

EVANS, HON. A.L., RESIGNATION

3 July 2008

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: I thought it appropriate to rise at this point as I will not be present at the next day of sitting. I am one of the 25 per cent of South Australians with diabetes—a disease which is both misunderstood and sometimes debilitating. My medical advice has been to retire for the sake of my health, and this time I have decided to follow that advice. At the conclusion of this day's sitting, Mr President, I will be handing you a letter of resignation according to section 16 of the Constitution Act. I want to leave this place with some final thoughts.

I want to place on the *Hansard* record my hopes and concerns for South Australia. I was elected to this place, following the election of 9 February 2002, at the head of a brand new political party, Family First. The people who elected me were ordinary mums and dads, young people and the elderly who were concerned about traditional family values. My history was with the church and, given my commitment to traditional values, I received a lot of support from Christians. However, I expanded the party's base and opened it to those genuinely concerned about the direction in which South Australia is heading—and many South Australians are concerned about where we are heading.

An article last week entitled 'Everything seemingly is spinning out of control' talked about environmental concerns, petrol prices skyrocketing, and the cost of living being out of control, along with the never-ending fear of terrorism and wars without end in Iraq and Afghanistan. Society has lost its anchor and is adrift on the wild open sea, buffeted by the winds of social experimentation and open attack on the family unit. I can scarcely believe that, in 2005-06, there were 266,745 reports of child abuse across Australia. That figure has doubled in only six years. Each year for the past 10 years 1,000 extra children have been placed away from their families because their own family was abusing or neglecting them. South Australians are asking: why? How have we reached this point? Sadly, just in the past year, South Australia has:

- Found a baby boy dead in a bin at the City West TAFE.
- The number of babies born addicted to heroin and methadone, etc. has increased by 20 per cent.
- Almost 200,000 South Australians now live in poverty, despite the state's economic growth. Just over a decade ago, about seven in 100 people lived below the poverty line, but figures for 2005-06 show it is now more than 12 in 100. Despite our economic development, services are reducing, not increasing.
- We have a spike in hospital-related violence, from 4,427 code blacks in 2005-06 to 6,056 in 2006-07, with 37 per cent more related to drug abuse.
- We are becoming increasingly selfish and introspective, with the number of day spas, cosmetic clinics, tattoo parlours, and the like listed in the Yellow Pages soaring since 1988, while church organisations, union branches, community clubs and volunteer organisations are seeing a steep decline.
- Tragically, about 5,000 South Australians had an abortion in 2005-06, of which 97 per cent were claimed to be on the grounds that the birth of the child posed a significant mental health risk to the mother. I simply do not believe this to be true. This is either the 'social reasons' situation that MPs argued violently against when abortion was legalised, or it otherwise represents a massive and unexplored mental health epidemic. Either way, it is tragic.
- In the 1950s, statistically we felt emotionally close to seven family and friends. Now, the average is down to just four.
- Respect for authority has dramatically fallen in the past 10 years. In 1998, there were 1,608 breaches of bail or parole in the state. By 2005, the figure had quadrupled to 6,695.

In the Adelaide I once knew, we did not have to give our teachers panic phones before putting them in a playground. I have lived in Adelaide for almost 73 years, and I have never seen South Australian families more fragmented or the consequences so evident. I have no doubt whatsoever that South Australia is in trouble, because the Australian family is under siege.

In 2006, we had 51,375 divorces in Australia, of which 3,913 were in South Australia alone. Each divorce represents a broken family, and many divorces result in lost and hurting children. Our marriage rate in Australia has only once been lower: in the midst of World War I when 416,809 Australian men in their prime bravely and selflessly left our shores for battle. Some of their families now ask me, 'Is this the South Australia our fathers went to war for?'

Up to a quarter of women will never have children, and one in four homes in South Australia is now occupied by only one person. On the abortion front, in this state, more teenagers are now having abortions than actually giving birth. Why can't these children be adopted?

The fragmentation of our family units through divorce, low marriage rates and high abortion rates is responsible for many of the problems in our society. It is little wonder that house prices are spiralling out of control when our families are so fractured that so many people are forced to live alone—often not through their own choice. It is little wonder that we have an ageing population when we abort so many South Australians. Quite simply, if we reduce the number of babies, the average age of the population increases, as do the associated health and social costs.

