

**HON LOUISE PRATT**

*Standing Orders Suspension - Motion*

On motion without notice by **Hon Kim Chance (Leader of the House)**, resolved with an absolute majority -

That so much of standing orders be suspended as will enable Hon Louise Pratt to make her valedictory address to the house.

*Valedictory Remarks*

**HON LOUISE PRATT (East Metropolitan)** [12.19 pm]: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy President, and I thank the house for its indulgence. I would like to begin my comments by acknowledging, as I did in my maiden speech, the Nyoongah people, the traditional owners of the land on which this Parliament rests. As a member of the East Metropolitan Region, I have been pleased to learn a little more about Nyoongah culture in my work over the past few years. I am really pleased that, although the Parliament has been here for 100 years, there is now a visible presence of Western Australia's first peoples in the Aboriginal People's Gallery.

In preparing my speech this week, I reflected on my maiden speech in this house and some of its themes. I spoke quite a bit about activism and change. I think we have seen quite a lot of change over the past six years, and I have loved it. I spoke of the way in which community activism has been able to militate against some of the worst excesses of change. I am very happy that the Labor government has been a good change agent and, in most cases, has managed change very well. It has promoted, instigated, championed and implemented change. Most of the time I have rallied around such change in parliamentary and party forums, but at other times I have been against it. I have had the great opportunity of working with many community activists, community groups, government and non-government organisations and industry associations. It has been an enormous privilege to participate in and contribute to change in Western Australia and many debates over the past six years. In my speech today I will highlight some of the issues that have been really important to me.

One of the key reforms that has been a signpost for the Labor government's stand on justice and equality has had a particular personal resonance for me; that is, gay and lesbian law reform. As a community activist campaigning for reform before I was elected, it was quite something for me to go from debating with Hon Peter Foss on radio when he was Attorney General to debating with him in the chamber and championing reform on behalf of the government. Even though I engaged in debate with him while he was on the other side of the chamber, in getting to know him during the last Parliament, I learnt of some of the sympathies he had for reform. I think he felt a little hard done by at times, although it was up to the Labor government to deliver what I think are the best gay and lesbian equality laws in the nation. They are the most equal and just laws, covering the areas of property rights; recognition of family status, including adoption; and equal opportunity. I have been really pleased that the overwhelming majority of Western Australians have accepted these reforms as a great thing and see them as a symbol of Labor being a forward-looking government. I think we are in dire need of similar reform at a national level and I look forward to taking part in those debates. Australia is a long way behind western Europe and the United Kingdom. The United States is also a long way behind those nations. The sentiment of electors in those nations suggests that this is seen in some communities as a symbol of the potential for a government that belongs in the future, not the past. Although law reform has been implemented, more work needs to be done to ensure that there is equality within services, and there is a need for a state-based relationship recognition scheme. Although it was very forward thinking when it was introduced in 2000, there is a need for improvements to the way the Gender Reassignment Act operates in this state.

Similarly, I have been very pleased to be involved in reforms that have protected and enhanced the status of women in this state, such as the equality of status laws covering de factos and domestic violence laws. I have been incredibly pleased to work with organisations such as the Maternity Coalition. It has been advocating the need for a new framework on maternity services. This includes better valuing our midwifery workforce and greater continuity of care for women and babies. Happily, these reforms are underway in Western Australia. I note that a lot of work also needs to be done in this area at a federal level, and I am a firm believer that accredited midwives should be able to apply for a Medicare provider number.

I also very much support a human rights act for Western Australia, and I look forward to seeing continuing progress on this front. I hope it can also be addressed at a national level.

Members of this house will know that the environment has been a key political passion of mine. I have been very proud of and pleased with the government's progress on these issues. I foresee many challenges ahead, however. It was a great opportunity for me to be involved in the state government's greenhouse strategy task force, putting forward key directions on climate change policy for the state. It was also really terrific to be chair of the state government's greenhouse stakeholder group. For those members who do not know about that group, it is a wide-ranging group of stakeholders from the Western Australian community, including heavy industry, the Western Australian Council of Social Service, unions and environmental groups. Together, we have really come

head to head trying to bed down greenhouse policy issues in the best interests of the state. I think we have made some progress over the past six years. A really important cornerstone of this is that we now have a target to cut emissions by 60 per cent by 2050. We have begun to gather together the machinery of government, policy and legislative frameworks and communication strategies to deal with a carbon-constrained future and climate change. We know that all Australians will confront lifestyle changes and new accountabilities because of climate change. We have already begun to face those issues with measures such as water restrictions. Western Australians are getting used to adapting their lifestyles; however, this will continue to impact on other parts of their lives. I think this will be a big challenge, but not without what I think are exciting opportunities. It will, however, take some real guts and commitment to make some hard decisions in coming years. For the sake of our planet and our unique Western Australian environment, which is very vulnerable to climate change, we must address this issue. I know it is a challenge that the people of Western Australia and this Parliament are up to. It is an exciting area of policy and it is one that I am looking forward to continuing to engage in and make a contribution to.

