

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ELECTIONS) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS (NO 2) 2005, DISALLOWANCE

Notice of Motion

HON RAY HALLIGAN (North Metropolitan) [7.37 pm]: Mr President, I also offer my congratulations on your elevation to the exalted position of President of this house. I seek leave to give a notice of motion.

Leave granted.

Hon RAY HALLIGAN: I give notice that at the next sitting of the house I will move -

That the Local Government (Elections) Amendment Regulation (No 2) 2005 published in the *Government Gazette* on 18 March 2005 and tabled in the Legislative Council on 5 April 2005 under the Local Government Act 1995 be and is hereby disallowed.

SHIRE OF NORTHAM EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES LOCAL LAW 2004, DISALLOWANCE

Notice of Motion

Hon Ray Halligan, by leave, gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move -

That the Shire of Northam Extractive Industries Local Law 2004 published in the *Government Gazette* on 8 February 2005 and tabled in the Legislative Council on 5 April 2005 under the Local Government Act 1995 be and is hereby disallowed.

CLAUSE 3.4 OF THE CITY OF ALBANY JETTIES, BRIDGES AND BOAT PENS LOCAL LAW 2004, DISALLOWANCE

Notice of Motion

Hon Ray Halligan, by leave, gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move -

That clause 3.4 of the City of Albany Jetties, Bridges and Boat Pens Local Law 2004 published in the *Government Gazette* on 31 January 2005 and tabled in the Legislative Council on 5 April 2005 under the Local Government Act 1995 be and is hereby disallowed.

CLAUSE 4.9 OF THE CITY OF COCKBURN LOCAL LAW RELATING TO STANDING ORDERS, DISALLOWANCE

Notice of Motion

Hon Ray Halligan, by leave, gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move -

That clause 4.9 of the City of Cockburn Local Law Relating to Standing Orders published in the *Government Gazette* on 28 January 2005 and tabled in the Legislative Council on 5 April 2005 under the Local Government Act 1995 be and is hereby disallowed.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS CODE OF PRACTICE 2004, DISALLOWANCE

Notice of Motion

Hon Giz Watson, by leave, gave notice that at the next sitting of the house she would move -

That the Nurse Practitioners Code of Practice 2004 published in the *Government Gazette* on 11 January 2005 and tabled in the Legislative Council on 5 April 2005, under the Nurses Act 1992, be and is hereby disallowed.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 19 May.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call on Hon Sally Talbot, order of the day 1 is the Address-in-Reply. This will be the honourable member's inaugural speech, so the usual courtesies, according to the customs of the house, apply.

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [7.40 pm]: As I rise to introduce myself to the house, I must start by congratulating you, Mr President, on your election. Both you and I have inherited a bar set very high. John Cowdell will be a hard act to follow both as President and as member for the South West Region. John represented the diversity of interests in Peel, the south west and the great southern with the dedication and skill those communities now rightly expect from their member of the Legislative Council. He has also of course been a fine President for the past four years. Many of the changes he has made around this place will be a lasting tribute to the first Labor parliamentarian to hold that office. There is one big difference between us, though, Mr President. Your experience and your proven ease with the customs and practices of this place lend all your actions an authority that make you a fitting successor to John. I still have to find my place in the scheme of things, but I know I can look to you for help and advice in making my way in this new world.

There are lots of different traditions and expectations relating to first speeches by new members of Parliament. Historically, some chambers have expected new members to sit quietly for years as a mark of respect to their elders and betters. Others prefer that new members wait to speak until they can address a piece of legislation that particularly interests them. Within the living memory of this chamber, new members were rostered to speak on whatever matter came up on the notice paper, which led to one unfortunate person having to frame his first speech in terms of the onion bill. Our modern tradition, however, is to allow new members of Parliament some leeway to introduce themselves to the Parliament and to the community of Western Australia. The idea in a first speech is to describe a moment that is both a summary of our life experience so far that leads us to take a seat in this house and a kind of launching pad for the agendas we want to pursue now that we are here. I am sure that I am not the first and I will not be the last new member to find that life does not condense quite as neatly as we thought into this kind of story. What I want to do tonight is link the “why am I here” question about agendas with an account of where I have come from and what it is I have pieced together along the way that I can bring before members today.

