

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

*Motion*

Resumed from 12 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 SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [12.30 pm]: I wish to continue the remarks I was making last night when I formed half of the sandwich that I referred to as a metalworker's sandwich and deferred the rest of my speech so that new members Hon Alanna Clohesy and Hon Stephen Dawson could make their first speeches. I am extremely honoured to have been part of that sandwich. Both of them made outstanding speeches. In a purely personal sense, it is a great honour and privilege to have two of my closest friends and comrades in this place making such a flying start to what I am sure will be magnificent parliamentary careers for both of them.

I said that I was going to talk about three things, starting with where we are at the moment. I will make a couple more comments on that before I return to talk about how we got to where we are. As I said last night, this is not a particularly happy time for the Australian Labor Party, either federally or in Western Australia. On 9 March we saw the incumbent government, the Barnett government, play its first-term advantage very well and very successfully. We know now that it has brought four years of absolute misery on itself because it has given Hon Ken Travers only one speech that he tells us he will make for the next four years, and that is about the deception that the Liberal Party wrought on the Western Australian electorate when it promised that its commitments were fully funded and fully costed. We could count the time it took for that undertaking to unravel in a matter of hours because within a very short period after it swept back into government, it began to unravel those promises. We have the extraordinary situation in which the second-term Barnett government is trying to distance itself from the first-term Barnett government. It is a remarkable thing. I guess there are precedents where there have been significant changes in leadership when a new direction can be claimed with some degree of accuracy, but in this case the changes to its leadership have been absolutely minimal. The change of direction clearly has not happened at all, yet it seems to be scuttling away under the rocks for cover about its broken promises by saying that if it had known then what it knows now, it would not have made such lavish commitments to the electorate. I am sorry, but that will not wash. We have a cruel and unusual way of extracting our vengeance in the shape of Hon Ken Travers, who will make the same speech for the next four years.

I am looking forward to 2017 because honourable members who follow their electoral history in this state will know that we are now in a situation that is comparable to the late 1990s. Everybody will remember what happened on 10 February 2001. That was when the Labor government came back into office after two terms in opposition. I remind honourable members opposite exactly what happened then so they can draw their own conclusions about what will happen in 2017. In 2001, the ALP needed a swing of about four per cent. That would have given us government. We got a swing that took us from 19 seats, which is two fewer than we have now—we have a bigger Assembly now so that is probably directly comparable—to 32 seats in one election. As I said, a swing of four per cent would have done it. In fact, we got swings in the order of nine per cent in several seats, notably in the seat of Collie–Preston, which is very close to my heart and which I will have a bit more to say about in a minute, which swung 9.27 per cent away from the National Party; the seat of Swan Hills, which swung 9.73 per cent away from the Liberal Party to the Labor Party; and of course our hero in the seat of Albany, Peter Watson, swung that seat 11.9 per cent. I ask honourable members opposite to tuck those figures away in their minds and remember what will happen in 2017.

**Hon Jim Chown:** How did you lose the unlosable 2008 election?

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order, members! Hon Sally Talbot has the call.

**Hon Jim Chown:** It was a fair question.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** I can understand that members opposite are getting a little excited about this. I might just go through those figures again as I am getting exactly the result I hoped I would get. I thank Hon Jim Chown; he always rises to the occasion.

I want to talk about the election campaign that has just passed and pay a couple of tributes. There were two focuses in my household for a couple of years before the election on 9 March. I was working very closely with



Mick Murray in the seat of Collie–Preston and Hon Jon Ford was working in the Kimberley with Josie Farrer. I am very pleased to say that we both won so our household was a very happy place. It did not happen on the night of 9 March, which was a bit early to break out the champagne. That did not apply to every campaign headquarters in the state. The Liberal Party members celebrating in Collie–Preston popped the champagne corks a little too early and went public with their claim of victory by about 7.45 pm that night. The Liberals got a little carried away. They rang us all personally and said, “Have you conceded yet?” One thing we learn when working with Mick Murray is that Mick makes the decisions.

**Hon Jim Chown** interjected.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** What is Hon Jim Chown’s problem? They are my electors. They voted for me as well. Sorry, Madam Deputy President; I will address my remarks through you.

One thing we learn when working with Mick Murray is that Mick makes the decisions. In the end, after taking a number of these phone calls, I went to him and said, “Look, we’ve had all these calls. They want you to concede. What’s your feeling?” He said, “She’ll fight for every vote the same as I’ve done after every single election.” We should remember that this was Mick Murray’s sixth election, the sixth time he has run for the seat of Collie–Preston. Mick is very well practised in this. Mick said, “We’re hanging in there; we’re going to wait.” We waited for nine or 10 days before we ended up winning the seat by a handsome majority. It was a handsome victory for the electorate of Collie–Preston. Compared with 2001, when I think he won by 27 votes, I think we doubled our majority in 2013. By that time we had also confirmed Josie Farrer as the member for Kimberley. Queen’s *We Are The Champions* was playing very, very loudly and on repeat that night in our flat in East Perth. I am glad nobody had the cameras out because I do not think I would want people to see on YouTube what was going on in our apartment that night to the sound of Queen. That was a great victory for us and we were very, very happy about it.

