changes that have occurred since I have been in this place. When I came here my office was upstairs and near it was a bathroom, which had “Gentlemen” on the door. I was shown around and told that was the bathroom I needed to use. I would go in there cautiously and knock loudly. A bolt was put on the door. There was a urinal there. It has since been upgraded and now has on the door “Bathroom”, and it can be used by both women and men. I had a couple of experiences in that place, having locked myself in and found a very embarrassed man not knowing how to get out or whether he should get out. That story is best told at another time. I mentioned earlier in my speech that I thanked the staff for some of their forgiving moments.

Also when I first came into this place, women members and women Hansard reporters were not allowed to wear trousers. A ruling was made by the then Speaker, Mr Jim Clarko, and the then President in this place, Clive Griffiths, who declared that women, in particular women Hansard reporters, should not be allowed to wear trousers in the house. The picture that tells it all is Alston’s cartoon the next morning in the newspaper. Here we had a bewigged Speaker, in a cape like that worn by women, saying to Hansard reporters, as well as women members, “What do you think you look like?” I know how members like to doodle, so, out of generosity of spirit, I have had copies made for all the women members. I thought that when the speeches get a bit boring, they could do some colouring in.

Moving on, there have been many adjustments in this chamber. I have talked about some of those. One could talk about many stories, but I think that one of the things that first struck me when I was first here, when we were in government and backbenchers did a lot of representing of the Premier and ministers, was when I went to the University of Western Australia one evening for a graduation. We were duly begowned in our academic dress and had drinks with the official party. I was introduced as Barbara Scott, MLC. We took our seats in the front row of the upstairs part of the UWA building. A gentleman turned to me and asked, “How many students does MLC have?” I thought, wow, so I said, “I am not sure of the number but it is a very good school.” Later on in the evening he approached me and said, “I am terribly sorry; I did not realise you are a member of Parliament and that MLC stands for member of the Legislative Council.” I tell that story to new members and say that it was 16 years ago when there were not as many women members of Parliament. I tell them not ever to get carried away with the fact that people know who a member is and put them on a pedestal. That is not the case.

Some of my most enjoyable and interesting times have been when undertaking travel that has been associated with the Parliament. I have attended a couple of anticorruption conferences. The Standing Committee on Public Administration did a wonderful trip to London and then travelled by train all over the place in England. There were three women and one man. That one man is sitting in the chair tonight—Hon Barry House. Poor old Barry was such a gentleman. At every railway station we came to, we would go to the lift for the disabled or for people with heavy cases only to find that the key was somewhere else. Barry would tell us to give him the cases and he would walk up the stairs. Members will know that London railway stations have masses and masses of stairs. Barry carried our cases all over England, for which I will be eternally grateful to him.

I would also like to compliment and commend Professor David Black and Dr Harry Phillips, who have recorded and written on the history of this place. I think that when retiring after 16 years there are many wonderful experiences. It is important to record some of those for posterity. The changes are quite marked when I look back on that time.

I would also like to thank all the leaders who have made comments this evening. I would like to wish the incoming members all the very best. I would like particularly to commend the new members who took their places for a very brief time here, Carolyn and Shelley, both of whom I have worked with. For them I guess it is a great experience to be here for a little while but disappointing that they have not got further opportunities to serve.

It is always a privilege and an honour to be selected as a member of Parliament. I think it is the duty of all of us to make sure that when we are in the public arena, we work as a team in making sure that the community respects members of Parliament. Although there is criticism of members of Parliament, I think that on an individual basis once people get to know a member of Parliament, they respect the amount of time a member puts in and the commitment that a member makes to the Parliament. As Hon Sue Ellery said earlier this evening, and I think it is a very telling remark, the majority of people coming into this chamber to serve in Parliament come here because they have a passion or a conviction. I believe it is incumbent upon members of Parliament to support each other in the community.

In closing, I thank people for the enormous amount of support that I have had, the opportunities that have been given to me and the challenges, and I hope those things for every member here. I hope I have not forgotten anything. I hope the women members enjoy their finger painting 101 and that they colour their pictures in and keep them. I thank all members and say good luck to all those new members as of Friday.