Four out of five divorced Australian mothers are dependent on welfare 5 to 8 years after separation. Family breakup, rather than unemployment, is now the main reason for the rise in poverty levels in Australia. As families break up and children are left without fathers, these children have lower test scores and turn to crime more consistently. American figures show that: 63 per cent of youth suicides are from fatherless homes; 75 per cent of adolescent patients in substance abuse centres come from fatherless homes; 90 per cent of homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes; 71 per cent of

high-school dropouts come from fatherless homes; and 85 per cent of youth in prison had no fathers at home.

The family is at risk throughout Australia. It is shredded by divorce and separation and is redefined in increasingly bizarre ways. The *Daily Mail* recently carried a report of a teachers' conference looking into the effect of family breakdown on children at school. It states

'Children with 'chaotic' home lives turn up at school too troubled to learn, wrecking their prospects of success in exams, they said. Growing numbers are being brought up in splintered families by mothers with children by different fathers, leading to behaviour and mental problems including eating disorders and suicidal thoughts, a teachers' conference heard.'

This is not to blame single-parent families, many of whom move heaven and earth for their children but, as a society, we should be promoting the ideal for our children, which is to grow up with mum and dad. One author writes:

'There exists today no greater single threat to the long-term wellbeing of children, our communities or our nation than the increasing number of children being raised without a committed, responsible and loving father.'

I believe that in 20 to 30 years, as we look back on South Australian history, several things will become apparent. We will look at the '80s and '90s, and we will see a state consumed by the health of the economy. The governments of today have responded by basing policy directions on economic calculations and balance sheets and, by and large, they have done well in stabilising the economy.

This decade has seen a shift towards environmental concerns and increased awareness of the need to reduce pollution and wind back global warming. Family First, of course, supports this. However, the next looming threat is to our families and to our society as a whole. We simply cannot continue to exist as a cohesive society if our families continue to disintegrate.

I strongly believe that the people of South Australia would prefer us to put the family first even before economic prosperity. Sometimes, both go hand in hand, but when economic prosperity means that we are destroying our children's environment, or it means that mums are spending 60 hours a week at work, or if this means that as a society we lose interest in the battler, the disabled and the elderly, then economic considerations must take second place to the needs of the family.

It is easy, as politicians, to ignore long-term solutions to complicated problems and focus instead on polls, media sound-bites and short-term popular decisions timed for an election. Politicians are said to be successful if they are active in the media, and yet I have found in most cases the opposite to be true. I started Family First because I thought the politicians were not focusing on the major issues that were the concerns of the family and the sometimes difficult solutions to those issues that South Australia needed.

We should have family impact statements for our legislation, and they should be more important than economic impact statements. It is an indictment on all governments' priorities that they do not consider such things. I am proud that this parliament saw merit in my bill to remove the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse. I understand that some 60 sex offenders are now in prison because of it. I am proud that I defended the definition of the traditional family in the domestic relationship legislation, and initiated a parliamentary inquiry into the status of fathers.

I first suggested that control of the River Murray be given to the commonwealth so that our children and grandchildren by some miracle might be able to enjoy and use it. That miracle has not yet occurred. While the state and federal governments are arguing among themselves and have meeting after meeting, nothing has been done. We have sucked water from the Murray as if there is no tomorrow, and the latest advice is that there is no tomorrow for the Murray—or it has months to survive. We can argue all we like that the focus should be on the economy, the environment, families or something else, but without water, there will be no South Australia and nothing left to argue about.

The challenges for this parliament in the years ahead are clear and very important. Preservation of the family unit and family values, the establishment of genuine water security for South Australian families, the re-establishment of a society where individual responsibility is the expected norm and a legitimate safety net for genuinely disadvantaged should be the focus of debate in this place. In closing, I would like to comment on people in this place and my relationship with them.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: I have enjoyed my time here, actually, and I have found fine friendships and attitudes towards me from everyone in this place. There are three I would like to highlight, though. I used to say I was rather green when I first came in here but, with my brother here, I would hate to take his title. So, I will say that I was rather naive about many of the things in this place, and Carmel Zollo helped me in the first week that I came here. I knew nothing about the structure of this place or how it worked, and she gave me a pattern of how it works that her husband had written. I have kept to that right through, and it has been a very good help to me from time to time as I have wanted to know where we go next on the issues here.