I have also been a strong supporter of Western Australia's antinuclear and anti-uranium mining stance. In my opinion - the research that I have done also shows this - we have a completely inadequate guarantee in our international agreements that Australia's uranium will not end up in nuclear weapons. I am really committed to helping Western Australia maintain its position on this issue in the face of the shift in federal Labor's three-mines policy.

I am really proud of the work done by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. A particular highlight for me from a number of years ago was the key role the committee played in influencing the legislative framework for managing the entry of genetically modified organisms into this state. The work of the committee was based on a strong precautionary principle and set the state up to be the gatekeeper in charge of keeping out the GMOs that threatened the state's interests.

Moving on from the environment, one of the key differences between the sides of the house has always been the issue of industrial relations. I very much remember the heady debates in this place when we wound back the Court government's industrial relations laws. I have vivid memories before that of times spent in Solidarity Park when it was a protest camp. I was particularly concerned at the pressures that these laws placed at the time - we are seeing it at a federal level now - on vulnerable workers such as cleaners, childcare workers, young people and others in low-paid industries. I continue to be concerned that these workers are feeling extra pressure in the current economic times, as there is an increasing disparity between these industries and those that are benefiting from the boom.

In that context, I also see the new prostitution laws as necessary for the protection of vulnerable workers who have been neglected and forgotten for too long. I have listened to the debates on sex work in the other place over the past few weeks, and I am sorry that I will not have an opportunity to participate in the debate on this legislation in this house because I very much support the reforms. However, I know it will be a very passionate debate in this place, as were other debates on which members in this place had strong views. I have spoken to sex workers about the need for these reforms, and I know that these reforms will assist in creating a framework for safer working environments.

I have highlighted some issues. However, I really want to wish both the government and this house well in managing future challenges, some of which have changed in the time that Labor has been in government - issues we had not quite come to terms with that were going to emerge. We can all appreciate the great benefits that we receive from managing a booming economy, but there are significant challenges in this, such as the rising inequity for those on fixed incomes. There is also the risk of a new generation of people who will not be able to afford their own home. There is growing pressure on our precious environment as industry, mining and the population expand in this state. The loss of teachers, nurses, police and childcare workers to a different economic future in the mining industry is also a very challenging issue for us. However, I see the vigour and vision with which the government is tackling these issues, and I wish it well.

I would now like to say some thank-yous. I will begin by thanking the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs: Hon Bruce Donaldson, Hon Robyn McSweeney, Hon Paul Llewellyn and Hon Kate Doust. I have learnt, I think, both the easy and the hard way of the merits of parliamentary committees and their capacity to tackle issues in a non-partisan way. It has been a pleasure to work with all those members.

In the committee office, I give particular thanks to Mark Warner, who has always been cool and collected in all states. I thank Vincent Cusack, Stefanie Dobro and all the fine advisers who became before them. In my experience, all the very talented staff of the committee office are very skilled in their writing, research and management work - people such as Felicity Mackie, Kelly Campbell, Paul Grant, Amanda Gillingham and others whom I have been able to work with in the committee office. It has been a real pleasure to do that work with them. They are skilled in balancing that delicate art of pointing out to committee members, with all due

respect and appropriateness, that we might at times be a little off track, when in fact we are probably being complete idiots.

I give my thanks to the catering staff, the dining room staff, the switchboard ladies, the library staff, the gardening staff, the security staff, the IT staff, the broadcasting staff, the education office staff and the parliamentary services staff. It really is a delight to work in this place with them. They are people who make this place tick. They are patient, vibrant, professional and understanding, giving this place a really strong sense of community. Many of those people have known me from when I was a pesky activist organising protests - I know that Ken Craig certainly recalls me in that capacity - or a young political staffer.

I give particular thanks to Hansard for skilfully rephrasing my words when they are muddled, and that was an appropriate point at which to muddle my words, I think.

I thank Malcolm Peacock, Mia Betjeman, Janeen Robertson, Nigel Lake, Nigel Pratt, Chris Hunt, Brian Conn and all officers of the Legislative Council for the skill and courtesy with which they have enhanced our work in this place.

