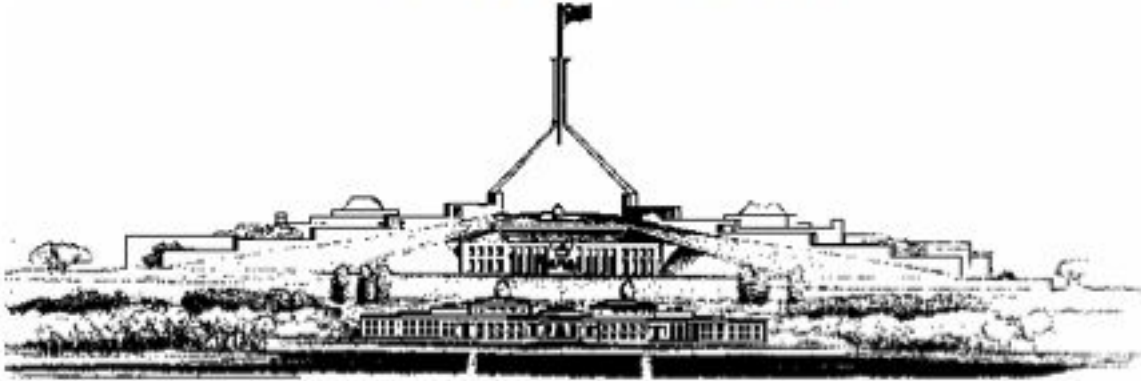




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Chatfield, Mr Alan, Wagstaff, Mrs Margaret

SPEECH

Tuesday, 3 June 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Tuesday, 3 June 2014
Page 5391
Questioner
Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP

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Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (16:23): I will call this statement 'Two Beginnings' because this week we lost two icons of music and arts in West Gippsland—Alan Chatfield and Margaret Wagstaff. I was extremely close to these people because of the beginnings they gave me. I thought I could sing a bit, so I went out to Alan's place at McCraw Road in Nar Nar Goon. I sat there with Alan and his beautiful wife, Heather, at the piano and started to sing a bit. Alan said, 'You're going nowhere, you've got no future, you haven't got a future at all.' But Heather said, 'No, give him a go. I reckon he'll be all right.' Thanks to Alan, 20 years later, in 1987, I stepped off the stage and said I would never sing another song for money—and I haven't! I have great feelings for Alan and all that he gave me. Alan and his brother were dairy farmers at Nar Nar Goon. They were the Chatfield Rythymaires. They played day and night. I remember the functions they played at West Gippsland for the young farmers. They would go from eight o'clock at night until two o'clock in the morning. Young people these days have no idea how much work and energy there is in that. I wanted to sing with the best, and I was able to sing with Alan for a short time before I went to Melbourne to sing. Alan made a fantastic contribution to our music industry. Whatever he touched, wherever he went, he was loved, along with his brother Ian. The icons of the band were Wally Webster, Stewie Saunders, Ran Webster, Alan Chatfield, Ronnie Banbury and Robbie Arnold, their chief singer.

Margaret Wagstaff was a schoolteacher. She was a choir teacher and an individual teacher. She was a mum and a lover. She was all things to all people. She gave me a beginning. After I had lost four election campaigns I was pretty knocked about publicly and I was not really interested in public activity at all. She said to me, 'I want you to come and sing in the church play.' I said: 'I don't want to sing in the church play. I don't want to be seen.' She said: 'No-one will see you. You're a tree. You will sing and speak from inside a tree. You're going to be Redgum.' Thank you, Margaret. What she gave me was my first tentative steps back into public life through being a tree—Redgum in *Spindles and the Lamb*. She was right: nobody ever saw me; nobody knew who the singer was in the tree. Everybody left before the person came out of the tree. In fact, they thought I was a recording.

Margaret, I love you. Alan, I loved everything that you did. We were so lucky to have you giving your life, your time, your energy, your music and your enthusiasm to our community. Margaret, we said goodbye to you yesterday. That is why I was not in the parliament. Alan, we will say goodbye to you tomorrow morning. You will be sorely missed.