

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

*Motion*

Resumed from 11 June on the following motion moved by Hon Liz Behjat —

That the following address be presented to His Excellency —

To His Excellency Malcolm McCusker, Companion of the Order of Australia, Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Queen's Counsel, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the commonwealth of Australia.

May it please Your Excellency: We, the Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our most gracious sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

**HON JIM CHOWN (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary)** [5.03 pm]: I think Mr Wandel needs be extremely serious about conducting an unbiased and open discussion with grower shareholders about the best direction and structure that would serve the Agricultural Region, and especially grain growers, well into the future.

As I have already discussed, corporatisation of the entity was attempted at the turn of the century, and a fair bit of work was done on that matter. For the information of members, if 75 per cent of the grower shareholders were to decide that the best way forward for the entity would be for it to be corporatised, a bit of work would need to be done within the Parliament. In fact, section 35A(e) of the Bulk Handling Act 1967 would need to be repealed. That is because, under that section, if the company was wound up, any surplus assets remaining after payment of debts and liabilities would be expressly prohibited from being returned to the shareholders. In fact, any surplus assets et cetera would return to Treasury and would be disbursed as directed by the Treasurer of the state. When this matter was contemplated some 13 years ago, the government of the day did a bit of work, and a bill to repeal the Bulk Handling Act 1967—the Bulk Handling Repeal Bill 2000—was put in place to enable the Parliament, if the entity was corporatised, to return those assets to the shareholders. That bill received royal assent on 6 July 2000 and was drafted so as not to come into operation until the scheme of arrangement had been agreed to by the members of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. This was put in place just in case 75 per cent of the grower shareholders decided to engage in the corporatisation of the company. As I have said previously, 58 per cent of the shareholders decided to do that. A sunset clause was also inserted into the bill to provide that the act would expire if it had not commenced operation within three years. Of course that act has not expired. That act is somewhere in this Parliament and can be re-enacted at very short notice, obviously with the required change of dates and titles. This is an issue that needs to be expanded on within the agricultural community, especially, as I have said previously in this address, in light of the impending competition that is on the near horizon.

I would like to bring to the attention of members that, unbeknown to me, the Premier did an interview on *Country Hour* yesterday. In answer to a number of questions regarding corporatisation, the Premier said that he thinks it would be a good idea. In fact, the Premier believes, as I do, that after almost 80 years as a cooperative, the time has come for the \$2 shareholders to receive their due reward and to have the positive side of the ledger placed before them in the form of these blue ribbon shares, if that were to take place.

I will quote the comments of the Premier as reported in *The West Australian* yesterday —

“I think a lot of capital is tied up there and CBH, if it goes down that path, can probably become more active in a whole range of different agricultural areas.”

I agree with the Premier. If CBH as a cooperative were to be corporatised into a company, it would be able to expand its influence. Let us face it, CBH, as a company worth in the order of \$4 billion, would become a company of great value to Western Australia and certainly to agriculture in Western Australia. There is no reason why CBH as a corporatised company could not expand its influence as Wesfarmers, as a former cooperative, has done. Wesfarmers was a cooperative for many years before it was corporatised. A corporatised CBH could, for example, become a large importer of fertilisers and chemicals, and also possibly of machinery. It is the inputs that are making agriculture today almost commercially unviable. It is not the cost of the product. We produce the product in a very efficient manner. It is the overseas inputs that we need to buy in at high Australian dollar rates that are causing great angst in the agricultural community. The shareholders receive a discount on these sorts of things. If corporatisation were to take place, there is no reason why the shareholders would not be able to receive a discount on these inputs to make agriculture more viable. This is just one of the areas that the company could engage in.

I note with some interest the following comment in the same article —

WAFarmers grains section president Kim Simpson said he was disappointed with the comments, which did not reflect the view of the vast majority of grain growers.

I am a little surprised at that comment, because, as I have said, 13 years ago, the majority of grain growers—58 per cent—wanted corporatisation. The attrition rate of grain growers since that time has been enormous. There are only about 4 500 grain growers left. I would be very surprised if the vast majority of grain growers did not want that entity to be corporatised. I do not know where Mr Kim Simpson gets his information from. It can be taken as a fact that the majority wish it to be corporatised. The stumbling block is the 75 per cent required to have this take place. In fact, I would like to talk a bit about WAFarmers as a grower representative body. In my opinion—it is certainly the opinion of others—as a grower representative body, it is not quite impartial in some of the issues that it pursues. In fact, I think it does itself a great disservice as a grower representative body. As I said earlier, when we were fighting for deregulation of the single desk, which today is taken as a significant benefit to grain growers to the tune of \$100 million a year, WAFarmers was adamant in its pursuit of the single desk remaining as it was. What I find interesting is that when that particular battle was lost, it decided to go into partnership with a commercial group called Emerald Grain. Emerald, of course, was a private trader and still is today. I will quote from a media release by WAFarmers and Emerald Grain from 20 November 2012. It states —

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc.) (WAFarmers) has renewed its alliance with the Emerald Group in a move which will give Western Australian growers access to specialised grain marketing options.

The five-year extension of the partnership will see a range of innovative grain marketing and finance products rolled out to WAFarmers' members and supportive growers.

The press release goes on in great detail about the partnership between WAFarmers and Emerald Grain. Another press release headed “WAFarmers congratulates Emerald on Supply Chain Expansion” was released on 1 December 2011. It states —

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc.) (WAFarmers) congratulates its partner in the WAFarmers Pools, Emerald Group (Emerald), on its announcement today of its intention to become an integrated grain marketing and logistics company.

The last paragraph states —

“Emerald manages the very successful WAFarmers Wheat, Barley and Canola Pools, and we hope that our members continue to show them the support and patronage that they have done over the past 12 months.”

One of the key paragraphs in the next press release by Emerald from 11 February 2013 states —

*WAFarmers Pools* are governed by the *WAFarmers WheatPool Oversight Committee* ... which is made up of both senior WAFarmers and Emerald representatives. The committee keeps an eye on the marketing and risk management strategy of the *WAFarmers Pools* to ensure that members are getting the best possible returns for their grain.

Of course, between the time of this release and this press interview, it has come to public knowledge that some of the pools that WAFarmers encouraged its members to participate in have underpaid these people to the tune of \$40 to \$50 a tonne. A lot of these people are in the eastern wheatbelt and are suffering from a lack of rain, a lack of trading conditions et cetera. In fact, it has come to my knowledge that some of these people who have suffered financially to the tune of up to \$100 000 are contemplating a class action against Emerald Grain and, I would assume, against WAFarmers. Let me repeat: WAFarmers believed in the single desk. The minute that the single desk was lost, it hopped into bed with a private trader. The hypocrisy is just obscene.

This is a press interview from the ABC's *Country Hour* between Belinda Varischetti, the ABC journalist, and Mr Dale Park, the president of WAFarmers. Belinda Varischetti asks —

So this agreement, this partnership, the extension, the five year extension is not going to be signed? The WAFarmers will not be signing it?

I have just read the press release in which they patted each other on the back about this particular agreement. Mr Dale Park says —

We will be saying to Emerald that we would like to get out of that agreement because we have just lost confidence I suppose, in their ability to manage the pools as we would like to see them managed.

Belinda Varischetti says —

Well this goes back to why WAFarmers agreed to it in the first place. Because Emerald was shopping this idea round to other players including the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and the association tells me it has decided not to go down that road of a partnership with a group like Emerald because it

was beyond the skills as a farm representative group to be operating as a broker to members and endorsing one product over another to get a return for it.

Mr Dale Park says —

We were never a broker, and certainly we have never had anything to do with the management of the pools so we were never a broker, they were a sponsor of WAFarmers; so it was definitely understood by our members and ourselves that we had no role in managing any of the pools.

Belinda Varischetti says —

But it's an endorsement of one particular product over another ...

