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SPEECH

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Speaker Lim, Sam MP	Question No.

Mr LIM (Tangney) (16:21): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'd like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today—the Ngunnawal people—and the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, which Tangney is a part of, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. The seat of Tangney is named after Dame Dorothy Tangney. She was the first female senator in Australia's parliament and a proud Labor member. I am honoured to stand here today as the first Labor MP elected to represent Tangney in 39 years. I would also like to acknowledge my predecessor, Ben Morton, and thank him for his service.

My story starts in 1961. I was born and grew up in Parit Zing, Johor, Malaysia. I am the oldest among eight children. My family could not afford electricity or running water. We had to chop rubber wood to cook. The floor of our house was rammed earth. The roof was leaky, and our toilet was just a hole in the ground. My parents were uneducated rubber tappers. When it rained, they could not work, so there was no income to feed the family. My parents and the generation before them never went to school. I was lucky enough to be able to go to school. I felt immense pressure to do well. I studied very hard, knowing that life would be better for my family if I did well in my study. After finishing high school I wanted to study further but unfortunately could not afford university fees.

As a child, I always dreamt of being a police officer. In 1980, I joined the Malaysia police force, as I always wanted to serve the community and help people. I enjoyed this career, but the salary was too low—not enough to support my family. So, after two years in the police force, I went searching for new employment, and I found the best job in my life—dolphin trainer!

Dolphins are so loving and beautiful. They are cheeky and very intelligent. They can sense our feelings. I was with my dolphin friends for four years, before the safari park closed. I was very sad to say goodbye to them, but I was also happy that they were back in their home, where they belonged, wild and free.

It was during this time, when I was a dolphin trainer, that I married my love, Chew Yong. She is up there. She is my wife of 40 years, and also my best friend and mentor. Without her, I would not be the person you see here today.

After the safari park shut down, I started a supply and distribution business. That was quite successful, with operations across the country. It allowed me to provide a secure life for my growing family.

My spirituality is very important to me. In my early 30s I decided to live as a temporary Buddhist monk for 25 days in northern Thailand. I shaved my head and took a vow of silence. I meditated and ate very simply. During this time I experienced absolute peace—peace that radiates from within. It was an important experience that I still reflect on, and I find peace in solitude and contentment in helping others.

All parents want the best for their children. For me, education is everything. And I want my children to be better off than me. In 2002, my wife and I made the decision to emigrate to Australia, to give our children the best education and opportunity to secure a comfortable life. My children each received a great education at the public schools in Tangney, and they graduated from their local universities. They are now all married and have great careers. I love my children with all my heart, and I'm always so proud of them.

After our arrival in Perth in 2002, we ran a coffee shop in the CBD. It was great to be working as a family. We had to learn a lot of words that I'd never heard of before, like 'flat white' and 'lamington'!

2006 was a big year for me and my family. I reignited my lifelong dream and joined the WA Police Force at the age of 45. 2006 was also the year that my oldest daughter, Yin Wee, was diagnosed with cancer. Looking back, I don't know how my family and I got through that period. Every day I travelled back and forth between my intense police training, in Joondalup, and Fremantle, so that I could spend every waking moment by my daughter's bedside in hospital. I had to appear hopeful and joyful for my daughter and my family, even though I was crying

inside. My daughter won her battle with cancer, thanks to our amazing system—all of this underpinned by the great Labor Party initiative we know as Medicare. I am eternally grateful to the doctors and nurses. For many years, my daughter spent her birthday visiting the oncology wards to express her thanks, in deep gratitude.

I spent more than 15 years in the WA Police Force. I was posted across Western Australia, servicing the community from Eucla, 1,400 kilometres east of Perth, to Karratha, 1,500 kilometres north, and back to Perth. Police officers have a most difficult job, constantly taking on stressful, undesirable duties that no-one else wants to do but must be undertaken. My brothers and sisters in blue bear a difficult burden. This difficult burden has a name: it's called duty. We start our day before our children or partner are awake. Once we arrive at the police station we put on our blue uniform and gear up and hit the road. We never know what situation will arise or what we'll be called to attend. It may be serious family domestic violence, a fatal traffic crash, an armed robbery, a pub brawl, sudden death, murder and many more.

All these are common tasks for police officers. Police officers have often been abused, kicked, punched, bitten and spat on. They go from job to job, often thanklessly, dealing with so many difficult situations. They may be tired. They may be affected by what they have encountered. But whenever they receive a call, they turn up and do the job professionally without complaining. Then, at the end of the day, they return to the office to finish a big pile of paperwork before heading home to their families, keeping a brave face of normality from what they have experienced. And the next day they start the process all over again. This is the burden of duty.

I want to take this opportunity to recognise the uniqueness of policing and the people who put their hands up to serve. I also extend my thanks and gratitude to all the front-line workers, like our nurses, doctors, carers, teachers and beyond. And I thank all of them, deeply, from the bottom of my heart and I want to advocate for all of you. I received the Police Officer of the Year Award in 2020. I felt that I was where I needed to be: serving the community.

Whilst my whole life journey is important, one man made all this possible. His name is Gough Whitlam. He was the Prime Minister of Australia when the Labor government abolished the last vestiges of the White Australia policy in 1973. He is a hero to me as well as to many. He introduced multiculturalism into Australia. Because of him, we can call Australia home. Because of him, I and many of the new MPs here in the 47th Parliament can be the faces and representatives of our multicultural communities.

I was born as a third generation Malaysian Chinese, but I stand here today as a proud Western Australian elected by the people of Tangney as their representative in Australia's federal government. Western Australia is where I live. I note and cherish the achievements of our state Premier, Mr Mark McGowan, and the WA Labor team. Mark is a gentleman and a statesman over and above his position as a premier. Thanks to his leadership, WA is now the wealthiest state in Australia. In my eyes, Mark is a legend.

