

NEW ECONOMY NETWORK AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE

Statement

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [5.39 pm]: The weekend before last, I attended the New Economy Network Australia conference. It was very interesting. It confirmed my view that the world is changing. The world is changing in many ways, and not just through the environment; many of our structures will break down over the coming 10, 20 or 50 years. I cannot put a time on it, but I know that it will change. Young people more than ever understand this. They do not look at things in the way we oldies do. They have a much more fluid and flexible way of interacting with each other. When they were asked how they communicate and organise and make things such as the climate strike happen, for a second they were a bit perplexed by the question: “Why would you ask such a silly thing? We just do.” Through a number of different platforms, including social media, and in many other different ways, they connect with the things that they are interested in and they share the information that they think others need to know. Through this quite complex distributive network of information, they are able to make things happen. It is more like how the human brain works than how our hierarchical, patriarchal, colonialist-type structures have worked in the past. What I found interesting about this is that some adults in the room were flexible enough to understand and grasp this idea and move with it. They are talking about a whole different structure for our economy.

Yesterday, I spoke about the Noongar words for head, heart and spirit—“kart”, “koort” and “wirrin”. These words are quite interesting because, as an accountant, they seem like the triple bottom line of Noongar culture. Some years ago, I found through an accounting magazine that the triple bottom line of environmental, social and financial aspects should be thought about when we do our accounting. This idea of bringing in social and environmental aspects was new, because we had accounting that was financially based and everybody thought that was good and worked for our system, as we could count our profits and losses. That is always good, but somewhere along the line we forget to count the impact on social systems, people and the environment around us. The cost of those things was starting to build up because they had to be matched, even though our economy was not focused on that. Our economy was there to count the financial systems.

We still refer to the triple bottom line every now and again, but we have pretty much forgotten that we have gone back to all the financial stuff. One of the slides that were put up on the weekend had a Venn diagram with circles that overlapped each other. Through the triple bottom line thing, the three circles overlapped. There were environmental and social areas, there were financial and social areas and there were environmental and financial areas, and all was good. That system was brought in to explain to us the concept of how we can stick the environment and society in with the financial situation, but it really has not worked. It has not worked because that is not what the real world is all about. The real world is about this environment. There is the large circle of the environment and that is everything. That is the planet, the air and the solar system—it is everything. Within that is the social stuff, because people are part of that environment. People were not always part of that environment, but they are now, and that social circle is within the environmental circle. As our society grew and did more transactions, more collaborative work and more separating—mine, yours and ours and that sort of thing—we needed something to represent that, and the economy came inside that circle to serve the society. The economy developed because our society grew. It is within that. Outside that is the social system and outside that is the environmental system. I am trying to say that we need to focus more on that social and environmental stuff.

I understand that these structures are somewhat difficult for us to comprehend, because we grew up with something different. We grew up thinking that financial transactions are the things that matter, but, really, it is not like that. Until we learn to be a bit more flexible and listen to some of these other ideas that are coming out, we are not going to fix things. We are not going to fix our social ills and our environmental degradation. That is what I hope comes up in the future. That is what I hope our youth will bring forward for us, so that we can make some good out of this world and restore it to how it could be and should be. We will all profit from it in the end, possibly not in a financial sense, but we will all be better off if we are able to address this and really work for what the planet needs and what our society needs.

House adjourned at 5.44 pm