Mr Dale Park says —

Absolutely and we actually got some positives early on when you remember right at the beginning of all this, there was no quality payments, we had cliff face pricing, all the things that Emerald actually came out with have been taken up with the industries so the industries actually gained by the innovative things that Emerald were doing back then.

Belinda Varischetti says —

But even from the start, I mean, aligning yourself with one particular company over another; doesn't that put into question your impartiality as a farm lobby group by saying to your growers or your farmers, we're signed up with them?

Mr Dale Park says —

No, as long as we are clear about what the arrangement is and we always have been clear on what the arrangement was with Emerald ... it's like any other sponsor ... if we get a sponsorship from ... I'm just trying to think ...

Then there is a pause. Varischetti then says —

But doesn't this go beyond a sponsorship, isn't it a commercial relationship?

Mr Park says —

Well the sponsorship was done on the basis of how many ton were put into the pool, so it's still a sponsorship

Varischetti says —

But depending on how many ton of grain goes into the pool depends on how much you're paid by Emerald ...

Dale Park pauses, and Varischetti says —

How much did you get?

Dale Park says —

That I'm not sure about, but it was quite a reasonable amount of money so opting out of this arrangement is going to be ... quite a big deal for WAFarmers.

Varischetti says —

So you are going to be taking a bit of pain ... is it hundreds of thousands of dollars?

Mr Dale Park says —

Up to a hundred thousand, yes

The question is: how can a grower representative body such as WAFarmers say that it is not impartial and that it is not a sponsor but certainly an agent on behalf of Emerald Grain and then try to walk away from this financial arrangement? Varischetti asks early on whether it is a broker. To me, a broker is somebody who brings two parties together and receives financial gain. I am just aghast at this interview and the revelation that WAFarmers receives up to \$100 000—I assume that is per annum, but it is not stated in this interview—for encouraging its members to deal with Emerald Grain to their detriment, I might add, as has come to the fore on this particular matter. So one has to ask the questions: When WAFarmers supported the single desk, was it receiving moneys from AWB Ltd? Was it in the same practice? Was this cash for comment? Today I again ask the question in this place about its complete and utter support for retaining the cooperative as a cooperative without going to its members with the pros and cons of whether it should be corporatised, rather than taking a totally impartial line on this very important matter and saying no, no, no. Is it nothing more than a spokesman for Co-operative Bulk

Handling Ltd? That is the question I would like answered on this particular matter, because after looking very closely at this interview, it is a very fair question to ask.

Summing up, what do we have in this industry that is worth \$5 billion per annum? We have encroaching competition. I believe that in the next five to six years it will draw up to four million tonnes out of the current cooperative system. We have an entity that at least three generations of farmers have paid for and supported without question that today is worth in the vicinity of \$4 billion. I have no doubt that this government would facilitate corporatisation of this entity through the required acts of Parliament in this house and the Legislative Assembly. I make that statement on the back of the Premier's statement in the press yesterday. If the growers wish for this to take place, they would receive an enormous amount of money out of their cooperative, which would then become a company. They could do what they wish with those shares, which would certainly be on the positive side of the ledger. If this took place, the company would certainly move forward rather than lose market share, which I believe will happen. At the very least, it would engender enormous loyalty from their \$2 shareholders.

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [5.21 pm]: I was listening with rapt attention to Hon Jim Chown because when we discussed the speaker order, he told me that if he ran out of things to say during the allotted time, he would talk about me, so I was glued to every word. Clearly, he feels very passionate about this subject that he was addressing. It was extremely interesting.

I join honourable members in thanking the Governor for his speech and for performing his duties at the opening of Parliament. I also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam Deputy President (Hon Adele Farina). As you are sitting in the chair at this moment, I will give you seniority over the President, who is not here. Congratulations on being the first woman to hold the position of Chair of Committees in the history of the Western Australian Parliament. It is a momentous position for you to hold, and I wish you well in that position. I also congratulate Hon Barry House on having been re-elected to the position of President. We have grown to respect his handling of the Chair and I am sure that will continue over the next four years. I should also congratulate members of the government who have taken up new positions. Hon Ken Baston has taken on a ministerial portfolio. We also have a new Leader of the House and Deputy Leader of the House, so I congratulate Hon Peter Collier and Hon Helen Morton on those positions.

It is always moving to experience this stage in the cycle of the Parliament. Not many people in the community realise that we get slightly out of step with our colleagues in the other place at this time of the four-year cycle because when we go to a general election, a government is either re-elected or an opposition is put into government and the big change takes place downstairs but here we trundle on with the old model until 21 May when we make the changes, all in our own good time, which is highly appropriate. I always find that it is quite a moving experience to go through that period of a few months when we spend a couple of weeks listening to the valedictory speeches of members who are not continuing past 21 May, either by their own choice or because that is what the electorate has decided, and that is immediately followed by the excitement of listening to the first speeches of new members coming into this place.

I have long argued both in this place and in the community more widely that as politicians we ought to be doing more to explain to the community what we do. I am sure it is the experience of other members on both sides of the house that when we are invited to talk to a high school in our electorate and we talk to the year 11s or year 12s, one of the first questions we are asked is, "What about all the fighting?" They see extracts from our question time and the commonwealth Parliament's question time on the TV and all the rah-rah. I always go to great lengths to point out to them that something like 85 per cent of the legislation that comes before Parliament is agreed to as part of a bipartisan process. Of that remaining 15 per cent, about 85 per cent is negotiated in the process of putting bills through the Parliament. It is negotiated amicably and constructively. That leaves only a very small proportion of bills on which we deeply disagree with each other. We have certainly seen some of those bills come before this place in the eight years that I have been a member of Parliament.

I truly believe that if the other five members for the South West and I sat down—that is yourself, Madam Deputy President, Hon Robyn McSweeney, Hon Nigel Hallett, Hon Barry House, the President, and Hon Colin Holt from the National Party—and talked about our electorate and the priorities in the eight lower house seats and what we wanted to deliver for the people in those communities, I suspect that there would be very significant degrees of overlap right across the board on all sorts of subjects. We all want better schools for our kids and better access to medical services. The disagreements come in how we provide those things. As far as our engagement with our constituents, our electorate and the communities that make up our electorates is concerned, a lot of collaborative effort goes on. It helps people to understand that we work together the majority of the time.

The reason I think that is so important is that it is a key part of building public confidence in what we do. At the moment that public confidence is pretty low. That is a very bad thing for all of us. I am not scoring party political points when I say this. To the extent that public confidence in the activities of politicians or

parliamentarians is eroded, so is public confidence in our democratic system and so is the community's willingness to get engaged with the political process.

I do not want to resort to clichés about how good democracy is but in the words of one famous commentator, democracy does not work but it sure beats everything else. We all agree that we want to basically hang on to what we have because it protects our fundamental human values—the kind of ethical system on which we base our human engagement with each other. At the moment I believe we do not spend enough time simply talking about the work that we do, the beliefs that we have and the values that we are trying to put in place that we think will best serve our communities better because that is what our communities tell us they want. It is always a two-way process. When I listen to those valedictory speeches and the speeches of our new members, it just reinforces that point for me that we are all engaged in an extremely important endeavour, which is about protecting the fundamental values of our community. I wish we could engage our communities more with this particular phase of the parliamentary cycle because when members stand and make those key speeches at the beginning and the end of their political careers, we hear a reflection of those values.