The other person is Rob Lucas. Rob met with me and talked with me on my first day or so in this place, and he gave me some advice on staff: who to look for and what kind of people to get. I must say that I have had brilliant staff and a lot of the ideas I got from you, Rob: thank you very much for your advice. Without the staff, I would not be anywhere. I would have no hope of making a success of any kind in this place. I am grateful to my staff, and I want to thank all of them.

Another person who gave me on-the-job training for several years, and particularly in the first few weeks, is Nick Xenophon. He would say, 'You need to move this here,' and 'You need to do that here,' and so on, and it was a kind of guide to me in that short time that he was sharing those issues with me.

I am also grateful to the Hon. Dennis Hood. He has carried a fair load for me. In the past 18 months, I suppose it has been more difficult for me health-wise, and Dennis has really carried the load and been a tremendous support. I appreciate all you have done, Dennis.

I thank the thousands of South Australians who have voted for us. I believe that we are a party on the move, and we will be a middle-of-the-road commonsense party that will seek to uphold those values that I have spoken about today.

Last of all, I want to say that I am thankful to my Heavenly Father, upon whom I have constantly called for wisdom and strength, and who I found was always there to help. With that, I conclude my little speech. I also thank our President. I think our first chat was when we were crossing over King William Street to Government House. We chatted, I got to know him a little bit and I have learnt to appreciate him very much. Thank you.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

The Hon. CARMEL ZOLLO (Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Correctional Services, Minister for Road Safety, Minister Assisting the Minister for Multicultural Affairs): On behalf of the government I would take this opportunity to give my thanks for the service of the Hon. Andrew Evans to South Australians in his capacity as a member of the Legislative Council. I believe the honourable member has always been true to his ethics, values and convictions, and in particular in relation to his beliefs on families. The Hon. Andrew Evans has made a difference to the lives of South Australians by his contributions to legislation in this place and, as has been placed on the record earlier today by the Hon. Paul Holloway, particularly in relation to a bill concerning sex offenders.

On a personal level, while we may have occasionally disagreed on legislation, I believe the Hon. Andrew Evans is a thorough gentleman in the way he behaves, and one could always rely on his word. I would take this opportunity to wish the honourable member my very best wishes on his retirement. I know

that his wife and family would be incredibly pleased to have him back in their lives in a full-time capacity.

The Hon. Andrew Evans has said that he has enjoyed his time in this place. I know I speak for everybody—and I know that other people will be speaking as well—by saying that we have enjoyed his company. I do thank the honourable member for his presence in this place. Again, my very best wishes to the honourable member on his retirement.

The Hon. D.W. RIDGWAY (Leader of the Opposition): I rise, first, on behalf of my colleagues, although I think a couple of others may make some comments as well, and personally too, to thank the Hon. Andrew Evans on behalf of the Liberal Party. It is interesting: we were elected on the same day, back on 9 February 2002. I have admired the honourable member's great strength and courage for being such a wonderful advocate for the things that he and Family First have held dear and the values that he has built his party around. It is certainly a testament that the Hon. Dennis Hood is here now and, of course, other members of parliament elsewhere in Australia as well. It is a credit to the Hon. Andrew Evans and a credit to the party that he has built.

The honourable member's contribution today has made me reflect on my own family. I am very fortunate to have a wife and three wonderful kids, and it takes times like this to make you sit and reflect and think how lucky you really are that—touch wood—we are all still healthy and happy and have a wonderful family life. I think too often in these days it is people like the honourable member who remind us of the real value that we should place on our family relationships and how important they are for us personally and for our community. So, I thank the honourable member very much for that.

As the Hon. Carmel Zollo said, the Hon. Andrew Evans has always been a wonderful person to deal with. He has always been very honourable, decent and straight down the line, and I think that that is something that we often do not see in politics. Political games are played, but I have found that the honourable member was always very much straight down the line. We have had some differences of opinion on certain fundamental issues but,

notwithstanding that, the honourable member has been able to put them to one side and still deal with me on a level playing field. Certainly, I appreciate that and I know my colleagues appreciate that.

In closing, I wish the Hon. Andrew Evans, his wife and family, all the very best in his retirement. I guess the only disappointment I have is the football team that the honourable member barracks for, but I am sure that is a minor disappointment and not shared by all of us. So, all the very best and I hope we see the honourable member around from time to time.