In one sense the “where have I come from” question has a very straightforward answer. I was born into a Labour Party family. My two grandfathers were shop stewards in their respective unions. One was a toolmaker and the other was the father of the chapel in the print union. My parents were active members of the British Labour Party before becoming virtually the only members of the local British Labour Party when my family moved to the second safest conservative electorate in the whole of Britain. From my earliest memories, our kitchen was campaign headquarters at every national and local election. My mother was the candidate, my grandfather was the campaign director and my father was the campaign manager. My three brothers and I made up the rest of the campaign team. As soon as we could write, we were sat down at the kitchen table in a production line of folding, stuffing and addressing envelopes, while weekends were spent tramping around the district’s letterboxes. My brothers and I learnt to watch mum’s face as she appeared on the town hall steps after the count, the four of us and our little band of supporters solemn among the cheering Tories. One day she came out beaming all over her face. We were sure that she had won the seat. In fact, what we celebrated was the first time that Labour had not lost its deposit in a general election.

I started to find my own feet in the Labour movement when I was 16 years of age and left school to go to the Royal College of Music in London. I got a letter from the education department congratulating me on getting a place at the college. The letter went on to note that I was too young to qualify for any financial assistance with my studies. It was the Musicians Union that came to my rescue when it not only gave me a study grant, but also made sure I got work playing in the local pier and seaside bands to help make ends meet. Thinking back, a 16-year-old cellist who had no idea how to busk a bass line to the waltz from the *Merry Widow* was probably not high on the union’s list of priorities, but I experienced my first taste of professional comradeship on these gigs and I will be forever grateful for that.

I spent about 15 years working as a musician in both the United Kingdom and Australia before getting my first chance to work directly in politics. I was already studying at university when in 1983 the Australian Labor Party won both the state and the federal elections within two weeks and I was offered a chance to go on the staff of a federal member of Parliament. As many members will remember, they were momentous years to have been involved with the ALP federally; years during which Australia came of age economically, culturally and socially. There are still contested accounts of the economic legacy of that decade. Perhaps our economic coming of age should have been tempered with a more realistic appreciation of what it is like to be one of the cogs in the deregulated wheel. Culturally and socially, however, there can be no ambivalence about measures such as the accord, Medicare and the Sex Discrimination Act. These reforms, along with many others, put a spring in the steps of Australians who wanted to see their society become more inclusive, fair and tolerant. I cannot lay claim to any direct role in implementing these measures, but there was great satisfaction in helping to keep our ships in Canning and Brand on the right course for the seven years I was part of those teams. It was during this time, and more recently working with Kim Beazley, that I got to know many of the communities in the South West Region that I now represent. Mandurah, Murray and Collie were all part of the electorate held first by Wendy Fatin and then by Kim Beazley. We worked hard to help those communities thrive and prosper, and I am very proud now to be part of a government that is committed to delivering first-rate services to the people of the south west. I should mention at this point that the recent election of Paddi Creevey and David Smith as the Mayors of Mandurah and Bunbury respectively opens up very exciting prospects for those communities, and I look forward to working with both David and Paddi to ensure that we keep moving ahead in the most constructive way possible.

My next venture took me onto the staff of Murdoch University - a path well trodden before me by certain other Labor figures in this town - where I spent the time teaching philosophy and wearing a T-shirt stating, “Please do not ask me about my thesis”. Eventually, the thesis turned itself into a book and I am here to tell members tonight that owning up to having published something called *Partial Reason: Critical and Constructive Transformations of Ethics and Epistemology* is a great conversation killer, especially when I then have to admit to being a politician.

The most recent part of my history is the only part recognised by those in the media who like to accuse the ALP of drawing on a narrow skills base to fill these benches. Following in John Cowdell’s footsteps then, as now, I was elected as Assistant State Secretary of the WA Branch of the ALP in July 2001. My past four years, in common with everyone else on this side of the house, have been spent working for the re-election of the Gallop Labor government. There can

be no doubt that this government deserves its second term. This is only partly because of the fact that, as we heard in His Excellency's speech, we delivered the essential services that governments are elected to deliver - the police, teachers, nurses, schools and hospitals, which provide the levels of safety and excellence in our health and education systems that our community deserves and expects. It is also because we delivered in our first term of government a program of social reforms that overturned some of the divisive, exclusionist practices that only Labor governments seem prepared to address. One of the most significant of these was undoubtedly the gay and lesbian law reform. The legislation went a long way towards dismantling some of the prejudice and misunderstanding that destroys families and lives when left unchecked. I look forward to being part of the Labor team in the thirty-seventh Parliament as we continue to work to make our community a place in which fairness is not reserved for those who are members of majority groups.