I say to my caucus colleagues, both here and in the other place, that in them I have a great many terrific role models. They are a demonstration of what can be achieved with commitment and determination. In my view, our best performers have been those ministers who have had the foresight to take on big agendas and settle them in with a vision and a timetable. In particular, I am looking forward to our health policy and planning visions continuing to unfold.

I want to give special thanks to Geoff Gallop for his leadership and encouragement, and acknowledge his personal courage. I thank him for being brave enough to help lift the lid on depression and mental illness.

I want to thank the many good people I have had a chance to work with in the East Metropolitan Region: individual constituents, community groups, mayors and councillors, and, indeed, my east metro colleagues in both the Assembly and the Council.

I would not be in this place without the very special opportunity that the ALP has afforded me: the privilege of being a Labor member of Parliament. It takes a great many activists to deliver each one of us a seat in this place. I think people work very hard, trusting us to competently battle out our competing agendas, as well as work cooperatively to serve the best interests of the state. I really love being a member of the ALP, for all its trials and tribulations, and we all know that we have them. I thank the party for the opportunity it has afforded me. It really suits my personal appetite and approach to tackling inequality, to supporting and empowering people when they are down and to viewing things with an open mind, while promoting justice, fairness and human dignity.

I have some very firm friends whom I have had a chance to work with over the past six years and who have been forced to come to terms with some of my foibles. They include Justine Parker, Nickie McKimmie, Alanna Clohesy, Craig Comrie, Kylie Turner, Blair Archbold, Marinomoana Ward and Di Welch. I really want to thank them for their patience and understanding and service to me on all the issues and causes that we have worked on together.

I want to give special acknowledgement to my dear friends Stephen Dawson, Dennis Liddlelow, Daniel Smith, Jon Ford, Sally Talbot and Jock Ferguson for their unrelenting friendship and support. I extend my thanks to the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union and all the unions that are affiliated with the Labor Party, because they are our heart and soul.

I have many people I would like to acknowledge. However, I do not want to abuse this indulgence of the house, so I will not turn this into Ted Cunningham's valedictory speech, in which case I would be here all day! However, I do want to thank our leader Kim for his steady, grounded leadership. He always sounds like the world's greatest expert on everything, and I am sure that is because he is! I would like to thank Hon Norman Moore for the constancy of his presence here in every debate. It is something that I remember from the voluntary student unionism days when I was holding student protests at the front of Parliament House. I thank Hon Paul Llewellyn. He has a cheeky nature, tabling a fax machine. I thank my dear friend Giz for her warm friendship and for the steady argument that is extended to this place. I thank people such as Sally Talbot, whose speeches have great intellectual rigour. I am very sorry that I shall not hear more of them. I thank Sue for the compassion that is always behind her very steely gaze. I thank Ken for his capacity to leap to his feet and put some fire into any debate. I have anecdotes about all of them, and very pleasant memories. I really want to extend my sincere thanks to all members of this house for their robust debates and for their interjections.

I have learnt a lot from my colleagues on the other side of the house. I have enjoyed being challenged in my views, and have appreciated the perspectives they have brought to the debates in this house, however different our opinions might be.

I wish all members well, and I know how hard they all work. I know the sacrifices that they and their families make to be here. I ask members to please look after their health and to spend time with loved ones.

On that note, I would like to extend my personal thanks to my family - Sandra, Greg, Fleur and Nicholas - and my dear partner, Aram, who displays unyielding patience for my political life and shares many of my political passions. I trust that I shall not test this patience too much in the future.

As members of this place, I know that we do not always share the same views on issues and debates. I know that some of my highlights from the past six years represent other members' horrors. However, I know that we all share a deep respect for the Legislative Council and the role of this place as a democratic institution that facilitates debate and provides a forum in which to reach compromise or consensus, and do battle on issues of importance to the people we represent. As a member of this house, it has been an enormous privilege and pleasure to be in the good company of all Council members.

I have endeavoured to stay true to the goals I set myself in my first speech, and would like to quote from my own very earnest speech to this house, because members all know now that earnestness is part of my political style. I said -

We live in a complex and fast-changing world that can at times be a struggle for everyone, but especially for those who are impoverished by economic or social marginalisation. Fortunately, Western Australia has many committed citizens working together to improve our community and protect our environment. As parliamentarians, our worth will depend on our links with the people at the coalface of the hands-on work of trying to build a better world.

Today I am sitting on the cusp of a whole lot of new challenges ahead of me. I will renew the sense of commitment that I have, and I will carry it with me to my new responsibilities. I firmly believe that my experiences here as a member of the Legislative Council will serve me well as I undertake my new role. Traditionally, senators are representatives of their state. In this role I feel that I have been well prepared by my experience in this state. I give thanks for the very many opportunities that have been afforded to me.

[Applause.]