The Hon. M. PARNELL (17:04): On behalf of the Greens, I would also add my best wishes to the Hon. Andrew Evans for his retirement, and to wish him very well in his life beyond parliament. I can recall, I think, the first telephone conversation that I had with the honourable member. I was very grateful that at the time I was playing a family card game—it wasn't gambling—and I had to tell him over the phone, 'I am with my family and we are playing a family card game', and I thought: 'That will go down well with the members of Family First.'

Clearly, there have been a lot of policy differences between the honourable member's party and mine, but in spite of that our relations have been professional, they have been cordial and they have been friendly, and it is my sincere hope that that will continue with his replacement as well. The number of times those of us with a conscience vote on every issue find ourselves sitting together on the for or against benches was one of the big surprises when I got to this place. I think that those occasions probably outnumber those issues on which we disagree.

At the honourable member's age most people are putting their heels up well and truly, but I have got no doubt that the Hon. Andrew Evans, in his retirement, will still engage in public life, and I have no doubt that we have not heard the last of him, whether it is through the Letters to the Editor or in some other form. So, with those words, on behalf of myself and all my colleagues in the Greens, we wish the honourable member all the best for his retirement.

The Hon. J.S.L. DAWKINS: I rise to speak, not on a political party basis, but on behalf of one of the groups in this parliament that, I think, fosters and allows fellowship between members across the political spectrum, and probably broader than that, and that is the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship. I am privileged to say that until a couple of months ago I was the immediate past chairman and the now the Hon. Mr Evans is the immediate past chairman.

That is a group that goes across all political parties and Independents but also crosses over all of the various Christian denominations. I am very proud of the impact that that group continues to have in the parliament. I remember when the Hon. Mr Evans came here he provided considerable support for me as the chairman. I was working at him very early to try to get him to take over from me, and after a year or so his resistance gave way and he took over.

I believe that most members of that group, and others in the parliament, have appreciated the Hon. Mr Evans's leadership of the Christian fellowship and particularly the fact that the meetings have had some excellent music added to them. As someone whose Christian worship is enhanced by music, I found that very good. I would also like to say that I think it is important we keep those forums in the parliament alive and well, because they allow members from across the spectrum to work together and see a little more beyond the political basis of so much that we do.

I would like to wish the Hon. Mr Evans all the best in his retirement, and express the hope that we will still see him around the place from time to time. I have enjoyed working with him.

The Hon. R.I. LUCAS: I rise to join my colleagues in making a few brief comments in relation to the announcement just made by the Hon. Mr Evans, and to congratulate him and his party on the achievements that the Leader of the Government and other members have highlighted (so I will not go back over those details).

In my six or so years of serving with the Hon. Andrew Evans, I can say that our dealings have always been based on his never having duded me on any undertaking he has given. He has never welched on a bet either, which I cannot say about some other members. When the honourable member gave me an undertaking on an issue, whether it related to legislation or to the workings of his or my party, he followed it through. I can only make judgments on the basis of the discussions and dealings that I have had with the Hon. Mr Evans, so I can certainly attest to that fact, and I thank him for that. I also thank him for his personal friendship over the past six years or so. It is something I have appreciated and treasured, and I hope we can continue to maintain that friendship.

I will not use the word 'retirement' in wishing the Hon. Mr Evans well, because I think this is just moving to the next stage of the challenges ahead in his life. I know he will have a continuing involvement with his church, and I know there will be a continuing involvement with the administration of Family First as a political party. So, I wish him well in terms of the future challenges in the next stage of his life.

I would like to conclude by saying that perhaps the only disappointment I have, after six years or so of serving with the Hon. Mr Evans, is that I do not think I could ever encourage him to participate (as the rest of us did) in the unruly behaviour of interjecting during question time or during other members' speeches. Indeed, there are probably one or two colleagues over in that corner who are among the very few, I suspect, who have never interjected on other members in question time or in their contributions on legislation. I wish the Hon. Mr Evans and his family well for the future, and I hope we can maintain some contact.

The Hon. SANDRA KANCK: I believe that, on the political spectrum, the Hon. Andrew Evans and I are a long way apart. We have frequently disagreed on what I guess we call 'conscience vote' questions, and I think sometimes our exchanges have been reasonably robust—particularly when I have quoted the Bible. In fact, the Hon. Andrew Evans has even spoken to me and taken me to task, claiming I have quoted out of context.