I often refer to a statement that our Prime Minister made about a year ago. She talked about the Labor Party but I want to comment in respect of all the speeches I have heard from members in this place—the old ones going out and the new ones coming in—in the last two or three months when she said, “We are not a brand, we are a cause.” We hear that reflected in the speeches in this place at this stage in the cycle. We are not a brand, we are a cause. I remember a great essay by Geoff Gallop that I have referred to before in this place. If ever I am asked to speak to incoming members of Parliament about the process of coming into Parliament, and I opened my written remarks in the recently published book about women in Parliament with this same reference, I often talk about how I was completely lost for several months when I first came into this place. I was very familiar with the political process. I had worked for many years in both state and federal politics. I knew the ropes and yet somehow changing sides of the desk was much more difficult than I ever anticipated it would be. I am a list keeper; that is my illusion of control. I make lists everywhere, and I was still making lists and they were getting longer and longer. Suddenly I had two staff members and thought that perhaps they could help me with my lists. I rang up very early one morning when I knew they would not be in and I left a voicemail message saying, “If you are not too busy this morning, these are the top 10 things on my list. If you have any chance to look at them that would be great.” By about 9.40 am they rang me and said, “We have done those, can we have the next 10?” It took me a lot of effort to work out how to move from one side of the desk to the other.

The turning point for me was reading that essay by Geoff Gallop in which he wrote about the role of a member of Parliament. He wrote that a person is not in Parliament as Joe Blow or an individual; a person is there as the “member for X”, and as the “member for X” that person is the only person who can wear that hat at any particular community gathering. That is why we go to the school graduations, the citizenship ceremonies, the community meetings, the christenings and the funerals. One of the things I often say about being a member of Parliament is that I have the immense privilege of sharing in people's best moments and worst moments. We cry with them and we celebrate with them. Geoff Gallop pointed out that we do all those things as the “member for X”. We represent the institution of state Parliament whether sitting in someone's lounge room and talking about how they might solve some of their problems or being on the stage giving a keynote address at a school graduation. We represent the Parliament of Western Australia; that is a key institution in the fabric of our community. I commend that essay, which is still available online. It is well worth reading and quite inspiring.

To continue on the subject of being a cause and not a brand, I will comment on the speeches we have heard over the past few weeks. I will go roughly in order and start by acknowledging the contribution made by Hon Linda Savage to this place over the few years that she was here. As she pointed out in her valedictory speech, she came into this place under very difficult circumstances following the death of the previous member. For those of us who had lost our best friend, it was particularly difficult to see somebody else come in and sit in his seat, but I have to say Linda won my absolute respect, trust and confidence over the few years she was here. Her contribution will outlast her short time in this place, particularly in terms of policy development in areas that I am now very much associated with; that is, early childhood. Linda will be very much missed.

I must comment about our former Whip. Our new Whip is doing a magnificent job of filling some shoes that were big both literally and metaphorically. Comment has been made in previous speeches that Hon Ed Dermer was the only person any of us have known who turned the use of Post-it notes from an art to a science. It is fair to say it became a science, and I am told that the legacy remains on the underside of his desk. It is like people who used to graffiti the boab trees; Hon Ed Dermer has left his mark on this place. The thing I will never forget about Ed, and the thing that I really admired about him, was his capacity to talk at a moment's notice on any topic whatsoever. I used to be absolutely in awe of that ability of his until I discovered his secret, which was simply to ask the Clerks to bring him the dictionary and he would then look up every word in the bill or the motion to which he was speaking and define it. Many of Ed's speeches should have had an acknowledgment to the *Macquarie Dictionary* at the end of them. He was an absolute past master at that and it must be

acknowledged. Ed's valedictory speech in this place, for me perhaps more than any other single valedictory speech, confirmed the fact that Ed certainly represented a cause and never shirked at the hard work that goes into that cause. As many members know, Ed has some quite—I will not call them “onerous” domestic responsibilities as I am sure he does not think of them as being onerous, but he takes on a lot of responsibility for looking after his boys who are both extremely impressive human beings. However, Ed was always here and worked tirelessly for the Labor Party as part of the team in this place for all those years. I wish Ed a very happy time in what I am sure will not be his retirement from politics.

Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm and I are sort of neighbours in the south west. Matt lives in Albany and I live in Denmark. The extent to which we have been able to catch up over the past eight years has been absolutely minimal because the life of a politician does not involve much socialising. Occasionally I used to meet him walking his dogs around Ocean Beach and we would end up going back to my place and opening a bottle of red.

**Hon Jim Chown:** Was this in the morning or the evening?

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** It did not matter. Nobody is picky when it comes to sharing a bottle of red with Matt. The great thing about sharing a bottle of red with Matt was that I got to enjoy not only the wine, but also the stories behind the wine. I look forward to seeing Matt in what I hope will be a slightly more relaxed frame of mind, at least for him.

I also pay tribute to Hon Giz Watson. Giz and I have a recurring conversation over what probably stretches out to a couple of decades now. I have always said to Giz that she really sold out by going to the Greens. Giz understands the Labor Party so I could talk shorthand to her and I used to say to her, “So there you are in the Greens doing a fine job at bringing to public attention the issues that you care about, but you have left people like me in the left wing of the Labor Party. If only you would come over and join us. There are lots of people here who think exactly like you do. You could have the arguments where it really counts; in the party rooms of the Labor Party rather than having your debates over there, and the left wing having the debates within the Labor Party over here.” Strange as it may seem, I was never able to persuade her of the merits of my case and so Giz soldiered on in the Greens and ended up wanting to change the electorate of the South West Region. Giz has family in Albany where her father lives; I do not think he is a general practitioner anymore but he certainly was for many years. Giz and her partner, June, have land between Albany and Denmark so I am very much hoping that within a short period we can add Giz and June to our list of neighbours. I look forward to continuing to fight the good fight, not with Giz but shoulder to shoulder with Giz because there is much more that Giz Watson and I agree on than disagree on. These four people will all be missed in this place, and I wish all of them well in the next stage of their professional lives.

While I am talking about members who are no longer in this place, I should make reference to Hon Jon Ford who, as members who heard my first speech to this place will know, has been my constant and most trusted political companion for many, many years. I count the opportunity to work with Jon in our professional workplace for that length of time, the eight years we have been members of Parliament together, as one of the best things that ever happened to me. It has been a real privilege, and one that is not shared by very many people, to have had the opportunity to work professionally with not only a person who is their most trusted professional colleague, but also somebody who is very much loved by them and valued in a personal sense. It has been a fantastic journey, and it has a long way to go yet. I am sure that in another few years I will still be talking about the fact that Jon Ford and I will never run out of things to talk about, if only because we share a passionate love of politics as well as, I am happy to say now, each other.

Let me move to the new members' speeches. We have heard some fantastic contributions, and again I want to refer honourable members back to the statement I started with—we are not a brand, we are a cause. Where could we have asked for a clearer demonstration of that than in the first speeches that have been made so far in this place? I am going to be generous and say that I make the same observation about the speeches that have been made by new members on the other side of the house. Our role, of course, in opposition is to make sure that you guys over there on the government side deliver what you promise! That is probably about the only good thing about opposition that I can think of at this moment. It is a place to lay out what we intend to do, and I can assure all the new members on the other side that we keep those speeches and we will remind them of them at various points.

On my own side of the chamber I have been inspired, in listening to the comments that have come from our new members, by the commitments, the undertakings and the vast range of experience that our members have brought onto our backbench. I will single out one so far. I do note that I am forming a kind of debating sandwich here in which I am the bread on either side of the meat. This is an unfortunate metaphor and I might not push it too far but I will keep going and see how far I can go with it. The meat in my sandwich is going to be the first speeches, which will interrupt mine in about 15 minutes, from Hon Alanna Clohesy and Hon Stephen Dawson,

but that is highly appropriate. Some people would call it a metalworker's sandwich, I suppose. We certainly have not heard all the first speeches yet. But so far the comment that moved me the most was made by Hon Samantha Rowe when she finished her speech by saying that her determination was to make every day count. That is something that I thought we all on both sides of the chamber should have written up in front of us in neon lights. We have to make every day count for a couple of reasons. One is that if we are to rebuild the community trust in what we do, we have to be out there in the community working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Let us not be precious about this. That is what public life involves in our community in 2013. This is a full-time job in spades, so we have to be out there doing it every day. Every day, I think, we have to do what a very close colleague of mine does every day with his staff and say, "Who did we make a difference to today?" Sometimes we might struggle to find the answer to that. We might have spent all day in a committee and be really struggling to find an answer to the question: who did we make life better for today? But we can broaden that question. Just be a bit imaginative. What did I learn today? How can I do my job better today than I could yesterday because of what I have been doing during the day? We have to make every day count, because before too long it comes to an end. If we take a common theme that has been iterated in this place by retiring members, it is the wonder about what role they will play in the community when they lose the privilege of being able to stand in this place. I use that term "privilege" in every sense of the word. I am not just talking about the legal immunity we have. I am talking about the immense power that goes with being able to stand in this place and talk about the things that matter to us in a way that connects us with the action that we would like to see taken. It was therefore a great thing for Hon Samantha Rowe to remind us that our primary obligation during our time in this place is to make every day count.