I want to say a couple of things about Mick Murray. As I said, Mick has run for the seat of Collie–Preston six times. I have been working in politics for a long time. The way that Mick runs an electorate still takes my breath away. I have never seen a local member who works at the pace and with the intensity, commitment and enthusiasm that Mick Murray works for the electorate of Collie–Preston. I see that Hon Robyn McSweeney is listening with great interest to the debate because the electors of the South West Region are her constituents as well. The electorate of Collie–Preston has changed very substantially over the years. The majority of voters in Collie–Preston—more than half—live in what we call the outskirts of Bunbury. They live in Dalyellup, Eaton and further south down to Capel and some of the communities south of Bunbury. I travelled with Mick Murray around those areas for months and months before the March election and saw that he did just as much work down the hill as he did in Collie. He was fighting tooth and nail for issues such as the Capel police station. That was one of the very significant issues that Mick took up. Had we won the election on 9 March, that police station would already have been under construction. It is very sad for all those communities that we did not win and were not able to put in place the things that Mick had put on the priority list. He is a man who understands his constituency and I was impressed with how well he knew individuals. He can drive down any street in his electorate and say who has a sick child or whose parents are waiting for a place in a nursing home. He embodies the true believer. He puts Labor values in place and looks after people.

It has been a great honour and privilege to get to know Josie Farrer over the last 12 months or so. Josie was preselected for the seat of Kimberley. What an enormous task it is to be elected to Parliament for a person who lives so far away from Perth in the kind of community Josie comes from. Josie tells me that she did not live in a house with four walls until the 1960s and that she owns nothing except a car that does not actually run at the moment. Jon Ford and I talked to her over 12 months ago about running for the seat of Kimberley and she never hesitated. Not for one instant did Josie Farrer blink. She saw immediately what an enormous opportunity it was for her to take the stories of the people she knows so well into the Parliament of Western Australia. It was a difficult road. It is hard for anyone to run for a seat in Parliament, but it is particularly hard for people in regional communities when the tyranny of distance comes into effect, and it is especially hard for women, as I discussed last night in the first part of my speech. Of course, as an Indigenous woman, Josie is walking a path that very few people have walked before. I say again, honourable members, that not once did she blink. She has entered this place with her wings spread very wide and she will make a real difference to the whole community of the Kimberley. That is the only electorate in the state in which Indigenous people are in the majority. Josie Farrer speaks for everyone in those communities and I am looking forward very much to seeing what she is able to achieve over the next four years. I am happy to say that Josie shares with me the same preference for having our room very well heated. We have acquired a couple of blow heaters and are using all the sockets in our room. When Hon Alanna Clohesy walked into our room last night, she said it was “too Kimberley” in there as she fanned herself and walked back out to cool down in the corridor. It will be great sharing that hot space with Josie Farrer.



I will also mention David Templeman and Peter Watson. I have said before that Peter Watson has acquired the status of a true Labor hero for the way he has held the seat of Albany over the years. He defied all the critics and pundits this time around and actually got a swing towards him. That happened in only two seats. One was Mark McGowan's seat and the other was Peter Watson's. I pay tribute to Peter Watson. Like Mick and my friend and colleague David Templeman, Peter Watson knows that we win an electorate when we show people that we care about them. That is what all three of the Labor members in my electorate do day in, day out and year in, year out. I am happy to say that the election result in their seats proved that they are doing a fantastic job.

My tributes for the efforts during the election campaign would not be complete unless I referred to the people who took on the thankless task of running for the seats that we did not expect to win. I have to mention five seats in the South West Region. Councillor Karen Steele is well known to you, Madam Deputy President. She took on the job of running for the seat of Bunbury at quite short notice and did an admirable job of getting the Labor message out to the Bunbury electorate.

I have to say that John Thorpe, the candidate for Warren–Blackwood, was an unusual candidate to work with because he decided to doorknock most of his communities—it is a very big electorate! I cannot talk about John without talking about his wife Evelyn Thorpe. John and Evelyn hit the road on an almost daily basis, putting pamphlets in letterboxes, knocking on doors and going to community meetings throughout the length and breadth of that large electorate. We can all see that they did an extremely good job. The fact that the member for Warren–Blackwood, Terry Redman, had a very anxious couple of days while he was waiting for the results to be counted shows what a good job John and Evelyn did. They got the message out about the community's disgust over what the Liberal–National government has done with genetically modified crops and the way that the government mismanaged native forests. John ran a good campaign on those two messages and I pay tribute to him.

Lee Edmundson ran for the seat of Vasse and played a very significant part in making sure that people who were inclined to vote Labor understood what the messages were. They knew that they had a team in the Labor Party that was ready to fight for them. Lee did an excellent job. My other close comrade David Scaife took on the Murray–Wellington electorate and was a fine example of how to get Labor messages out when there is little support on the ground. He worked extremely hard to do that. He was ably abetted by his parents, Cathy and Roy Scaife. Members would not have been able to see a great difference between the fight for the seats of Riverton, Mount Lawley and Murray–Wellington, given the way the Scaife family took on that fight. They were quite an inspiration.