That is basically the story of where I have come from. When it comes to the question of why I am here, I draw on every aspect of my life experience so far to distil my answer. Once again I find that things are not quite as readily condensable as one might expect. Reading the inaugural speeches of some other members of this house, I feel quite envious of those whose professional experience and skills translate directly into a set of legislative priorities. I have a feeling that, if I start to talk about politics in terms of Plato and Aristotle or even Bach and Beethoven, some members will find the solitaire game on their laptops irresistible. Instead I will talk about why I think it can be constructive to approach the subject of agendas in a broader way than is sometimes expected.

It is a fact genuinely recognised among progressive social philosophers that we live in an age of uncertainty. The past few decades have seen the collapse of old ways of understanding communities and relationships; the collapse of old ways of making sense of the world and of the good society and of what it means to be good. Yet, as my friend Eva Cox has noted, talking about uncertainty is risky because the word itself may send a frisson of fear through people. In 1996, John Howard forecast that Australians would be relaxed and comfortable on his watch. Instead, we are captive to a toxic mixture of uncertainty and the fear it generates. It is this that gives rise to what Cox describes as the worrying social phenomena of excessive demands for order, loss of public trust, self-interest, fear of strangers, increased litigiousness and forms of fundamentalism and terrorism. Visit any electorate office, Mr President, and you will hear people giving voice to this phenomenon. They feel ripped off by banks, by governments, by drug companies, and by the providers of everything from phones to roof cladding. They are inundated by accounts of corporate greed and mismanagement and horror stories about child abuse and pollution of our air and water.

I remember listening to talkback radio in September 2001. Australians had already been shaken to the core by the collapse of Ansett when the World Trade Centre attacks happened. A young woman who had just lost her job as an Ansett employee rang the radio station sobbing. "Nothing is safe any more", she wept and everyone listening to her knew what she meant. It was as if there were an Old World order that said these things could not happen; that there were still jobs that were jobs for life; and that ordinary people could avoid direct encounters with terrorists.

The question is: how can parliaments and governments respond to this changed world? How can we, as community leaders, help people make sense of our world? I think there are at least three things we can do. First, we can make sure that we colour all our deliberations with real people. We need to make sure that when we talk of progress and of reform, we know how to measure that progress with regard to the people whose lives that progress will affect. When reform factors out real people, it plays into that preoccupation of self-interest to which I have just referred. Self-interest is the very opposite of the collective action at the heart of the labour movement. Now perhaps more than ever before politics needs to be about promoting the kind of social cohesion that increases people's feelings of security. We need collective action for the common good. If we are to provide effective representation for the real people who elect us to this place, we must resist policies that promote fear and fuel uncertainty. It is fear and uncertainty that undermine collective action and destroy people's faith that there might be a common good worth searching for.

I am not alone in noting that certain so-called reforms being talked about in the national Parliament risk increasing levels of uncertainty and distrust in our community. How does giving employers unrestricted rights to fire employees lessen people's uncertainty and fear? How does gutting the award system, abolishing the national wage case and reducing workers rights to bargain effectively over wages, entitlements and working conditions add to people's sense of security? Surely laws like these risk making life worse for working families. When political leaders lose sight of the real people they are leading, we all end up poorer in spirit. It does not have to be this way. The union movement has not lost sight of the real people it represents. In the face of threats like this, Labor governments should be using every resource they can muster to help people restore their trust in themselves, their relationships and their world.

This leads me directly to the second thing I think we can do to respond to our changed world. It is about turning threats into opportunities. In earlier times in a simpler and more certain world it was not so hard to map out what constituted progress or to measure the effects of reforms. Let us take some of the great social reform agendas of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, three momentous legal reforms relating to women meant that we were granted property rights in 1883, equal access to education from the end of the Victorian era and, in Australia, the right to vote from 1894. I am not saying that these measures were uncontroversial. We all know what a road to ruin we risked by giving women the vote! As to the right to an equal education, a group of medical doctors during Victorian times were reflecting not only popular but also royal opinion when they issued the following advice: if women have access to

education that includes studying science and maths instead of needlework, it will inhibit lactation, cause atrophy of the uterus, produce infertility and bring on nervous breakdowns. These are not opinions likely to have avoided controversy. My point is that in those days it was easier to identify what shape reform had to take and how progress could be measured.