Let me make some more general observations. I am going to talk basically about three different things. I am going to talk first about where we are now. That is why I wanted to start by making a few remarks about the valedictory speeches followed by the first speeches. I am going to talk first about the current place in which we find ourselves in politics. Then I want to talk a little about the past and then I am going to finally talk a bit about the next four years. Let us just look at where we are at the moment.

For us in the Labor Party this is not a particularly happy time. I am sure many honourable members on both sides of the house share my experience that when I read political commentaries, I find that I am turning the pages as though they are mystery novels, because those of us who live and breathe politics really grow in our trade better to the extent that we understand the history of our profession. So when the histories are written about this time—my goodness me!—there are going to be some page-turning chapters in there, both in regard to the state scene and to the commonwealth scene.

I want to take this opportunity to make a couple of comments about Julia Gillard. I do not have a crystal ball about the future, but I do know where we are today and what it means to have had Julia Gillard as our Prime Minister for the past three years. This is very, very important for women in politics. It does not matter what we think of specific things that the federal Labor government has done. Everybody has an opinion about what could have been done better or what should not have been done or what the timing should have been. I have been thinking about this a lot recently, because following the "misogyny" speech I have seen a whole change to the tenor of the way we talk about gender politics in Australia, and I think this is very important for every woman in politics to apply a bit of brain space to. I think that what Julia Gillard has given us is some very valuable lessons about women in public life. I will not be alone here in admitting that it is difficult for a woman to make the decision to go into public life. It is always daunting for a woman. I am not saying that it is not daunting for a man, but I think it is daunting for women for particular reasons that apply more to women than to men. I think we can boil that down to the fact that in the traditional model of the feminine in our community we separate the public from the private. So, all of a sudden, as a woman going into public life, we blur that distinction. We have at least blurred it, if not completely done away with that distinction, and that is a very challenging thing. I am not just talking about a crude sense in which everything that is private becomes public. I am talking about the sense that for a woman in public life, every aspect of what we do is done as a woman in public life. We can still protect our privacy. We can still not use our children as examples, for instance. We can operate in public life as a single person. I am not saying that all those boundaries have broken down, but in everything we do we are seen as women in public life, so it is a daunting prospect and a tough decision. I have come to the conclusion that there are three aspects of having a female Prime Minister, particularly Julia Gillard, that we will take from this time and analyse into the future. In a sense, I suppose we can learn three lessons from this. The first is fairly obvious. Whichever side of the political divide we are, we will probably want to concede that Julia Gillard has given us a demonstration of how to be tough and resilient. The other day I heard someone talking about the Prime Minister—a non-political commentator, although they made some claim to being a political commentator because they were talking about the Prime Minister, albeit in the context of a literary discussion about Edith Campbell Berry. I wonder how many people know the wonderful Edith Campbell Berry, who is a fictional character created by Frank Moorhouse. I recommend that anyone who wants to understand something about professional women's lives in Australia in the past 100 years read the probably 2 000 pages, in three volumes, of

Edith Campbell Berry. I digress; that person was comparing Edith Campbell Berry with Julia Gillard and she made the comment that she did not know how on some mornings Julia Gillard got out of bed because of all the negative commentary that surrounds her. But my goodness me, that woman not only gets out of bed, she takes the fight up to her critics. I think the lesson about how to be tough and resilient is one all women in politics can pay tribute to and learn from.

The reality is that, as many members have commented in other speeches in this place, politics is a profession that is littered with broken hearts, many of which are caused by thwarted ambition. Very few of us actually get sworn in to these places compared with the number of people who want to be here. We all know from looking at our own political parties that, to be frank, it is not always the best person who gets the job. Somebody said that to me when I was running for preselection. When I got a dose of candidates' disease and panicked about everyone else who was running for preselection, my mentor said to me, "Don't worry, the best person doesn't always get the job." I have thought about that a lot since. I think he was trying to be encouraging. I do not count those thwarted ambition broken hearts as genuine. I think there are a few crocodile tears cried about that. But there is no doubt lots of hearts are broken by the kind of treachery and incompetence we find in politics. I will be frank here. My own party is not immune from individuals and groups that act in ways that are both treacherous and incompetent. I think anyone who is familiar with political history will agree with me. It is a very tough world to operate in. If we can avoid having our hearts broken, that is something we can wear with pride. In my darkest moments, I look at Julia Gillard and think she has something we can all learn from.

The second point I want to make is probably quite contentious. It is something that probably warrants longer discussion in a different sort of ambience than the one in here. It seems to me important that another thing Julia Gillard has done has been to demonstrate that the introduction of women into politics does not necessarily make politics kinder and gentler. That has been a fallacy that I believe has been woven out of a strand of what we might call liberal feminism, and I am not using "liberal" in the political sense but in the old fashioned sense of liberal.

A government member: Small "l" liberal.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** That is right, thank you. It is a notion that easily rolls off the tongue. It sits nicely with lots of arguments, most of which I think lack any real sort of intellectual rigour. I have never seen any reason why "feminine" has to go along with kindness and gentleness in politics. I say that because politics is about passion, argument and beliefs. It is about being prepared to put ourselves out to articulate our arguments to fight for the people we believe have a cause that needs to be won. On this side of the house many of those fights are on behalf of people who do not have that power or opportunity for themselves. Why we should have bought the line that introducing women into politics or increasing women's involvement in politics would have made the whole debate kinder and gentler I do not know. I was not brought up by nuns but I have a lot of friends who were brought up by nuns. There is a sense, of course, that nuns are kind and gentle.

**Hon Kate Doust:** Really? I must have missed that one!

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Hon Kate Doust speaks with a lot more experience than I have about how unkind and ferocious nuns are.

**Hon Kate Doust:** No, no; I wouldn't say that.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** She will have to make a personal explanation after I have finished!

**Hon Kate Doust:** I always loved the nuns who taught me.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** They were unkind and ferocious—except the nuns who taught Hon Kate Doust. Friends of mine who were brought up in the Catholic system tell me that the nuns were their role models for that kind of ferocity; the tenacity of commitment that enabled us to cop the most atrocious abuse and the most unacceptable discrimination in the way we were treated by the establishment in order to stand up and say what we believed in. When I look at what the Prime Minister has done in that regard to show us that we can walk away from that, I do not think we need to talk about the kindness and gentleness of women in politics any more. I think that is now finished and we can talk instead about passion, commitment, the rigour of the argument and the pure, raw, tough courage to stand up and fight the fight when most people would not even be able to get to the starting line.