Finally, I want to mention Fred Riebeling, who ran against Hon Kim Hames in the electorate of Dawesville. I will share something with honourable members that I decided to keep confidential at the time but can now share because of the way things turned out. About 12 months out from the election, as the upper house member with two lower house candidates I was trying to assist, I was in the odd situation of having one candidate who was convinced he was going to lose and the other who was convinced he was going to win. The candidate who was convinced he would lose was David Templeman in Mandurah and the candidate who was convinced he would win was Fred Riebeling in Dawesville. That made for some interesting dynamics during the campaign. My advice to David was that he just had to keep doing what he had been doing for 11 years because he has proved that it works and he is very good at it. I am happy to say that my prediction was right. My advice to Fred Riebeling was that once the constituents got to know him, they would love him and vote for him. Fred took my advice literally and knocked on the doors of about 13 000 houses in Dawesville. He looked extremely trim and sun-tanned by 8 March! I think he had a thoroughly good time.

If people cannot do that when running for a seat like Dawesville, then I do not know what people can do to have fun. Fred put in a tremendous effort. He was helped beyond all reasonable expectation by a young man who appeared from nowhere, Peter Rogers, who I have since discovered is an extremely accomplished actor. He hits the boards every now and again with the member for Mandurah as part of the member's Christmas show. Although it is a little disconcerting to see some of my key campaign workers on stage doing vaudeville during the election campaign, Peter Rogers is a very talented actor and an extremely talented young man. He has just graduated from the University of Western Australia with a degree in law, and I am sure will have a stellar career in whatever he chooses to do. But I could not believe that almost every day, young Peter was out with Fred tramping the streets of Dawesville, putting things in letterboxes, drafting direct mail text—doing all the things that Labor members have to do to get the Labor message out. It was a really great team.

While I am talking about people who work behind the scenes, I must pay tribute to two of our key workers on the Collie campaign. Laurel Dhu, who has been a long-time staffer of Mick Murray, put in a fantastic effort, which she is now well practised at doing, but it does not detract from the amount of energy that she put in to supporting Mick. Tom Palmer was doing a postgraduate degree at the London School of Economics when I rang him and said, "Tom, I am not quite sure what career path you have imagined for yourself, but my proposition is LSE to Collie!" and Tom said yes, which I must say took me aback a bit at the time. His partner has



subsequently told me that they were about to get on a tube train when he took my call. She said that they were about an hour and a half late getting to where they were going to because Tom would not get on the train in case the signal cut out. But Tom agreed to come back. He finished his degree—I was not actually going to interrupt his studies, but the timing was absolutely perfect, which is another sign of a good political operator. When Tom finished his postgraduate studies, he came back to Perth and he went to work for Mick Murray. I can tell members that we could not have done it without Tom; I am really appreciative.

I want to make a couple of other references to people who worked with me. I have just lost my long-term electorate officer, Joanne Dean, who has been with me eight years. Jo has decided to study nursing. I think she will be a fantastic nurse. She has certainly been a terrific electorate officer. Her place has been taken by Barbara Wilson, who also worked very, very hard during the last campaign to support me in my duties. I have already referred to Roy Scaife. His incredible support for his son was only matched by the support he gave me over the years. A great discovery, along with Tom Palmer, was a young man called Harry Burrows, who I believe is now working for our leader.

[Leave granted for the member's time to be extended.]

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** I should also make mention of Tina O'Connor, who has worked with me in opposition for a couple of years now. All those people were the team. In terms of the effort that we all put in, I think we delivered well and I thank them all.

I want to spend the last few minutes available to me by casting back over the last four and a half years when I have been the shadow minister for environment and youth. I have had a couple of other portfolios during that time, but the environment and youth portfolios I have had for all that time. Being the shadow minister for the environment has been a great and interesting experience. I am sorry to lose the portfolio, for a number of reasons. Mainly, there are a number of issues that still need to be addressed and they are the issues that I was fighting very hard on. I know that my successor in the portfolio, Chris Tallentire, the member for Gosnells in the other place, will make a very, very fine job of taking up these issues, but I must say that it was an inspiration over those four and a half years to work with people in the environment movement who showed their commitment day in, day out to get better outcomes in a number of areas. One of those was native forests, an area in which the Liberal–National government has seriously dropped the ball and needs to be challenged on a daily basis. I am sorry that we have missed the opportunity. I think there was one last chance to make a difference with the management of native forests and that was the renegotiation of the forest management plan. The new plan is due to start on 1 January 2014. The current draft plan that the government is looking at is very, very seriously deficient. It will change the face of the south west forest forever, absolutely irrevocably. I think that is a very sad opportunity to miss.