The question about what reforms matter now is less easy to answer. The great social reforms in the past, such as those I have just mentioned, came about because of sustained collective action, and sorting out the threats from the opportunities was fairly straightforward. Sadly, too many agendas on the non-Labor side of politics promote self-interest and destroy the spirit of collective action that sustains us on the left of the political spectrum. This means that the challenge for progressive politics is to help people see that some of the things that appear to be threats might be transformed into opportunities by changes of focus or emphasis. For example, globalisation is seen as one of the biggest threats to local community identity. Yet the globalisation of our communications technologies means that people power exists on a scale never dreamt of previously. Systems that can transmit millions of computer viruses an hour can also rally thousands of people to a cause in that time. Corporations that have literally acted behind closed doors now have their dealings on virtual display 24 hours a day. Debates on the morality of corporate practices fill talkback radio shows and the letters pages of newspapers. It is often said that Paul Keating taught the community to talk economics. Perhaps it is also true that the age of uncertainty is teaching the community to talk ethics. Moving beyond self-interest means learning who can be trusted. It is a debate that every community leader, including every member in this chamber, needs to be part of.

That brings me to my third and final point about what I think we can do in this Parliament to help people make sense of the changing world. It is the novelist Ian McEwan who said that a good society is one that makes sense of being good. In other words, we are good when it makes sense. Clearly, for many people in our community, the world has stopped making sense. What used to make sense has been replaced by that toxic mixture of fear and uncertainty I talked about earlier. It is perhaps a natural reaction for people to try to reintroduce a sense of meaning in public life by emphasising things like family values and using so-called educative laws to enforce certain community standards. Instead of using the law to protect people, we want laws to control people's behaviour. In Hugh McKay's terms, we try to force people to behave in ways that were once considered the province of personal morality. That might be an understandable reaction to what I am calling the age of uncertainty, but I think it is a misuse of the power that resides in the parliamentary system. It seems to me that there are two ways we can use the power that is accorded to us as members of Parliament. We can use that power to force people to be obedient; we can regulate to bring about a climate of suspicion; we can send people back behind the barricades of self-interest by withdrawing the basic infrastructure that helps people make sense of their lives - affordable education and health services, job security and a decent level of support for people whose circumstances put them at a disadvantage. That is the assumption we have often seen operating on the non-Labor side of politics, and it is to be hoped that we do not reap the full destructive force of that approach as it takes control of both chambers of the commonwealth Parliament. However, state Labor governments both here and around the country have shown that there is another way to use the power that is given to us. It will always be my objective - I know it is an objective shared by my colleagues on this side of the house - to use whatever power I have to help people without power. Empowering people is not about forcing obedience or pretending we can regulate for human decency and care; it is about keeping the practices of government open and transparent; it is about helping people have the courage to make choices about the sort of life they want to live; it is about building relationships of trust and cooperation, where might does not necessarily make right and where freedom and fairness are not distant ideals but the web from which we weave the fabric of our public and our private lives together.

These are the thoughts that emerge from a life spent immersed in politics, playing the cello and writing philosophy. One common thread occurs to me at this point. You more than anyone in this chamber, Mr President, know that as parliamentarians we have to work long and we have to work hard to get it right. In the same way, a musician or a philosopher has to work with an intense degree of application to achieve an effect that may be almost undetectable to the uninitiated. This takes an unshakeable commitment, but one that is sustained by understanding how very great, even momentous, the effect of such application might turn out to be. As a musician and a philosopher, I have had the immense privilege of playing passages of music and explaining complex ideas in ways that made people feel their lives were richer. I know that it is possible to make a difference to people's lives by our work in this place, and my commitment to make that happen is as strong now as it ever was to play the Elgar Cello Concerto or deconstruct the categorical imperative.

I will close my first speech tonight by acknowledging some of the people who have made a difference to my life. I have already talked about the challenges involved in following in John Cowdell's footsteps. I owe John a great deal. He has been my mentor, teacher and friend for nearly 25 years. That has been a great privilege. He really did not have to bequeath 12 years of bound *Hansards* to the walls of my new office to make sure I do not forget him as he moves into his new life.