Right up to the end, listening to his final words, I was so tempted to interject and disagree with him. I am even tempted now to disagree with him about some of the conclusions he has reached about our society and where we are going; however, it is neither the time nor the place. I think when people choose to retire we have to honour the positive contributions they have made, and from time to time we actually did, in votes, end up on the same side. I indicate my good wishes for a happy retirement.

The Hon. B.V. FINNIGAN: I rise to join my honourable colleagues in wishing all the best for the future to the Hon. Mr Evans and his family. I have served with him for only a couple of years but I have certainly enjoyed knowing him for that period, and I have found him good to deal with on a professional level.

From a political point of view, the Hon. Mr Evans' achievements are considerable. I do not think there are too many of us here who can say they started their own party from scratch and managed to build that up into a force, with two members in the upper house. I suppose the Hon. Mr Parnell is the first member from the Greens, but he did not exactly start the party from scratch (no disrespect to him or his abilities, of course), unlike the Hon. Mr Evans. I do not think any of us who rely on our party vote can really appreciate how much work would go into setting up a party from scratch, getting the support base, the finances, and volunteers on the ground to be able to pull off an endeavour like that.

I think it is also important to note that the Hon. Mr Evans has very much stuck to his guns in terms of standing up for what he believes in, in gospel values and in the integrity of human life. The fact that he has been very much a man of his convictions is something to be admired. I echo the sentiments expressed by the Hon. Mr Dawkins in terms of thanking him for the work he has done in the parliamentary Christian fellowship. With those brief words, I wish the Hon. Mr Evans and his family all the best into the future, with every blessing and good wish.

The Hon. R.D. LAWSON: I would like to join with other colleagues and add some brief expressions of goodwill regarding the announcement today that

the Hon. Andrew Evans will be leaving us. In his valedictory remarks today, the honourable member showed his interest once again in families, and I have enjoyed serving with the Hon. Andrew Evans on the Select Committee on Families SA. In that committee, he has provided a number of deep insights into his experience of families, his personal knowledge of them and the great work he has done in relation to them, and I have greatly enjoyed working with him on that select committee.

He came to this place after a life of very real achievement. He had been an outstandingly successful leader of his church but, unlike what might be termed the popular stereotype of a successful evangelist, the Hon. Andrew Evans is no demagogue, as he showed here, no egotist—he is certainly not, and never was, overbearing or self-opinionated. His manner has been gentle, conciliatory, reasonable, fair, never doctrinaire, and he has played a part of reasonableness in the deliberations of this chamber. He has brought those qualities to bear in all the work that he has undertaken and all of the relationships that he has had. I have certainly enjoyed working with him and, as with other members, I wish him a healthy and enjoyable time as he continues life's journey.

The Hon. J.M.A. LENSINK: I also rise to congratulate Andrew on his retirement and I wish him and his family very well. A lot of comments have already been made about his demeanour—his kindness and gentleness—and I would like to reiterate that. He has always been a perfect gentleman and, while we have not always agreed on certain issues, I think it is a tribute to the diversity of this parliament that we have a wide range of views and that we can try to work things through together for the benefit of all South Australians. I am sure he is also pleased that, at this late hour in his term, I am finally being made an honest woman, and I hope to enjoy family life myself. I truly wish you, your wife, children and grandchildren all the very best for a long and healthy retirement.

The Hon. T.J. STEPHENS: Many times things have been said about the Hon. Andrew Evans, but I think someone should stand up and really talk about his dark side. I entered this place at the same time as the Hon. Andrew Evans

and a number of my colleagues. I quickly ascertained that you, Mr President, and the Hon. John Gazzola were fearsome Port Adelaide supporters, and it was not a surprise. But here was a fine man of God—a man of good heart and a very humble fellow—who was also a Port supporter; it was quite a shock.

In those early days, Port Adelaide had a wonderful record against the Crows and the fearless ribbing I got from you, Mr President, and the Hon. John Gazzola was not to be unexpected, but the Hon. Andrew Evans in his gentle way used to give it to me as well. He would say, 'I like your Crows, the Hon. Terry Stephens, but we have just got you at the moment'. If that is the worst thing that anybody could say about a fellow, I think it is a testament to his character.