Australia's closest neighbours are those in Asia, encompassing the ASEAN region, China, India, Japan, Korea and many more, and it is important to note that our economic boost, especially WA's, over the past few years was from the Asia region.

There is a verse in the Bible from the Book of Proverbs, chapter 27 verse 10, in the King James version that reads, in Mandarin, 'Yuan qin bu ru jin lin'. The translation of it is, 'Better is a neighbour that is nearby than a brother far away.' This is the principle of Neighbourhood Watch, in the police terminology.

My youngest son, DJ, serves in the Australian Navy, which makes me very proud of him. Well done, DJ. He's the one that gave me the pink lunchbox! DJ and I believe in peace, and we believe that peace can bring harmony and prosperity. You can see both of us; we are not fighters. We always smile and are happy. But, if our country required our services, we would put our life on the line for our country and its people. Like all of you here today, Australia is our home.

I am a very passionate about promoting peace. When I was young, my grandma and grandpa told us about their life experiences during World War II—the cruelty and atrocities that Japanese soldiers imposed on the civilians when they invaded Malaysia. This event left a terrible burden on them. My grandma passed away at the age of 76, and she was still in fear of the Japanese soldiers, even on her death bed.

In my electorate of Tangney, we have residents from more than 160 nations, with more than half of them having English as their second language. Many of the migrants who live in Tangney are from war-torn countries. They

have emigrated from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central Africa, Afghanistan and many more. When I was doorknocking, many of them told me they came to Australia because they wanted to escape from war. They shared with me their stories and their struggles. All they ever wanted was to be with their family and to have peace.

War comes with deep costs. War causes huge humanitarian, environmental and financial crisis. War brings suffering, pain and sorrow to many. There are 1.1 million Commonwealth war graves in 23,000 locations around the world. So many mothers, so many widows, so many sons, daughters and families have cried and mourned, senselessly suffering from unnecessary conflicts, generation after generation. The cost of war is too much to bear.

We must learn from history. We must learn from those mistakes. I have been to so many community events and celebrations: Jewish and Palestinian, Tamil and Sinhalese, Burmese and Karen. People from countries with conflict now live together harmoniously in Australia. I am a firm believer that we must propagate peace not only in our communities but also in our neighbouring countries and beyond.

Peace, love, unity, respect: these four words are simple but meaningful words to live by, and I choose to live by these words. I believe all of us here today want to see Australia as the beacon of peace in this troubled world. Beating war drums is a foolish exercise. I do not believe that war is the way to resolve human problems.

Words are not enough to express my gratitude, but, right now, they are all I have. With the indulgence of this House, I would like to pay my thanks in the first two languages I have learnt: Malay and Chinese. Kepada semua saudara saudara yang berada di Malaysia, Australia dan di seluruh pelusuk dunia. Terima kasih atas semua perhatian dan berkat yang telah anda sekian berikan kepada saya. Terima kasih atas semua dukungan dan bantuan anda semasa pilihanraya di Australia, terima kasih semua! Ge wei lu ju zai wu fu si hai de hua ren tong bao, xiong di jie mei men, da jia hao. Xie xie ni men gei wo suo you de guan xin he zhu fu. Gan en ni men zai quan guo da xuan qi jian gei wo de yi qie zhi chi he xie zhu. Xie xie da jia! In translation: to all my friends in Malaysia, Australia and abroad, thanks for all your care and love. Special thanks to all who have reached out to support and help me in the Australian general election. Thank you!

To all my supporters, my friends, who have travelled across the country to be with me here today, thank you very much.

I would like to thank the Honourable Kate Dowse MLC and Raj Selvendra for their encouragement to start this journey and for their continuous support.

I would like to thank the SDA and in particular Ben Harris for his unwavering support throughout my campaign and beyond. I would also like to thank Tim Picton, Ellie Whittaker and all the staff at party office.

Thanks to all the WA state MLAs and MLCs. Thanks for all your support.

And a special thanks to the member for Isaacs, Mark Dreyfus, for doing many days of doorknocking with me.

I would like to thank my campaign team for their incredible efforts. Special thanks to Tim Grey Smith, my campaign director.

I also want to thank all my brothers and sisters in the blue uniform. Thank you for assisting me in doorknocking, letterboxing and much more, helping to put up hundreds of lawn signs after your hectic shift work. Thank you.

And to all my army of volunteers, donors and fundraising team, you know who you are. I don't want to single out any person, because I'm so indebted to all of the help you have given me. I'm forever grateful to each and every one of you.

I would not be here today without the support, understanding and encouragement of wife, Chew Yong, who is here today, my children—Yin, who is here as well, number 2; Artur; Kent Wee, Kai Yong, DJ and Diem—and my cute, cheeky granddaughter, Alina. She is not here.

To the good people of Tangney, it is an honour and privilege to serve you, and I am determined to do my best with integrity, remembering the words of Abraham Lincoln: government of the people, for the people and by the people. I make a pledge on this day. I will never take you for granted. I will work every day to make Tangney a better place. I will be accessible and responsive. I will deliver on my promises. I will serve all of you with love, compassion and honesty.

While my late parents may not be present physically in the audience today, I want to pay tribute to my hardworking mum and dad. I dedicate this first speech to them both. Ah pa, ah ma, kamsiah! Thank you, Mum and Dad.

Lastly, my wish to everyone listening to my speech today is to speak in Pali language: Sabbe satta sukhita hontu, anomodantu! The meaning is, 'May all beings be well, happy and peaceful.' Thank you for listening.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Frelander): Before I call the honourable member for Holt, Ms Fernando, I remind the House that this is the honourable member's first speech. I ask the House to extend to them the usual courtesies.