The third point I want to make about what Julia Gillard has done for women in public life—this again is probably a bit controversial, so that is why I am saying it at five to six in the Legislative Council on Wednesday night—is to demonstrate that to be a woman in public life we no longer need a reassuring personal narrative. Julia Gillard stands as a woman who is not married, who does not believe in God, as a woman who has had a pretty high-flying professional life as a lawyer, and she does not provide that kind of reassuring personal



narrative that many women before her felt obliged to provide. I will tell members why I think we felt we had to do that in the past and why we do not have to do it anymore. The simple reality is—I am sure honourable members on my side will know better than to harangue me over this, but the honourable members on the other side might have a go at me—for women working in politics, not all, but most of the men we work with are used to relating only to women who play the role of mother, wife or daughter. Therefore, in the past when we have gone into a forum where we have had to argue, persuade or represent a point of view—I am not talking only about politics but right through the professions—our instinct has always been to assume one of those roles. Julia Gillard has shown us that we do not any longer have to pretend to relate to the people who are having real trouble taking us seriously because of our gender. We no longer have to scabble around to see whether the way to relate to them is as a mother, a wife or a daughter. We can actually do what Julia Gillard has done and tell it as it is. We no longer have to provide the reassurance that we can be put into a category. As a woman in public life, those things have made a real difference to me. I offer them only by way of commentary in this speech on the off-chance they resonate with a few other people in this place.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm*

[Leave granted for the member's speech to be continued at a later stage of the sitting.]

**The PRESIDENT:** Members, I just remind you to observe that this is an inaugural speech and the usual courtesies should be followed.

**HON ALANNA CLOHESY (East Metropolitan)** [7.31 pm]: Thank you, Mr President. I would like to commence by acknowledging the Noongar people, the traditional owners of this land, and I pay my respects to elders past and present.

I congratulate you, Mr President, on your re-election and thank you for the welcome and encouragement you have shown me. I look forward to working with and learning from you during my time here.

I stand before you tonight, very humbled to have been elected by the people of East Metropolitan Region to represent their interests in this place. It is an honour that I will not take for granted and one that I will undertake with honesty, integrity and fairness, and a lot of hard work.

The East Metropolitan Region is my home. It is where I have decided, after many years of moving around the country and overseas, to lay my hat. Like many of my colleagues in this chamber and so many others who arrive daily, I am an import to WA—an import or a draft pick, depending how you look at it, but one that I hope adds value to our community. I chose Western Australia as my home because of the opportunities that were provided to me—opportunities to further my education, and from that came opportunities to be part of a community that was vibrant and engaging; and, of course, opportunities for me to give back to my community, to my chosen home; and not to forget opportunities to develop deep and enriching friendships. But opportunities are not available to everyone. We do not share equally or fairly in the opportunities of this great state. This could almost be the soundtrack of my life—that is, equality of opportunity. Having been in a choir, I know that this is music best sung in harmony.

So how, I am sure you are wondering, Mr President, does a woman from the north west plains of Victoria, the Mallee, end up standing before you, humbled, proud and somewhat nervous? It has been a long and winding journey to get to this place, but one that has shaped who I am, what I believe and what I hope to achieve. I was born in the Mallee in the heat and the dust and the flies, but with a few sprinklings of shamrocks around the edges and some Irish rebels in my background. Actually, I was born in August, so it was probably frosty and a sparkling, sunny winter day.

Nevertheless, I grew up in a small rural community. Like all small communities, this one offered the kind of support that closeness can bring. It offered the sense of community and of belonging that living in close proximity fosters. It also provided the kind of claustrophobia that being different in a small community, or any community, can generate. I learnt from an early age that to be different came at a price. I also learnt from an early age that fairness and equality were to be fought for and were not given easily.

My mother, Vera, raised six children as a single parent. This was of course before the life-changing social reforms of the Whitlam government, in particular before the introduction of the supporting mother's benefit. At that time, my mother's sole income was the paltry child endowment—not nearly enough to house, clothe, feed and educate six children. There were very few opportunities available to her in this isolated rural community. Her ingenuity, her circumstances and her facility for mathematics, which I do not share, and a dear uncle who managed the local pub saw her venture into starting price bookmaking to make ends meet. The community rallied around; the women at the telephone exchange put the calls through; the blokes at the pub placed bets and the local copper saw and heard nothing—for a time. SP bookmaking, of course, was illegal, so it is hard not to see the irony in me, her daughter, now being a law-maker. I can still recall the local policeman in his full uniform—something I had never seen before—coming to the front door to speak to my mother. No-one used our

front door; the back door was the welcoming entrance for all. So we knew that the police officer using the front door, combined with his full uniform, including his cap, meant it was something important. His formal visit was to strongly encourage my mother to apply for a licence to run a local Totalisator Agency Board that was coming up in the region. This she did with my aunt, because also at that time single women could not hold, or would not have been granted, a licence to run such a business.

My mother later retrained as a primary school teacher and spent the rest of her life instilling in her students, and trying to instil in her family, a love of learning. My mother and my community also instilled in me a deep-seated sense of fairness. Like sexism and the gender inequalities that she experienced, racism was deeply institutionalised in our community. It was deemed okay to barrack for the local footy team while screaming racial abuse at the best player on the paddock. It still seems that it is okay for some to do that, but just using different terms. It was also considered polite to look away when Aboriginal people were shunned and forced to live in dire poverty and shocking circumstances. It was easier, you see, to accept. It was deemed okay as well to vilify, denigrate and attempt to isolate people because of their sexuality, even if they were members of your own family. It seems that it is still okay for some to do that today.

But besides all this, I got on okay. I was the secretary of the local netball club and not quite a star of the local theatre production. I was kind of accepted. I relate these stories to you not to conjure up images of an impoverished and difficult beginning, but to share with you important facets that shaped who I am and what I believe. My rural and remote beginnings gave me a deep love of the land and the landscape. It gave me a respect for farming families and their trials, and a sense of community and the importance of belonging and giving. It also helped me to understand the importance and the necessity of an inclusive community. I also gained an understanding of the suffocating nature of gender inequality, racism and homophobia. In fighting to reject these, and in trying to find ways to do that, I later came to understand two important principles—social justice and social democracy. These principles are what drive me and they are what sustain me. They have been instilled in me from a very early age and have stayed with me through a number of periods that were not fashionable and not popular.

Throughout my working life, I have stood up for and alongside people from a range of backgrounds, many of whom did not have a say in the decisions that were made about them. I have consulted, talked with, negotiated and, most of all, understood their personal experiences and tried to do something about them. But it is my belief that all people, particularly those who are most disadvantaged, have a right to services and support that provide them with opportunities and that improve their quality of life. That is what drives me. That is my light on the hill.

Exactly 64 years ago to this day, 12 June 1949, the great Labor leader and Prime Minister Ben Chifley gave the now infamous “light on the hill” address. In this address, Chifley spoke about the potential of Australia, both economically and of its people. He talked about the importance of infrastructure—public infrastructure—and about the moral and economic imperative of encouraging migration to Australia as mechanisms for developing this human and economic potential. It seems the more things change, the more they stay the same. Chifley went on to argue —

... the job of getting the things the people of the country want comes from the roots of the Labor movement—the people who support it.

He talked about the commitment of the people working in the labour movement, not striving for their own advantage or personal gain, but working towards bringing about better conditions for all people. It is these goals and purposes that are still evident today in the labour movement. I have always been a union member throughout my many workplaces and I am particularly proud today to be a member of the Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union. Steve McCartney, our state secretary, has at his very core a sense of fairness and equality that drives whatever he does. I thank him, the state council and our members for their unwavering support.

My own pursuit of social justice also led me to join the Australian Labor Party over 25 years ago—although I am not saying how far over! I have held many roles over this time—letterboxer, doorknocker, policy committee member, campaigner—pretty much anything I could give and anything my party asked of me. I have been deeply honoured to be elected by our members to the position of president of WA Labor. There are many challenges in this role, but they are tempered by the opportunities to meet and work with our members at the local level. Their commitment and energy never ceases to inspire me—always inspires me. It is this purpose and these goals that make me proud to stand here today as a member of Parliament for the great Australian Labor Party and I sincerely thank our members for showing their faith in me.

Western Australia provides many with opportunities and prosperity; however, these opportunities are not shared by all. This is the shame that must be addressed by this state, particularly in the East Metropolitan Region.