I have learnt many things from the Hon. Andrew Evans. You are an absolute gentleman. Your heart is obviously very good and, if we could all take something away from the way you have conducted yourself, we would all be better people in this place. I wish you and your family a long and happy life, and everything that you turn your hand to from here I hope is successful. I wish you well.

The Hon. R.P. WORTLEY: I have known Andrew for just over two years since I was elected at the last election, but on occasion I have needed to see Andrew to discuss various issues. When I left Andrew's office, I was never under any illusion of where I stood. He was always very honest, always very upright with us, and I always found him very compassionate. That was evident when Andrew supported my motion to repatriate David Hicks, much to the horror of the Hon. Robert Lawson, even though he split with his colleague, the Hon. Dennis Hood.

Andrew is a man of principle. I would like to say that you are proud of your achievements, and you have every right to be proud of your achievements in this council. Just remember that, apart from your conviction to God, the most important thing for you is your health and to look after your health. I know that you will have a long and happy life and that you will also be active in issues

that are close to your heart. It has been a great pleasure working with Andrew. He has left the party in good hands. That is a very important thing. I wish him and his family the best of luck.

The Hon. S.G. WADE: I, too, would like to add to the words of my colleagues in honouring the service of the Hon. Andrew Evans. I cannot think of a member of this council who has entered with such an illustrious history. The Hon. Robert Lawson has reminded us that the Hon. Andrew Evans is a much loved pastor here in Adelaide, but I think it is also worthy of the council to note that the Hon. Andrew Evans has served his church at international level. I understand he was an international leader of the Assemblies of God—one of the largest and fastest growing Christian communities in the world.

Locally, the Hon. Andrew Evans was the founder of what is now the Paradise Church, which I understand is Adelaide's largest Christian Fellowship, and I think it must cause him great pride that the pastoring of that church is now in the hands of his son, Ashley. Of course, you cannot take the pastor out of any man. A Christian vocation is a lifelong vocation, and the Hon. Andrew Evans came into this council very much a pastor. It was evident in the way that he operated in this council that his Christian vocation had come with him. He exercised a high level of pastoral care in his relationship with other members.

I was interested to observe the leadership of the Hon. Andrew Evans in the Christian community here. The Hon. John Dawkins paid tribute to his presidency of the Christian Fellowship. I must admit it caused me great surprise when I first came to the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship under the presidency of the Hon. Andrew Evans to see the extent of diversity. Often Christians can become famous for their intolerance and their narrowness in their inclination to regard their brand of Christianity as the only true brand. As the Hon. Robert Lawson has indicated, none of that was to be seen in the Hon. Andrew Evans. His gentleness and openness led to significant diversity in the Christian Fellowship. I believe the fellowship was all the stronger for that style of leadership. I trust that in the years ahead the Hon. Andrew Evans will use the prerogative of the fellowship to continue to be involved with us as a past member, and I am sure that will be a blessing to us.

As other members have already mentioned, the Hon. Andrew Evans has every right to be extremely proud of a number of achievements in this parliament. I also acknowledge his achievements both in this parliament and previously. I wish all the best in his retirement to him and his family.

The Hon. J.A. DARLEY: I add my best wishes to the Hon. Andrew Evans. I first met him in 2005 at a public meeting in Mount Barker, where the topic, of all things, was land tax. I can honestly say we have been good friends since then. When I came into this place in November, Andrew gave me some very good advice, which I will remember for the rest of my days in here. He has also mentioned that he held the crown for being the eldest member ever to come into this place. I apologise for taking that crown from you, Andrew. Before wishing you all the best for the future, I think everyone would recognise Andrew Evans as one of nature's gentlemen.

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: I guess one of the downsides of being one of the last to speak is that almost everything has been said; there is really not much left to say. I do have a few points; I want to acknowledge the achievements of the Hon. Andrew Evans.

In Andrew's defence, I cannot help picking up on one of the points made by the Hon. Mr Darley. Whilst Mr Darley at the moment is certainly the eldest person to come into this place, Andrew is still the eldest person ever to be elected to this place at a general election, so he is still hanging onto the title in one way or another.

An honourable member interjecting:

The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD: He was, of course, but he replaced someone. There is so much I want to say, but I have condensed it into one or two points. The first is one that the Hon. Mr Finnigan raised. This man started this party from absolutely nothing; it was literally in his lounge room when it happened. I had not met Andrew at that stage, but I had heard him preach at Paradise Church. I was not a member of the church, but I had been there on very rare occasions, because they had some special events that attracted me. I

attended it maybe five or six times, so I heard him speak on maybe two occasions, as I recall.

