



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

## **INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Hon Alan Cadby, MLC**  
**(North Metropolitan Region)**

**Address-in-Reply Debate**

**Legislative Council, Thursday 24 May 2001**



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### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

#### *Motion*

**HON ALAN CADBY** (North Metropolitan) [4.36 pm]: It is a great honour to stand before the House to give my first speech. The people of Western Australia have given me the opportunity to represent them in this place and I acknowledge and accept the responsibility and challenges that I will face in the life of this Parliament. I also wish to acknowledge my predecessor Hon Max Evans, who has a magnificent analytical mind and the ability to understand fully the finances of Government. He will surely be missed by this place.

### BEGINNING OF MY CAREER

I wish to spend some time giving a brief sketch of my history, as I believe one's experiences shape one's personality and beliefs. I was brought up in the industrial city of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, where my family has been involved in the ownership of small business for many generations. As it turned out I was the first of my family to consider life outside the business environment, and consider a career in the educational sphere. After completing my tertiary studies I was offered a teaching position in a secondary school in Sandwell, in the Northwest Midlands, which had over 2 000 students from various cultural backgrounds. The school was designated an educational priority school. Most of the students were disadvantaged and violence was endemic in the school and surrounding areas. It was a tough place for a 21-year-old to start his career. However, I can say in complete honesty that it was a tremendous place to work and the teachers and students I met and grew to know have helped shape the person I am today.

Despite the students' disadvantages there were many notable success stories from the school. These successes were due to talent and family support, but the main ingredient was the dedication of a number of very committed teachers. Two students in particular became important role models to their peers. Dipak Patel was a young man who succeeded in playing first class cricket for Worcestershire and eventually played test cricket for New Zealand in 37 tests and 75 one-day internationals. The other boy of note was Ivor Linton, who played professional soccer for Aston Villa, and in 1982 played for them in the final of the European Cup. I am pleased to say that he played on the winning side, as it was my team.

### CHOOSING TO LIVE IN AUSTRALIA

After a rewarding couple of years teaching at Sandwell, my wife Susan and I decided it was time to see more of the world. As we were both teachers at a time when there was a shortage of teachers, we had many countries to choose from.

Two advertisements out of the many appearing in the paper caught our attention. The first one read, "Are you ready for the moose country?" It was from Nova Scotia in Canada. It was desperately looking for teachers. Married teaching couples were particularly welcome. The advertisement was attractive, offering good salary, postgraduate opportunities, free health care and accommodation. I also have a memory of a log hut and other incentives that were difficult not to take note of. This included in small print an added incentive of dubious attraction; it was an extra \$1 000 on top of the salary of around \$4 500 and was known as loneliness money. The other advertisement had a picture of a teacher wearing a mortarboard and an academic gown, holding a textbook, wearing his bathers under the gown with his feet in the ocean with the heading, "Come and Teach in the Sun, come to New South Wales". In the end it was not a difficult decision to make, particularly compared with the vision I had of living in an igloo in the freezing cold, wrapped up in furs with only my wife and the moose for company. The alternative was the opportunity of teaching only a stone's throw from the shores of the Pacific Ocean in more casual attire. As it turned out, when we arrived in New South Wales we taught in the Mt Druitt area, which was at least a two-hour drive from the ocean.

So we arrived in Australia from the United Kingdom in 1971. In those thirty years we have lived in three States: New South Wales, and Victoria on two occasions, and in July 1978 we finally arrived in Western Australia.

### **31 YEARS AS AN EDUCATOR**

I was a teacher for 31 years. Whilst it may sound an unexciting life, I have been very fortunate to have had many different mini careers in that time. As a result of my experience I am sure it will not be a surprise to anyone in this House to hear that education is a major theme of my speech. However, I will not be talking in generalities full of motherhood statements, but on three specific areas, as this may be my only opportunity to raise these issues in this place.

For background purposes I will give a brief summary of my career to date. I have taught in the United Kingdom, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. I have taught in government and in non-government schools, non-denominational, Catholic and Anglican schools, boys only, girls only and coeducational environments. My responsibilities have included being a teacher of mathematics, housemaster, sports master, head of department, director of technology and director of curriculum. My last teaching position was at Hale School as head of mathematics, which I can assure members was a different experience from my time at my first school.

In addition to my classroom and school responsibilities I was involved in the professional development of teachers in both mathematics and the application of technology such as computers, graphic calculators and data-logging devices across a number of subjects within the curriculum. In this role I have presented workshops and seminars in all mainland States of Australia, overseas in India, Singapore, Malaysia and, last year as my swan song, China. I have also been a consultant to the Curriculum Council of Western Australia, the Education Department of Western Australia, the Mathematical Association of Western Australia, the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers, the National Council of Independent Schools, Curtin University of Technology, Beijing University, Toshiba (Australia) Pty Ltd and Hewlett-Packard Australia Ltd. That was not all in the same year.