Shelter is the most basic of human needs and a fundamental human right. The rising cost of living in WA is seeing housing become frighteningly less affordable and accessible. Emergency housing and women’s refuges in

particular are experiencing unprecedented demand for services and are filled to overflowing. Social and public housing have waiting lists that extend over the years and tens of thousands of people. The cost of renting privately continues to escalate, making it more and more difficult for families, single people and senior Western Australians to afford to find appropriate and affordable housing. Anglicare estimated in its recent snapshot of rental properties in WA that —

... less than 1% of the market in Perth was affordable for people on benefits or pensions, and only 5% was affordable for people on the minimum wage.

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness and the National Rental Affordability Scheme are steps in the right direction, but it takes a political will and a commitment to make sure that the prosperity of the state is shared by all. It also takes political will and not much ingenuity to make sure that public housing stock and other affordable housing options are constructed in a way that is adaptable for the needs of people with disabilities and older Western Australians. I believe that all new housing estate developments and redevelopments should have a planning quota placed on them for affordable and adaptable housing options. A related problem is that housing options that are affordable are often located in communities that have no or little social infrastructure, such as public transport. Although the East Metropolitan Region has many features that make it an attractive place to live and work, the region is severely let down by the lack of access to public transport. If you live in Ellenbrook and work in Perth, or try to cross east to west, for example, your options for using public transport are extremely limited or non-existent. Your time spent travelling to work each day is time spent away from your family and from your community. Your choices for educational training are very constrained by lack of access to transport. The time spent in frustrating traffic congestion and long and multiple journeys is lost time—lost time with your family and lost productivity.

Building accessible public transport infrastructure makes good economic sense. The Alliance Commission on National Energy Efficiency Policy found in its recent report, “Energy 2030: Working to Double U.S. Energy Productivity by 2030”, that there are significant economic benefits to local communities where investment in public transport is made. The commission estimates that for every \$1 billion invested in public transport, some 36 000 jobs are supported or created. The commission estimates that the spin-off effects are over \$3.5 billion in sales and approximately \$500 million in tax revenue.

Having a healthy economy now and into the future requires attention to economic planning and detail. The effect of WA’s recent mining construction boom, as we have seen, is not shared by all. The absence of strong government policy to make sure that we all share in this state’s success has constrained opportunities for many.

In recent years we have seen the local manufacturing industry, a lot of it based in the East Metropolitan Region, being hollowed out. Instead of getting the best deal possible from large resource projects by making sure that as much skilled work as possible is done in Western Australia, we see much of that manufacturing work and those jobs being exported overseas. Where our local manufacturing workshops and our local engineers have the capability and capacity to undertake this work, surely this work should be done here. But why should we worry about this? Why should we not allow our manufacturing base to wither? The answer to that is best summed up by Professor Dani Rodrik from Harvard University —

Without a vibrant manufacturing base, societies tend to divide between rich and poor—those who have access to steady, well-paying jobs, and those whose jobs are less secure and lives more precarious.

Surely that in and of itself is a strong purpose for making sure that what can be made here is made here, for growing our manufacturing capabilities rather than letting them wither. Surely that in and of itself should be a strong reason to invest in apprenticeships and training to provide our young people with real opportunities now and for the future.

Another social and economic concern in our state is the widening gap in pay between women and men. The WA Department of Commerce has reported that in November last year WA’s gender pay gap was 26.4 per cent. As the department notes, this means that on average for every dollar earned by a full-time male employee, full-time female employees earn 73.6c. Western Australia has the widest gender pay gap in the country. The national gender pay gap, in contrast, stands at 17.6 per cent. While some important and significant steps have been taken at the federal level lately to reduce this yawning gap, there are issues pertinent to this state that behove us to do more. WA urgently needs a review of factors influencing the state-based gendered nature of pay and we need a statewide strategy to deal with this widening gap.

A further indicator of the detrimental effects of rising costs of living and economic inequalities in our state can be found in the increased number of domestic assaults in our community. WA Police statistics indicate that over the four-year period 2007–08 to 2011–12 there has been a significant rise in the number of reported domestic assaults in the East Metropolitan Region. While I acknowledge that increased population and changes in reporting procedures may have some impact, an increase in over 2 000 cases per annum is extremely concerning,

and they are the ones that are reported. There is a strong need for more support services for women seeking to leave violent situations. This is an issue that I will continue to pursue.

Much of my working life has been spent working with people with disability. For several years I was the executive director of the Brain Injury Association of New South Wales, or the head injury association, as it was also known. I also worked for many years at a fantastic community-based disability rights organisation, People with Disability Australia. Approximately 21 000 people have identified as needing assistance with their daily tasks live in the East Metropolitan Region and a further 35 000 have not stated their need for assistance. The National Disability Insurance Scheme, or DisabilityCare Australia as it is now known, will provide people with disability—many of them for the first time—with services they need to live independently and to live with dignity and to have some choice. This, of course, is a basic human right and one that I championed in my previous roles through the development of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and will continue to champion in this place. I have also worked as an advocate to ensure that people with disability receive good-quality services at a local level. I will continue to advocate strongly for and trust that people with disability in Western Australia will receive the same rights, the same access to services and the same choices as people with disabilities across Australia, as is their basic human right.

The East Metropolitan Region has been fortunate to have been represented by a talented and committed range of people. I would like to acknowledge the work of some of the former members of the East Metropolitan Region. Hon Alison Xamon and Hon Linda Savage have both made important contributions to the region and the Parliament, and have been generous in their support of me commencing in this role. I am very pleased that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich continues to serve in this chamber. East metro's loss is north metro's gain. It is great that we still get to share her wisdom and wit. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the work and life of Hon Jock Ferguson, an east metro man, a union man, a Labor man, and a friend of many in this place. May he rest in peace. Senator Louise Pratt, of course, was a fabulous former member for East Metropolitan Region and is a terrific supporter of mine, and I thank her for all of her work. I hope I can fill those big shoes in east metro.

Earlier I spoke about striving for integrity in the work ahead of me. I have been very fortunate in being surrounded by and having worked with many people who hold this quality and from whom I have learnt much. I acknowledge here one of those people, Hon Bob Kucera. Bob's integrity saw him fight an honourable and good fight in the recent election as the Labor candidate for Mount Lawley. Unfortunately, we were not successful this time, but the quality of this man cannot be understated. Bob, thank you for all you have given and continue to give to the people of this state. Like Bob, all the Labor candidates, staff and volunteers across the East Metropolitan Region and across the state acted with integrity. They worked unbelievably hard and gave it their all. Irrespective of the outcome of each electorate, they should be justifiably proud of their contribution, of their work and of their integrity.

This has been just an overview of who I am and what I am concerned with. I would like to thank all of my colleagues for the welcome that has been extended to me in this place. It is delightful and somewhat amusing to me to find myself in this place with my dear friend, Hon Stephen Dawson. I thank you for all your support. I thank each and every one of the Legislative Council and parliamentary services staff for their professionalism and the courtesy they have extended me. Without all of your support this would have been a much more daunting and difficult start than it otherwise has been.

There are many people in my life whom I owe so much thanks, as without their support I would not be here today. Many of them are able to be with us today from near and from far, and I thank them. Others are watching via the internet and I am pleased that they have been able to a part of this occasion. For fear of missing out on someone, I have done something very typical of me, I have made a list! There are many, many people who I owe my thanks to. Here is just a snapshot of some of them, and if I have missed you out, it does not mean I do not love you. The list is in alphabetical order: Feyi Akindoyeni, Bryan Bekker, Dascia Bennett, Donna Bevan, Michael Clohesy, Olivier Collas de Chatelperron, Hon Stephen Dawson, Kate Deverall, Thonya Deverall, Joan Erck, Hon Sue Ellery, Peter Fitzpatrick, Hon Jon Ford, Franck Gire, Aram Hosie, Maris Kavanagh, Alan Kirkland, Dennis Liddelow, Les Marsden, Tanya McCartney, Steve McCartney, Necta Minis, Maire Ni Chaoim, Eilish O'Connor, Aileen O'Donoghue, Justine Parker, Cindy Portland, Senator Louise Pratt, Sarah Seymour, Oliver Schofield, Hon Penny Sharpe, Daniel Smith, Gede Sukertia, Hon Sally Talbot, Jo Tilly, Jemima Tilly, my Sydney family, my Melbourne family, Sharon Webb and last but not least, just because his name starts with W, Owen Whittle.