The other thing that I just could not understand—I would love to be a fly on the wall in the government's party room meetings—is why we could not get a container deposit scheme in place in this state. The entire community supports it. Only seven per cent of Western Australians are cool on the idea. Some 93 per cent of Western Australians want it. Labor members tried through the Parliament by a private member's bill in the other place; it did not work. We tried to work cooperatively with the government; it did not work. I just do not understand why we have let this opportunity slip through our fingers. I can assure honourable members opposite that if we ever do get a national scheme—which, of course, is the preferred outcome—and we have our own scheme in place we would have been in a much stronger position and that would have enabled a good outcome for Western Australia. We have wasted that opportunity.

There were serious errors during that four and a half years on the government's part. They were all errors that I think we did a good job of making the government account for. Probably, the most serious error was the way that the government allowed the Environmental Protection Authority to handle the James Price Point assessment and approval. It was an error that we will be wearing the effects of for many, many years. I think the government actually lost control of the situation and did some rapid damage control at the last minute by changing the regulations to make the process, which was unravelling before its eyes, have some semblance of regulatory credibility. Allowing one person to rule on the biggest investment project ever to be proposed to Western Australia was a huge mistake and the final nail in the coffin of public confidence in the EPA's processes.

There were other mistakes, too. Hon Donna Faragher knows how strongly I feel about the move she made to take the waste levy away from the Waste Authority. We may never know, but one day in a couple of years' time I might end up having a quiet beer with Hon Donna Faragher in a back bar somewhere and she will agree with me, because I am sure I am right about that!

I want to pay tribute to some of the people that I have labelled as the stars of the conservation movement. There are a few of them and I will go through them fairly quickly. I must start with Jess Beckerling. Jess is one of the great hopes for the future for the environment movement. She is a young woman who went through the first native old-growth forest argument as a teenager. Still now, nearly 20 years later, she is right at the front and



centre of the argument. Jess has got that combination of skills that unfortunately is quite rare in our society today—that is, not only a great understanding of the complex, technical issues involved, but also a feel for a good story and the capacity to actually get stories onto the front page. I will be following Jessie's career with great interest.

I am sure Beth Schultz will not mind if I call her one of the old heroes of the environmental movement. Beth was justly acknowledged last year by the environment movement with an award. Alex Syme, my friend from Denmark, is another one of the true believers in the environmental movement. Every time I talk to Alex he tells me that he is way past his retirement date; I think that has been the case for many years now. But Alex will never retire because he is one of those people who understands that he can actually make life better for ordinary people if he can give them a better place to live, cleaner air and drinkable water. Alex really does such a fine job in fighting that fight at the absolute grassroots level. He has been a councillor for years; he loses no opportunity to make his point and he did a lot of work with me on the Dieback Consultative Council for which I thank him, amongst other things.

Anne Gadsby put the Fitzgerald River National Park issues on the political agenda and fought tirelessly to get better outcomes. Anne had considerable success in doing that. We did not have many successes during those four and a half years, but Anne should feel very proud of her efforts in that regard. My friend, Judy Blyth, is a wonderful woman who has taken on the issue of container deposits single-handedly. If any members of the house want to know what I am talking about, they need just go to the ABC's website and search on "Judy Blyth" to look at the 7.30 report on her from, I think, March of this year. Judy gets on her bike literally every day and rides around picking up cans. She also stands outside Colin Barnett's office every Friday dressed as a can or bottle. Anybody who can do that is not doing it as a stunt; they are doing it because they believe from the bottom of their heart that it is a cause worth fighting for. I love Judy dearly. She is another member doing a great job.

I want to talk about some of the players who move across national and state boundaries. Dave Sweeney and Mia Pepper have been the two heroes of the anti-uranium mining movement. Mia came into the job probably wondering whether she could do it and, within a few months, I knew that she was going to be one of the heroes of that cause.

*Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm*

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Before lunch, I was paying tribute to some of the people I consider to be the real stars of the conservation movement. To Jess, Beth, Alex, Anne, Judy, Dave Sweeney and Mia Pepper, I thank you. I should have also mentioned Pat Hart and Julie Robert at the South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare, and all the great campaigners on the Roe 8 protest. I pass all those people over to the very, very competent and experienced hands of the member for Gosnells, Chris Tallentire, who has taken over the portfolio. I know they will have a very, very productive and rewarding four years with Chris at the helm. I made those comments about people in the environment movement, and they are the people who, during my four years, greatly enriched my experience of the portfolio, and I think they are some of the true warriors in the fight for better environmental protection.

I want to draw the attention of honourable members to the work on the environment being done by Carmen Lawrence at the University of Western Australia. I commend her chapter in the book *Destroying the Joint*; it is about a very important aspect of environmentalism that I think has been lost in recent years. I think the leadership of the environment movement would do well to go to that chapter and reacquaint themselves with some of the basic politics involved in waging environmental battles.

This is just my take on what Carmen Lawrence is saying, so I recommend that people read the actual paper she has written. I think for me the value of what Carmen has done is that she has reintroduced the notion of class into the environment debate. Her basic argument is that the destruction of the environment, by which she means access to clean water and unpolluted air—that kind of environmental destruction—affects some people in our society more than it affects others, and that we should care about it, because it actually matters, and as political activists we should be engaging on it. The basic point I take from that is that the wealthy will always be able to overcome environmental destruction. For example, if some of the holiday islands around the world are destroyed by climate change, people with access to money and resources will always be able to find another beautiful place to go for their holidays, but people with less access to wealth and resources will not. So, I say again that the destruction of the environment affects some people in our society more than others, and that it actually matters.