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN WA EDUCATION**

As members have gathered, I have a passion for education in all these aspects, whether it be at school level, tertiary level or as a pursuit for developing skills and knowledge for occupational or recreational reasons. I hope that in my time in this place I can be a strong advocate for education. As someone committed to the improvement of education in Western Australia, I

shall be watching with interest the recent and proposed initiatives regarding education in our State. I am speaking, in the first instance, about the curriculum framework and, in the second, about the review of post-compulsory education. With both of these initiatives, we must ensure that the necessary resources and support are provided to ensure that our teachers are able to implement the required changes. The provision of such resources and support must be evident at the classroom level.

The Government has stated it is committed to addressing the imbalances that exist in our society. I hope in the context of education this does not mean the Government will be striving for an equality of mediocrity rather than for individual excellence.

#### **CONCERNS WITH THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN YEARS 11 AND 12**

In looking on the Internet at submissions on post-compulsory education received so far by the Curriculum Council, it seems there is considerable concern over the suggestion that study of a course in English will no longer be compulsory for school graduation or as a measure of literacy. In his speech when opening this session of Parliament on Tuesday, 1 May, His Excellency, the Governor, stated that an improvement in literacy was a priority of this Government. Although I understand that literacy is broader than completing a course in English and that there are many forms of literacy, it seems to me and others that the study of English is fundamental to reaching a high level of literacy. In our current scheme there are five choices within the domain of English, namely TEE English, TEE literature, senior English, English as a second language and vocational English. Each subject is aimed at different cohorts to meet their individual needs.

It has been proposed that these five courses be squeezed into two subjects. Many schools, including Perth Modern School in its submission to the post-compulsory review, have indicated they are concerned with the implications of such a move. In addition, representatives of English teachers from the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia indicated in their submission they were of the view that English should be a compulsory subject. They go on to say that in their view a valid definition of literacy is provided within the English outcome statement and when implemented enables students to obtain high standards of cultural and critical literacy. It is clear from the many submissions lodged by various institutions and organisations that there is a major concern with the proposal to downgrade the value of English. I am certain the general community will have the expectation that English should be compulsory and be taught by specialist teachers with the necessary skills to competently teach the subject.

#### **THE FUTURE FOR MATHEMATICS TEACHING/LEARNING IN WA**

In his speech, His Excellency said -

Lifting the education standards in our schools is another key objective of the Government. As part of achieving this, 200 specialist literacy and numeracy teachers will be recruited and there will be an increased focus on information technology.

As I outlined earlier, I have considerable knowledge of and experience with both numeracy and technology in the education environment. Although I applaud the sentiment of this statement concerning numeracy, I wonder how realistic the Minister for Education is in his endeavours. How can we recruit, say, 50 extra numeracy experts when it has been acknowledged for many years there is a worldwide shortage of teachers of mathematics? The demand for specialist mathematics teachers is outstripping our meagre supply, and those we do have in Western Australia are being poached by other States and by the United Kingdom.

Does the minister also promise to replace the many teachers teaching mathematics in our schools who are not qualified sufficiently to teach mathematics? Some have studied mathematics themselves only up to the year 10 level. A couple of years ago I was involved in a retraining program run by the Education Department involving 25 primary teachers wishing to

become secondary mathematics teachers. The course lasted for 10 weeks and cost about \$500 000. In many respects the course was very successful, with only three teachers not being placed in schools through their own rejection of offers to teach in the country. However, the main reason for its success was the total immersion of those teachers in mathematics, with a focus on pedagogy. The designer of the program, Dr Thelma Perso, should be congratulated on the innovative approach of using practising teachers from various backgrounds to lead the teachers through particular curriculum areas with a “how to teach” theme. However, I doubt that even those attending the course would be comfortable if they were classified as numeracy experts. I therefore ask: where are the numeracy experts going to come from?