Of course, I would like to thank my partner of many years; we actually cannot agree how many years it has been, so I will just say my partner for life, Phil O'Donoghue. He has been my constant support and companion. He is a man who lives his values—our shared values of social justice—and for that I love him.

Mr President, Ben Chifley argued that our main goal—that is, the light on the hill—could be achieved by working for the betterment of all people wherever a helping hand was needed. This objective, for which we are

striving, is the beacon, the light on the hill to which our eyes are always turned and to which our efforts are always directed. I ask: what else could be worth fighting for? This, Mr President, is my inspiration.

[Applause.]

**HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral)** [7.59 pm]: How do I follow that? First I would like to thank and acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet tonight, the Noongar people, and pay my respects to their elders past and present. I offer my congratulations to you, Mr President, on your re-election as President of this place. Thank you for your advice, your good humour and your hospitality over the last few months.

It is certainly an honour and a privilege to be standing before you tonight as an Australian Labor Party representative for the Mining and Pastoral Region. Before I elaborate my priorities in this place, let me tell you something about how I ended up here before my family, friends and colleagues. My first experience of the Mining and Pastoral Region was on holiday in 1986. My family first came to Australia in December of that year. At the time I was the eldest of three children, although a fourth child was on the way. My aunt and uncle had come here from Ireland months before to run a youth hostel and we travelled around the world to visit them. After months of planning, we finally arrived in the beautiful city of Perth. We loved the place. We explored its parks, Fremantle, Rottnest Island and the beautiful beaches. Having come from Ireland where we put our shorts and T-shirts on when it hit 15 degrees, this great new place was not what we were used to.

Soon after spending some time in Perth, mam and dad packed me, my sister, Mairead, my brother, Cormac, and a twinkle that was to become my sister, Brid, into a family wagon, and along with my aunt, uncle and cousins off we set for what was for us in those days an outback adventure. The journey took us through the wheatbelt, the goldfields and the south west of this great state. My first experience of red dust was the ochre sand caked into my nice, new, white runners. This was to be the first of many pieces of clothing ruined by red dust over the years. From that trip, I still have many fond memories, including panning for gold in Coolgardie, and some of the friends I made on those travels I still keep in touch with today.

After seven weeks of experiencing firsthand the delights of Western Australia and recognising the opportunities that lay here, my parents made the difficult decision to shift halfway across the world in search of a better life for their children, and upon arrival back in Dublin they began the process to migrate. Like many others who have settled here in WA, we were essentially economic migrants. The economy in Ireland was struggling, unemployment was rising and the working-class suburb we lived in was beginning to feel the consequences of joblessness and the social problems that this brings.

Both of my parents were Dubliners and it was through them I gained my strong values around family, community, and social justice. Mam was one of nine children born to Jem and Dolly Mooney, one of whom, Thomas, a twin, died at birth. Mam's eldest sister, Theresa, tragically drowned at the age of 16 years, and my heartbroken grandmother never recovered and passed away not long after. Now being the eldest child, mam took on the role of mother to her remaining seven siblings. In what could not have been an easy task for a teenager, she guided them along the path to where they are today. As I was growing up, those aunts and uncles in many ways seemed like older brothers and sisters to me. Often mam would call out "Seamus, Michael, Martin, Walter, Noel" before she finally got to "Stephen", and I would realise that she was calling for me. The patience she must have gained looking after her siblings no doubt stood her in good stead, as for the last many years she has worked as a carer of the elderly, and those she has cared for often becoming like our Aussie grandparents.

My dad, Noel, was the middle child of three children born to Peter and Monica. Dad's father died when he was just five years old and so I never got to meet my grandfather, and dad never got to experience what I have experienced with him being a loving father. As a young man, my dad went to England to play football for Everton, but missing home and his mam, he gave it up and came back to Ireland. He went on to have an illustrious career in the Irish Premier League. Dad continued to play top league soccer long after we moved to Perth and has played for and coached a number of Perth's soccer teams over the years. My parents, Phyllis and Noel, have always been there for me and my brother and sisters, and throughout the years we might not have been happy with all the decisions they made but we know now that they made them with our best interests in mind.

The immigration process over two years felt long, yet worth the wait. We were a young family escaping a depressed economy and in search of a better life. I still cannot imagine what families who board rickety boats to come to Australia trying to escape persecution must be going through when they choose to set sail on those treacherous seas. It breaks my heart to think of and to hear about boats sinking, and with them the lives of people seeking only to make a better life for themselves and their families.

A few weeks before my fourteenth birthday in 1989, we arrived in Australia for good. When looking for a place to settle and schools to attend, a family friend recommended Hollywood Senior High School, and so we moved to Nedlands. Having previously been schooled through the Irish language and speaking English only as a second

language, my first day at Hollywood made me feel like I was on the set of *Home and Away*. It was a very different life to the rigours of a Christian Brothers school. People carried surfboards and skateboards rather than the hurley sticks and the round footballs that I was used to. Suddenly all the academic subjects that I had known and loved at school I now found more difficult and lost interest in due to the language barrier. I kept with French, which I had long studied in Ireland and took up the subjects of politics and drama, both of which I have no doubt will serve me well in my role in this place.

For us, like many other migrants, Australia has been the lucky country, but it is only lucky for those of us who make it! All my brothers and sisters have prospered in our new homeland. We have done well and have benefited greatly from our lives here. Between us we have played soccer for the state, attended the WA Institute of Sport and received citizenship awards and all have made the most of the opportunities that WA has afforded us.

Perhaps it was because we were so far away from our extended family, but we are all good friends and very close knit. Rarely a week goes by that we do not catch up for a barbecue or lunch. We are blessed. As a result of my family's strong commitment to community, Irish culture and language has always been an important part of my life. I love nothing more than listening to the Pogues and Christy Moore or singing a few rebel songs on a night out. Over the years and to this day I still remain involved in the Irish Club of WA and occasionally tread the boards with the Irish Theatre Players. It seems most Irish politicians, because of the struggles that the nation has gone through, have a tradition of activism in the pursuit of justice. After all, our country was invaded and our culture was suppressed for many years. We have our own strong indigenous culture in Ireland, expressed mainly through our language, our music and our national sports. Thanks to Janet in the Parliamentary Library, I have discovered that I am the twenty-third Irish-born MP in the Western Australian Parliament, and the first in over half a century—part of a proud tradition of Irish rabble-rousers who have been elected to serve the people of this state.

After finishing high school I decided that I wanted to be an actor, but recognising the difficulty in making a living from that profession, I too decided to go off to Edith Cowan to train to be a teacher hoping to be able to supplement any income from acting with the pay of relief teaching.

I joined the Labor Party on orientation day in 1995, signed up by a then enthusiastic young woman, Linda Whatman, who was to become my best friend and mentor over the years and I continue to value her advice many, many years later. I was training to be a high school French and drama teacher but soon my involvement in politics began to take over; I got elected to the student guild and my studies received less and less attention. It seems a long time ago now that this Irish lad came to WA and got involved in politics. I stand here now, extraordinarily proud and humbled to be representing the Mining and Pastoral Region.

The sheer size of the Mining and Pastoral electorate is daunting to many, but I am relishing the opportunity to explore the diverse cultures, concerns and regions that it consists of. It is an electorate of strong cultures, dispossessed communities and migrants of all stripes. The Mining and Pastoral Region is truly one in which the geography could be said to represent the people—the strength, beauty and rich resources of this vast area is reflected in the strength and wisdom of our regional and remote communities. But it is also a landscape that can be fragile, and, with isolation, can also come great vulnerability.