When Carmen talks about class, I think we can interpret that in the modern Labor framework in terms of two things. The first is security and the second is equality. Those two key concepts, I think, shape the modern Labor agenda. We need go no further than the Western Australian Council of Social Service cost-of-living report 2012 to see how unequal Western Australian society has become, particularly in the last five years or six years. Inequality is having a marked effect on the quality of our society. Here is one of the raw facts from that cost-of-living report: households with the lowest net worth—the lowest 20 per cent—make up one per cent of total



household net worth. If we go to the other end of the scale, we find that the households with the highest 20 per cent—in other words, the wealthiest 20 per cent of households—make up 62 per cent of the total household net worth. That means many, many more people are clustered around that high end of the income scale than there are around the lower end, and the gap is widening.

As Hon Alanna Clohesy said in her speech last night, the gender pay gap in Western Australia is spectacularly wide. Against an Australia-wide average of 17.6 per cent, Western Australia has a gap of 27.7 per cent. That matters, and the thing that worries me is that some people—not all; I do not mean to imply, by omitting some names, that I am including everybody in this—away from the grassroots of the environment movement have forgotten about those priorities. In the past few years, we have tended to see things that amount to, at best, half-truths, at worst outright lies, being used to advance the case for a kind of environmentalism that, to me, has sinister overtones of a very, very old-fashioned sort of racism—a racism that borders on the old colonialism. I mean that in the intellectual sense as well as in the old-fashioned sense of that kind of double standard. The crudest way of expressing this would be in terms of “what is okay for me is not okay for you”. I think nowhere have we seen that played out in starker relief than in the Kimberley. The rifts that now beset the Broome community have been driven, at least to some extent, by the activities of some people in the environment movement who have had more regard for their own positions than they have for those basic principles I have outlined of equality and security for people who are less well-off. I think what we get to in those debates is dangerously close to a kind of old-fashioned lifeboat ethics or spaceship ethics, as it is sometimes called, which means that the privileged people are inside the lifeboats, pushing out the people who are trying to climb on. I think that is a very serious and sinister development in the environment movement, and I urge people who care about these things to make their views known. Care for the environment needs to grow out of a fundamental love and respect for our fellow human beings. If we lose sight of that, then I think we have lost a very important part of what the environmental movement has as its main strength.

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary)** [2.08 pm]: I also rise to support the motion moved by Hon Liz Behjat in response to the excellent address by His Excellency Malcolm McCusker at the opening of Parliament. Like other members, I recognise the significant contribution His Excellency makes as Governor of this state.

In rising today I am conscious that this is the first time I have had the opportunity to speak at some length since the new parliamentary term for the Legislative Council commenced. In that regard, I add my welcome to all new members, while at the same time acknowledging those who departed on 21 May. I want to particularly acknowledge our two new Liberal members, Hon Peter Katsambanis and Hon Mark Lewis, both of whom I have known for a number of years. Indeed, having first met Hon Peter Katsambanis when he was a Victorian member of Parliament and I was a Liberal student attending an Australian Liberal Students’ Federation conference many years ago, we are perhaps equally surprised that we have ended up in this place at the same time.

In recognising our new members, I also want to pay particular tribute to one member who is no longer sitting in this house. I think that certainly members on this side and those on the other side, although they might not say it, would also agree that it is somewhat strange that Hon Norman Moore is not here. Every member in this house, with the exception of the new members, has not known this place without him. I always had enormous respect for Hon Norman Moore long before entering this place. For those like me who come from the Liberal student fold, he is the hero who had the determination and commitment to introduce full voluntary student unionism here in this state. In fact, he is the only state minister across Australia who has ever introduced full VSU—something of which he should be enormously proud.

Government members: Hear, hear!

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Hearing those “hear, hears” behind me, I know that everyone is enormously proud of that achievement.

But, as we know, his career was much, much more than that. He and I perhaps worked closest when he was the Minister for Mines and Petroleum and I was the Minister for Environment. I hope he will not mind me saying this, but I recall that when he called me to congratulate me on my appointment back in 2008, he said something along the lines of, “You do realise, Donna, that this probably means we won’t always agree on things.” I have to say there may have been a couple of occasions when that was the case. But, in saying that, I would like to think that we had a very good working relationship. I know that I will miss his advice, guidance and support, and I know that other members share that same thought.

Turning to the election, I congratulate the Premier on the government’s re-election. Most importantly, I thank the East Metropolitan Region community for once again electing me to serve it in this place for another term. I also want to congratulate our two newest Liberal members in the region: the member for Forrestfield, Nathan Morton, and the member for Belmont, Glenys Godfrey, who I know will make an enormous contribution over the next four years. I also want to acknowledge the exceptional work undertaken by all of our hardworking



candidates, their campaign teams and our volunteers. These candidates represented our party incredibly well in both lower house seats, as did the three other members on the East Metropolitan Region ticket, in both the lead-up to and throughout the election.