Seven years ago Andrew had the vision to start this party to defend traditional values. There he was, in his lounge room with just a few people around him, whom I also had not met at that stage. I am the Johnny-come-lately who rode on their success after it happened, but this man started it all.

It was an incredible task. One of the things the people in the smaller parties may appreciate more than those in the bigger parties—and it is not a criticism in any way—is that a lot has to be done by fewer people. It is tough going. For example, just organising the corflutes to be put up across the whole state by a small group of people, and even things Andrew has done personally like filling out AEC documents—all these things can be quite onerous when you are doing them for every seat and, in some cases, every seat across Australia. Then, of course, the big one, raising the money, is not easy. In a small party like ours it essentially falls to two people, and before I was here it fell very much to one person, so it is an enormous achievement, and it is easy to forget that. As the Hon. Mr Finnigan said, no-one else in this parliament has started their own party as Andrew has.

It was not without its difficulties initially. There were some substantial difficulties, and I have written down a couple of things that were reported about our party before Andrew was elected, so we are going back to very early 2002 and late 2001. I believe Andrew went public with his intention to start a party in July or August of 2001. In the months after that, it was reported in the media that Family First would ban contraception; that we were against contraception and it was something we would not tolerate. That was absolute rubbish. I will not provide too much information, but I can assure the council that contraception is not something that we are against.

It was said that all candidates of the party were members of the Assemblies of God church; this was reported widely in the media. It is absolute rubbish; it is not true. I have never been a member of the AOG church. At that time it was not true; it has never been true.

It was reported that we were funded by large churches in America. That is absolutely untrue; to the best of my knowledge we have never received a single cent from a church in America. These were big stories at the time and they influenced a lot of people and yet, with this constant rumour-mongering which went on for months and months and which has really only started to dissipate in the past 18 months or so, you can imagine those obstacles when it was just a one man band, so it is an absolute credit to Andrew Evans that he was able to overcome that sort of opposition.

Despite all that, Andrew got elected and built a party. Family First is a small party; we acknowledge that. We have only four members nationally, but it is four members nonetheless, and we have bigger dreams than that, of course. What a credit to someone that he could begin a party that in the space of six years could look back and have four members elected nationally. Again, it is something that no-one else in this chamber could say, and that is not a criticism but just a fact. The reality is that it is a substantial achievement; very few people in Australia could say that.

Most significantly in all that for me is that he got me elected, something for which I will be eternally grateful, I can you assure you. I remember that campaign very well, as I am sure many members in this place remember their campaigns very well. I must say that 2006 was a very big year for me. People now know my story: I left my job and campaigned for 12 months to get elected, and I could not speak highly enough of Andrew through that process. He went out of his way to help me in every possible regard. I remember quite often driving and getting home at two in the morning from speaking at country centres. He was prepared to do whatever it took to help me get elected. I am eternally grateful for everything you did, Andrew; I truly am. During that period—I was 36 years at the time and I am 38 years now—I remember thinking that this guy has got more energy than I have got, and he was 71 years at the time, which was incredible. To think of the lengths he went to to get me elected, I am forever grateful.

In terms of other treatments of the party, Family First now has 15 sitting members elected around the country as a direct result of our preferences; that

is, all other things being equal, those people would not be in parliament without our preferences, which is a substantial achievement. There are four Family First members, but 15 members from other parties have been elected on our preferences. That is one of the great influences that a minor party has: that we are able to not only get ourselves elected but also to get elected like minded people from other parties. Ultimately we will always be a small party and will always have a few members in this parliament (hopefully two members as a minimum), and maybe a smattering of members around the country (and that may grow), but we can have a real role to play by getting elected other members with similar views. So far we have done that 15 times, which is a credit to Andrew as it would not have happened had he not started the party.

Specifically, in terms of what Andrew has done, his most significant achievement in this place was the passing of the Criminal Law Consolidation (Abolition of Time Limit for Prosecution of Certain Sexual Offences) Amendment Act 2003, which amended the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 and, as we referred to earlier today, allowed the prosecution of sexual offenders who had offended prior to 1982. That is a substantial achievement in itself because it has changed the culture of how sexual offences are viewed by our community—not that they were ever condoned, but because the floodgates have opened there has been a greater focus on that. Ultimately, the Mullighan inquiry investigated that area and came up with the appalling findings we are all shocked by. Andrew can certainly take credit for his bill and some substantial credit for the snowball that resulted from that—an achievement of which any one of us would be proud.