To add to the problem facing our schools, the average age of mathematics teachers in our schools is around 48. I think that is quite young. However, in a few years large numbers of teachers will be leaving the profession. Who will replace them? What can we offer to keep the good ones in the classroom? More importantly, how can we attract young, talented people to enter the teaching profession when their salaries are far below those of other professions needing mathematical ability? To alleviate the shortage of teachers in subjects such as physics, mathematics and technology, newly arrived migrants, whose cultural backgrounds are quite different from ours, are being placed into our schools without an induction program. In some instances their teaching methods differ considerably from accepted practices followed in this State. This has had a major effect on student achievement and teacher welfare. It is causing great heartache to schools and is not serving the needs of the students. If the Education Department were questioned on the shortages, it might not acknowledge the crisis, as it is my experience that it focuses more on quantity than on quality. In fact, I have received the response many times that all mathematics classes have a teacher, but the Education Department is more hesitant in answering questions about the quality of those teachers. If the Government is serious about improving educational standards, rather than dumping some of our new migrant teachers straight into the school situation, it should put them through an immersion program similar to the retraining program for primary school teachers, which I mentioned earlier, with a focus on our accepted pedagogy.

Members may be interested to know that on my recent trip to India I gained the impression that mathematics education was a priority at all school levels, and there was substantial encouragement for mathematics teachers to improve their general teaching skills. This may be a major reason for the world’s thirst for mathematicians and computer programmers from India. Certainly, their reputation in the world of computer programming is without peer. My experience leaves me with an impression that in Western Australia, and in Australia as a whole, mathematics education does not have a high priority. To my mind, we shall never be able to take our place in this high-tech revolution and share in its related employment opportunities unless a considerable change in attitude occurs.

#### **TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

On the topic of technology, in 1994 I presented a paper in Sydney to principals at the conference of the National Council of Independent Schools’ Association. The title of the paper was “Computers in the Classroom: Implications for the in-servicing of teachers”. In the paper I explored strategies for the incorporation of technology into our schools. I raise this topic today to remind the Government that the placement of computers in schools is an easy task. The most difficult and ignored task is formulating an in-service program for teachers that will give them the confidence and skills to use the technology in a worthwhile manner. Research has shown that successful implementation changes will not usually serve their purpose unless the initial drive behind them continues. Sustained change is a process and depends on innovations being embedded or built into the structure until they are part of the school’s natural behaviour. This is not just in terms of policy, budget or staffing, but also through procedures to pass innovations on to those who will be involved in the future. Persistence is a critical attribute of successful

change, and this cannot be achieved without substantial investment at the place of delivery; that is, teachers need to see and value the change to a more technological focus at the classroom level, and the support for teachers must be an ongoing process.

My experience suggests that any program must be planned in a holistic way, taking into account the individual school, curriculum area, teachers, students and the context. There is no blanket program that can be bought off the shelf to suit all circumstances. It is clear to me that individual schools need to take more responsibility for their own in-service programs. I am pleased that the recent Auditor General's report "On-line and Length?", which members received yesterday, reflects the same findings that appeared in my paper, with many recommendations on the need to focus on pedagogy rather than quotas and the need for an increase in the importance we place on the professional development of teachers.

In summary, I am concerned that, once again, our teachers will be asked to go through a number of substantial changes, in both pedagogy and curriculum organisation, without the time to assimilate and implement these changes into the teaching and learning process. Far too often what sounds good on paper never gets to the application stage in the classroom due to substantial under-funding of professional development and a critical lack of time.

#### **WHY I VALUE EDUCATION**

In concluding my comments on education, I will state why I feel so strongly about education and its importance in improving our society. It is a general belief that most personalities have already been developed by the time students leave school. It has already been determined by then whether each individual will be engaged with life, looking outwards with optimism and ambition, and be aware of his or her responsibilities as a citizen of this great nation, or whether he or she will be disaffected, disillusioned, introspective and a lifelong burden on the system. Obviously parents have a huge influence on this, but so do schools. How will we fund our welfare system if we fail to encourage the taxpayers of tomorrow to lead productive and fulfilling lives? How will we meet our responsibilities towards promoting family values and wholesome priorities if our schools are not given the confidence and backing to adopt with enthusiasm their new role in the area of personal development?

#### **THANK YOU**

In conclusion, I take the opportunity to thank my wife Susan for her total support in my endeavours and for her contribution to my successes. She has taken on the major responsibility of raising our three children Matthew, Daniel and Gemma, in addition to her own career in the areas of teaching, retail sales and, more recently, in the public service. I am truly amazed by her organisational skills, stamina, work output and total commitment to the love of our family. I also acknowledge the support and encouragement I have received from Rob and Sue Johnson, Ted Dickinson and Ian Goodenough.

Finally, I acknowledge the contribution of Liberal Party members in making it possible for me to be here today to represent the electorate of the North Metropolitan Region. Mr President and members, I thank you all for your indulgence and I look forward to the next four years with considerable humility and, dare I say it, a touch of excitement, which members can probably hear in my voice.

[Applause.]

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