I have said this many times in this place: the East Metropolitan Region forms a very special part of Western Australia, and I am delighted with the many projects that have been completed, are underway or have been committed to across the region. I want to highlight a couple of those commitments made prior to the election that I believe will make a huge difference once completed. The first is the proposed overpass over Reid Highway at Malaga Drive. I know that was the subject of some media comment yesterday. As a regular visitor to Ballajura, I have to say that this is an intersection that I travel through very regularly. It is always congested and very dangerous. I think one survey—it might have been done by *The West Australian* or the RAC—indicated that it could take up to 17 minutes for a motorist to be able to cross the intersection, and between 2000 and 2010, there were nearly 400 crashes, with 16 people seriously injured. Once completed, I would like to think that it will significantly improve safety and traffic flow for motorists heading into Malaga and Ballajura.

The other commitment relates to Gngangara Road. Much like the need for the overpass at Malaga Drive, the need to complete the dualling of Gngangara Road is also well known. Traffic volumes currently exceed 25 000 vehicles a day, with around 300 crashes reported in the past five years. Gngangara Road is a significant transport link in the eastern corridor, so, as a local member, I am particularly pleased that with an injection of \$14 million, we will see the remaining 7.9 kilometres dualled. I am also particularly pleased that the transport minister and the City of Swan heard the concerns raised by residents and by me about the need to make safety improvements at the intersection of Beechboro Road and Gngangara Road and that this will be fixed as part of the overall upgrade.

While talking about roads, I also would like to thank Minister Buswell and the City of Swan for undertaking some important road upgrades during the summer school holidays to help improve safety for students, parents and teachers who attend and work at Riverlands Montessori School in Dayton. Last year, I took up the school's fight to improve safety after the school's principal, Ineke Oliver, sent out a press release asking for help. We got a petition running, which was sent to both the minister and the city, and I was really pleased when Minister Buswell and the CEO of the City of Swan, Mike Foley, visited the site to see firsthand the situation that was being faced on a daily basis by parents and teachers. Essentially, at the main entry point to the school, the intersection of Lord and Harrow Streets, there was neither a turning lane nor signs to alert drivers either on approach to or at the intersection. Regular users of Lord Street would know that it is a particularly busy road, with many trucks travelling along it on a daily basis, along with, obviously, a significant number of residents who travel to and from Ellenbrook and surrounding areas. Cars were inevitably banking up behind each other, waiting for a break in the traffic to turn into Harrow Street, and as there were no turning or slip lanes, there had been numerous rear-end collisions and near misses.

After the visit on site, some significant improvements did occur. These improvements included the localised widening of the northbound carriageway of Lord Street, allowing traffic to overtake vehicles turning right into Harrow Street, and the creation of a second school access point through the opening of the cul-de-sacs on Cranleigh and Arthur Streets. Main Roads also installed "side junction ahead" warning signs on Lord Street to alert drivers of the upcoming intersection. These are good improvements. I know that the school community has really welcomed them, and that was certainly reiterated to me when I recently visited this lovely little school to open some new classrooms.

It would also be very remiss of me if I did not mention one particular school and its opening that occurred at the start of the school year. Members who have been in this place for some time—I know Hon Helen Morton mentioned this in her contribution a couple of weeks ago—would know that I have raised on numerous occasions matters surrounding Governor Stirling Senior High School in Woodbridge. While I do not intend to canvass the plethora of problems that were evident at the old school, it is fair to say that what the students and teachers had to endure for far too long was nothing short of a disgrace. In my eight years in this place, I have never seen a school that had been left to rot as it had been. To know where it had come from and where it is now, and to know that the students of Governor Stirling have the opportunity to now learn in a state-of-the-art school, with all the facilities and resources that they deserve and need, is nothing short of fantastic. I want to particularly congratulate, obviously, the government for ensuring that the school was built. At \$63 million, it is money very, very well spent. But I also want to acknowledge and recognise the parents, particularly Graham Lane, who is chairman of the school council, and others whose children in some cases have now already left the school and have not been able to enjoy the benefit of it, but I had the pleasure of working with them for a number of years. In my view, these men and women are the ones who deserve particular recognition for their determination and commitment to see that that school was fixed for the betterment of their children and for future students who attend the school.

In turning to some other areas, I would also like to spend a little time today talking about early education and intervention—an area that I have always taken a particular interest in. I think that we would all agree that every



child deserves the best possible start in life. Unfortunately, however, this does not happen for all children, and that can occur for a variety of reasons. The recent release of data from the Australian Early Development Index provides some interesting reading. In 2012, the AEDI collected data from almost 290 000 children in their first year of full-time schooling in the government and non-government sectors. Although the results show the majority of students were progressing well, it identified that around one in five were—I use AEDI’s terminology—developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains. Those domains include physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge. It is for this reason that the government’s decision to establish a number of child and parent centres across Western Australia, and the equally important decision to increase the number of child health nurses and school health nurses, is to be applauded. Once established, these centres will deliver a range of vital services for families and their young children, whether that be parenting workshops, child and maternal health services, playgroups, early learning programs, counselling or family support. Similar centres operate in other parts of Australia and overseas. I recall a visit to Canada in 2007, where I learnt much about Toronto First Duty, a program based on the work of the late Fraser Mustard—we heard a lot about him and the work he did when Hon Barbara Scott was in this place. Albeit not exactly the same as that proposed in this state, Toronto First Duty has the overarching aim of providing an integrated program for development in the early years, parental support and resource sharing.