Andrew also started the Select Committee on the Status of Fathers, which reported some time ago; that was also a substantial achievement in that its findings go to the core issues of our society today, and I am sure Andrew will be very proud of that. Finally, one of the things that is important to say is that Andrew has never sought the limelight. He has never been one to go up to the front. Again, when I was campaigning back in 2006 to get elected, Andrew constantly pushed me forward. I was not confident about what to do or sure

about how to manage a campaign, but Andrew was keen for me to take the front role, which says a lot about him. He has done that all his life, I understand. His success in the church prior to coming into parliament was also a function of his pushing people forward who he believed were the right people to take on those roles. He took a church congregation from roughly 100 to around 5,000 during the course of his life, which is an incredible achievement in itself. He does not seek the limelight: he is not waving things in front of the cameras or ringing journalists all the time. He is very interested in substance rather than style, and that is something that I will forever admire.

Andrew, I sincerely thank you: you have been tremendous to me. I could not have asked any more. It is a very sad day for me: I have been dreading this day, to be honest. I am eternally grateful. I cannot say 'thank you' enough. I wish you and Lorraine every happiness. I am thrilled to say—and some of you are probably aware—that Andrew is staying on as chairman of our party in this state. I am thrilled about that for two reasons: first, I do not have to do it (and that is thrilling); and, secondly, he is such a tremendous administrator. He is as good as anyone I have seen in terms of his administration skills, and our party is eternally grateful for that. Andrew, thank you. I cannot state clearly enough how much you have done for me and how grateful I am. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT: I also wish to add to the contributions. I have worked with Andrew on some committees, especially the Statutory Authorities Review Committee, on which we wrote a lot of very important reports which Andrew played a major role in. He was always a pleasure to work with on committees and had a very important input. I also thank him on behalf of South Australian workers for his support of the government's Fair Work Bill, especially for his support against the Redford amendment, which was very important to the workers of South Australia.

I also thank him and wish him and his family well on behalf of the chamber staff, the Legislative Council staff outside the chamber and all those who will not have the opportunity in this place to thank him. I know they would like me to pass on their best wishes to Andrew and his family in his retirement or

change of direction. I hope you have a happy, long and healthy change of direction.

The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY (Minister for Police, Minister for Mineral Resources Development, Minister for Urban Development and Planning):

In closing this debate I will add to the comments made by all other members in the chamber and wish Andrew Evans all the best in his retirement from the Legislative Council. In question time today I referred to just one of Andrew's significant contributions to life in this state, namely, initiating the steps that led to the removal of the time limit on bringing charges for child sexual abuse offences.

Andrew will leave a very significant legacy for which this state will owe him much gratitude, particularly some of the most disadvantaged people in our state. Much has been said about Andrew's success before he came here. It is indeed rare for someone to introduce a new political force to South Australia, as he has done with Family First, and that success has been repeated not just here but elsewhere. One can say that the impact of Family First, whether one agrees with all or only some of its policies, leaves no doubt that it has succeeded in putting a greater focus on families and their condition within Australia.

Certainly, Australian families, for a variety of reasons, are under a great deal of pressure at the moment, and it is extremely timely that that should happen. I think Andrew can rest assured that he has achieved, in the goals that Family First has set, bringing those family issues to the fore, as they should be.

On a personal level, as other members have said, Andrew has always behaved with honour and dignity in this place. I am sure that he will leave with the goodwill not only of all members in the parliament but also of the staff. He has really been true to the best Christian principles in his time here.

My one regret as a minister is that, because our offices are not in this place, I do not get to interact as much with other members as sometimes happens when you are in opposition and your offices are in this parliament. We get

here only for those 50 or 60 days a year when parliament is sitting. However, I have greatly enjoyed my relationship with the Hon. Andrew Evans. If I have ever been testy during debate at some stage, I apologise. As I and other members have said, Andrew has behaved with perfect dignity and as a true gentleman.

I wish Andrew good health and all the best in the time to come. I trust that he enjoys the time he will have now with his family, and I look forward to his visiting us from time to time in the future.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!