I want to acknowledge the contribution to this place of one who came before me as a member for Mining and Pastoral, Hon Jon Ford. Jon is a true gentleman who I know was appreciated by members right across the chamber. It was 12 years ago that Jon delivered his own inaugural speech to Parliament; a speech of real conviction and determination to serve the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region. Opening his speech, Jon stated —

I stand in this place, not as a great statesman or a master orator, but as a common man with common ideals and common virtues. I believe I have been blessed with an extraordinary passion for social justice and equity.

This passion for social justice has been a legacy of Jon's contribution to the Mining and Pastoral Region and has been fundamental to his work over the years. I hope to build on his work and passion for the electorate and in years to come make others as proud of me as I am of Jon.

The towns in my electorate often suffer from a lack of quality public services that here in Perth people take for granted. I acknowledge the benefits that the government's royalties for region policy has brought to many parts of the Mining and Pastoral Region. While many towns have new community centres or streetscapes, a large failing of this policy is that it has allowed the government to drop the ball on delivering the vital services needed in some of those places. Many communities in my electorate struggle with inadequate health services, with residents having to fly, or worse, drive to Perth to access vital services. Communities in the Kimberley still struggle to access quality drinking water. It is an outrage that this occurs in Australia in the twenty-first century. Government needs to work with regional leaders to address the high levels of youth suicide in the regions,

particularly amongst young people and the Indigenous community. I will use my voice in this place to highlight these and other issues affecting my electors and I am open to working with anyone, regardless of politics, who is open to helping fix these ills.

My focus during the recent state election campaign was predominantly in the Kimberley. I spent a number of months on the ground working closely with my good friend the member for Kimberley, Josie Farrer, MLA. She is a great member for that seat and I look forward to working closely with her over this term of Parliament to bring about solutions for the issues facing our electorates. I believe Josie's background and passion for the Kimberley and its people will leave a lasting impression on this Parliament.

I am proud too to place on the record that I supported the decision of the Goolarabooloo Jabirr Jabirr traditional owners to sign a native title agreement with Woodside and the state of Western Australia for the site of a proposed gas hub at James Price Point. While I did not support the Premier's big-stick approach and lack of negotiation on the matter, the agreement, endorsed by the Goolarabooloo Jabirr Jabirr claim group, was signed to enable high-level traditional owner cultural and economic engagement in the proposed Browse Basin LNG project. At the time, then Kimberley Land Council director Wayne Bergmann said —

The Agreement represented a rare opportunity for positive social change for Kimberley Indigenous people.

Had this project gone ahead, it would have seen lasting benefits for not only the traditional owners, but also Aboriginal people right across the Kimberley.

We in the Labor Party have a long tradition of fighting for equality with many of the country's great social reforms being delivered by Labor governments. I have been an activist over the years both in student politics and the gay and lesbian community and I am proud of the progress made in the past 10 years, but we still have a long way to go until everyone is treated the same in this state and country. We face many challenges, including an intolerant society that is prepared to judge and not accept. But we will accept and stay true to the dream that we hold in our hearts.

I also congratulate Hon Adele Farina on her election as Deputy President and for being the first woman in the history of this Parliament to hold the role—a great honour in itself. I have been a supporting member of EMILY's List for a number of years now and I want to pay tribute to that organisation for the support it has given many of Labor's female candidates that has ensured that we have a more representative and diverse Parliament than those of the past. Over the years I have had the great pleasure of working as an electorate officer, adviser and chief of staff to a number of politicians to whom I am very grateful for them having shared their wisdom, passion and political acumen with me. All are very passionate people with different styles, and they have taught me a great deal on my road to this place. To former Senator Jim McKiernan, Jackie McKiernan, Judy Edwards, Jon Ford, David Templeman, Louise Pratt and Hon Gavin Jennings, MLC, former Minister for Environment in Victoria's Brumby Labor government, thank you.

I am proud to be a union member. I first joined a union as a 14-year-old working at Hungry Jack's. Unions have played an important part in my life and the lives of many other working Western Australians. I sincerely thank the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union for its support in my election to this place and its members, organisers and staff. Thank you for looking out for Western Australian workers, especially those in the Mining and Pastoral Region. Thank you for putting up with me for a few years.

I also acknowledge another former member of the Legislative Council—my good friend and comrade the late Jock Ferguson, who I know even in his short term here left a lasting impression on many in this house. It was under Jock's guidance that the AMWU reached out to a number of young student activists in the mid-1990s and encouraged us to get more involved in the ALP. My dad had been a shop steward in the Irish Transport & General Workers Union, a sister union to the AMWU's Printing and Kindred Industries Union. Therefore, it seemed a natural fit for me and my activism.

I acknowledge the hard work of Labor's lower house candidates at the recent state election. Kelly Howlett in Pilbara, Jennifer Shelton in North West Central, Terrence Winner in Kalgoorlie, Greg Smith in Eyre and Josie Farrer in Kimberley are all passionate people who believe in a better society. All worked tirelessly to promote the Labor Party and what we stand for. The election was not ours for the taking but we will regroup, work hard and deliver for our communities over the next four years. Thank you to the great Western Australian Labor Party for giving me the opportunity to represent it in the Parliament. I thank all its members. I look forward to being a progressive voice in this place.

Thanks to my mam and dad, my sisters Mairead and Brid, my brother Cormac, and their partners Pat, Michel and Josie. To my partner's family Dale, Henry and David Pekel and Colin Liddelow, thank you all for your love and support. My family members and friends have long been dragged to ALP branch meetings and votes over the

years, all in the name of my passion for politics. Thank you to Steve McCartney and Tanya, Justine Parker, Hon Sally Talbot, Daniel Smith, Bryan Bekker, Linda Whatman, Tina O'Connor, M. Ward, Cindy Portland, Zoe Carter, Juliana Addison, Kim Bryant, Owen Whittle, Rhonda Donaghey, Aram Hosie, Jessica Houston, Pat Abbott, Margriet van Tuyl and Angela Padley. Thank you to friends and staff Sharon Webb, Nicole Coppock and Tricia Hebbard. I have received a great deal of support over the years from these and many others, some of whom are here tonight. If I have forgotten anyone, thank you. To those who are watching online, I want to thank each and every one of you for your support and friendship.

I would like to congratulate my good friend Hon Alanna Clohesy on her inaugural speech tonight. She and her partner, Philip O'Donoghue, have been great friends of mine for many years. I thank them for their friendship and support on the road to this place.

To my partner of 10 years, Dennis Liddelow, thank you. I highly value your advice and counsel, and I love you dearly. You have been on this journey with me over the years and I have no doubt that I could not have done it without you. You challenge me, you console me, but most of all you love me.

Before I started in this place I had the pleasure of working the last few years as state manager for Essential Media Communications. At EMC we ran campaigns for a range of charities, non-government organisations and trade unions, helping to make Australia a better place by securing social change. I had the pleasure of being involved in the Every Australian Counts campaign, a precursor to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and DisabilityCare Australia. I am very proud of the work we did at EMC. To my friends at EMC, I am grateful for the opportunities you gave me and will certainly use my time in this place continuing to help make Western Australia a better place. Thank you also to the parliamentary staff for their assistance over the past few years. Having worked in and around the Parliament over the years, I am well aware of the dedication and professionalism of its staff. I look forward to working with them in my new role in the years ahead.

Many of us in this place have made promises in our first speech here. I want to make only one promise; that is to stay true to the values of the Labor Party, to stay true to the electors in the Mining and Pastoral Region and to stay true to the people who elected me. I am often daunted by the task that lies ahead of me but I am committed to giving my all. Thank you, Mr President.

[Applause.]