To complement this initiative, I am also pleased that during the election the Premier announced that the number of full-time school nurses would also increase. These nurses will provide, and already do, important health services to Western Australian students including health assessments and the delivery of health education and promotion strategies within school communities. A key part of this initiative is aimed at ensuring that all children have an entry level assessment that focuses on vision, hearing, speech, fine and gross motor skills, language development and social adjustment. These nurses, along with child health nurses, play a critical role in identifying and helping to detect potential or actual health or developmental issues early in a child’s life, so additional funding to this area of health is particularly welcome.

In talking about these initiatives, my point of view is, however, that the government can do only so much and, at the end of the day, it is the influence of parents, caregivers and immediate family members that has the greatest impact on a child’s development. I do not think that anyone would disagree with that. I was looking at some work by the late Fraser Mustard and I will quote from a report written by him along with Hon Margaret McCain and Dr Stuart Shanker, whom I met in Canada. The report states —

Primary caregivers, usually parents, are crucial in providing the early stimulation that drives the function of the neural pathways. The quality of experience or sensing stimulation with adults, (particularly parents or other primary caregivers) and other children in the very early years of life has a major effect on neuron function and brain development.

Further

down it states —

When an infant is involved in a continuous flow of back-and-forth communication in the exchange of sensory stimulation, —

Which involves sound, vision, smell, touch and taste —

she is constantly sampling subtle variations in her environment.

In this vein I will also read part of a very good opinion piece that was written by Julie Hosking and appeared in *The West Australian* on 18 December 2012. It talks about the importance of reading to children. In part, it states —

... I’m uneasy when someone tells me they don’t like reading, more so if I visit a home with shelves bereft of books. It’s like walking into a gallery without art. Something fundamental is missing.

The fact is a frightening number of people in our so-called First World nation can’t read properly so that joy is lost to them.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, almost half of the population doesn’t have the literacy skills to function properly in society—they find it difficult to read the paper, follow a recipe or work out basic instructions on medicine bottles.

As the National Year of Reading draws to a close, you have to wonder whether we’re doing enough to turn the tide.



In an assessment of primary school reading, released by the Australian Council for Educational Research this month, a quarter of Australian Year 4 students failed to reach minimum literacy standards.

As literacy is the toolkit for learning almost anything, it is no surprise our kids were also stagnating in science and maths.

The most damning aspect of this report was the survey results of the parents of these same students—almost 40 per cent said their children had poor literacy skills before they started school.

Not something we can blame on teachers, then.

I'm not a fan of drilling letters and words into children with flash cards in the hope a genius will emerge before kindy. After all, who wants a child smarter than them?

But if we want our kids to learn to read and write without too much anxiety, it's up to parents, not schools, to set them on that path. We need to first instil in them a love of language.

While the mere announcement of pregnancy unleashes an avalanche of advice, one piece struck home: "Read to your baby. It doesn't matter that he doesn't understand, he'll love the noise, the rhythm, the sound of your voice."

By the time my son was born, —

This is Julie Hosking, not me —

I already had a little library for him. We'd snuggle on the rocking chair each night and, while there were some evenings when he'd rather have been chewing the book than listening to it, he grew to love that time together.

By two, he could recite the words of Lynley Dodd's *Hairy Maclary* from Donaldson's *Dairy*—not because he was a child genius but because those clever rhymes were as familiar to him as the Thomas the Tank Engine theme tune. He wanted to hear them *ad nauseam*.

**Hon Kate Doust:** I think most parents can recite *Hairy Maclary* books by heart.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Unlike Julie Hosking's son, we have not got *Hairy Maclary* books yet but my husband and I —

**Hon Kate Doust:** I can give the member the full set if she likes.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Really? My daughter would really appreciate that. My husband and I have read to my daughter Clare from the very first days of her life. In fact, the first card with her name on it was a library card. Although she obviously cannot read yet —

**Hon Peter Collier:** What?

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Well she is only two. Like Julie Hosking's son she has a couple of favourite books that she knows so well she can now essentially recite the story simply by looking at the pictures and knowing how the rhyme goes. Although *Hairy Maclary* is not part of it just yet, it is fair to say that Mem Fox's *Where is the Green Sheep?* and *Shoes from Grandpa* are certainly well read in our household.

There are a variety of reasons why children might not be read to. Perhaps, as was mentioned in the article in *The West Australian*, parents have their own difficulties with respect to literacy and numeracy. Unfortunately, others might not be interested or they might not realise the importance of it. It is for that reason that I want to congratulate the State Library of Western Australia on its Better Beginnings program. Members might not be aware that in most libraries each week there is a rhyme time and story time, both of which are free and parents and carers can take their children along. Its aim is to support parents in reading to their children so that they can build the early literacy skills that their children need to help them become good readers and to succeed at school, and it has proven to be a great success.

I was looking on the Better Beginnings website yesterday and noted that some work and research was undertaken by Edith Cowan University that independently looked at and evaluated the program. At first glance, members might wonder if this program really does have an effect; well, it does. In terms of a couple of the statistics, 85 per cent of the mothers surveyed reported that they read to their child after receiving the Better Beginnings reading pack. Only 14 per cent of these mothers reported having read to their child beforehand. After being involved in Better Beginnings 62 per cent of mothers reported that their confidence in sharing books with their children had increased. Of those surveyed 79 per cent reported that Better Beginnings had influenced their belief in the importance of sharing books with their children. The average number of books in the home suitable for reading to children increased from 15 to 49, and 23 per cent of parents took out library membership for their children. That was an initial report. A follow-up study done in 2010 showed that Better Beginnings was



continuing to have a positive impact on early literacy practices and helped parents establish a range of strategies to ensure that their children were being read to, which assisted them in their future literacy and numeracy development.

My only suggestion, and I will be writing to the Minister for Culture and the Arts about the program, will be that it would be beneficial that information on the program be included in the parent pack given to all mothers when they are in hospital. Although my daughter has gone to rhyme time since she was born, I only found out about it through a friend, otherwise I would never have known about it.

I raise two other matters not directly related to His Excellency's address, but I think there is enough leniency to address them in my comments today. The first relates to the sudden passing of the former director general of the Department of Environment and Conservation, Mr Keiran McNamara, who passed away after a short battle with a terminal illness earlier this year. Keiran and I worked closely together for nearly two and a half years when I was environment minister. I consistently saw his ability to work through difficult and at times controversial and sensitive issues. He had an enormous intellect and excellent memory of everything. He led the Department of Conservation and Land Management and then the Department of Environment and Conservation from 2001 to 2013. He had a lifetime career in conservation at both the state and federal levels, and he was dedicated to protecting and preserving the environment. Anyone who attended Keiran's funeral would have thought, much like me, that the hundreds of people in attendance was testament to the high regard in which he was held.

Finally, I want to mention our health system, a system I have come to know quite well over the past few months. We in WA are fortunate. I know that members of Parliament can tend to focus on the negatives when something goes wrong. While it is incredibly important that we raise the issues and the challenges that the system faces with requests that improvements be made and mistakes do not happen again, it is equally important however that when things go right that we also acknowledge this. As members in this place, we are fortunate to be able to do that in a more public way than others.

Members will know that towards the end of last year I had to take some unexpected leave from Parliament. While I do not intend to go through all of the detail, it is fair to say that just after announcing the happy news of my second pregnancy, what was deemed to be a low-risk pregnancy became high risk overnight. At around 15 or 16 weeks, at a time when you think the greatest risk is over, a significant problem arose. The membrane around my baby had prematurely ruptured, a very rare condition affecting about only one per cent of pregnancies. It carried with it an almost inevitable outcome: that the baby would probably arrive too early to survive. I also knew that irrespective of how long I carried the baby other complications were possible and that perhaps its tiny lungs would not sufficiently develop. That is not news any expectant mother wants to hear. But armed with that news, I did the same as any other expectant mother would do: I did exactly what the doctors told me; I prayed a lot, and my family and friends did the same. I want to thank members on both sides of the house for their well wishes and thoughts throughout that time. It was very much appreciated.

Despite the odds against us, including hospital stays and near-misses, perhaps by a sheer miracle my little boy held on. I am telling this story today not because I think that everyone wants to hear it, but because throughout those very difficult times I met some amazing people in our health system, medical professionals and their teams both in and out of the two hospitals that I spent time in, who provide incredible care and support to people like me every day. These men and women helped my family get through probably the toughest situation we have faced. Today I simply want to say thank you to the wonderful midwives and nurses at St John of God Hospital, Subiaco, and King Edward Memorial Hospital where Harry was finally born. I want to thank my obstetrician and I want to extend a very special thank you to Associate Professor Craig Pennell who took primary care of Harry and me during the majority of the pregnancy. I hope he does not mind my mentioning him in this place. He and his wonderful team, which includes Dr Seonaid Mulroy, a fellow Perth College old girl, Jan, Karen, Sam and Jess, gave my husband and I hope every week. I am so very thankful that I was placed in his care, and I am so thankful, on behalf of the many women and families who are faced with similar situations as I, that we are blessed to have some truly wonderful people in our health system in Western Australia, because they are very special indeed.

I do not often get upset about these things, but I did today. With all of that in mind, I very much look forward to the next four years. There are a number of exciting things happening both in the East Metropolitan Region and the entire Western Australian community. I am honoured to be able to continue my role in this place and I once again thank the East Metropolitan community for placing their trust in me and my colleagues for another term.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Peter Collier (Leader of the House)**.