My friend Nan Plummer never stopped making me feel I was good enough to try anything. As local director of music, she gave me my first promotion as a young cellist when she put me on the front desk at the Christmas carol concert. She is my internal voice of encouragement and support to this day, and she lights up my life with true friendship even though we live on opposite sides of the world.

Without Dr Patsy Hallen I may not have ended up in this place. At a particular crossroads about 20 years ago, she was the one who reminded me that there are people in politics who care as much about changing the world as the social reformers in universities. She was right about that, as well as about so many other things. Patsy lived what she taught, and my life would have been infinitely poorer without her.

State Secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, Jock Ferguson, has not only been a tower of strength during my four years at the party office, but also shown me how to juggle dozens of competing demands while never losing sight of the need to make life better for working people. Jock is one of those leaders who inspires both respect and affection and it is a privilege to work with him. To the people of the south west who have supported me personally and politically over the years, I owe special thanks. Illya and Susan Cenin, Enid and Ian Conochie and Ursula and Will Richards in Denmark and Albany; Greg White, Roy Scaife and David and Treslyn Smith in Bunbury; and Paddi Creevey, Lyn Rodgers and John Hughes in Mandurah are just a few of the people who have made the south west feel like home over the past 20 years.

There are so many people who, in giving me their friendship, have given me more than I can ever adequately thank them for. Amongst them are Gill Lowe, who constantly strips me of any airs and graces I try to acquire; Jon Ford, whose passion for politics means we never run out of things to talk about; and Margaret Duff, who knows she will never truly be a "former" staffer.

My parents have been a constant source of loving support and encouragement. It is a joy to have them here tonight, but I will not say too much or dad will cry. To Wendy Fatin and David Talbot, I just want to say that I will always hold you closest to my heart. I hope you will continue to be as tolerant as you have been in the past when I forget to demonstrate that to you every day.

Thank you, Mr President.

[Applause.]

The PRESIDENT: Before I give the call to Hon Vincent Catania, I should point out that it is Hon Vincent Catania's inaugural speech, so the usual courtesies will apply.

HON VINCENT CATANIA (Mining and Pastoral) [8.07 pm]: Mr President, I congratulate you on your elevation to the position of President in this chamber. Having had the good fortune of working with you in your role as a minister in the Gallop government, I firmly believe you will make a significant mark in the very important position of President of the Legislative Council. I also take this opportunity to congratulate my fellow members from all sides of the chamber on their election and I look forward to working together to make this current chamber one that will be of great benefit to the people of Western Australia. I thank the Australian Labor Party for its confidence in preselecting me to become its representative in this Parliament. It is an honour to have been elected under the ALP banner, the oldest political party in Australia, with a colourful and proud history.

I was raised in a household that instilled and nurtured high moral and social values, and I carry them with me to this day. I am proud of this fact and I am proud that these values represent the cornerstones of the Australian Labor Party. I thank the people from the Mining and Pastoral Region who had the confidence to re-elect the Gallop Labor government for a second term, a government that now includes three Labor members in the Mining and Pastoral Region Legislative Council team. It is a privilege to represent the Mining and Pastoral Region, an area that is without doubt the engine room of the strong Western Australian economy. Although my family history is in and around Balcatta and North Perth, I have grown to know and appreciate the Mining and Pastoral Region through my work and other experiences.

It humbles me to be the youngest person ever elected to the Legislative Council. I am acutely aware of the many difficulties and challenges facing young people entering public life. I look forward to facing those difficulties and rising to the challenge with enthusiasm. We live in a representative democracy, and diversity should be reflected and encouraged within our parliamentary chambers. I believe that this Parliament would benefit from the further infusion of people from different age groups, different ethnic groups and different cultural backgrounds to promote their active participation in civic and public affairs.

The Mining and Pastoral Region is well known as the engine room of the Western Australian economy. As we all know, the mining industry in particular has had a major role in the development of our state. In saying that, however, the contribution of small business to the economic and social fabric and prosperity of the local area should never be understated. I am passionate about small businesses and the challenges they face, no matter where they are located within Australia. However, one thing is for sure; unfortunately, small business in regional Western Australia is no stranger to adversity. It is fair to say that it is just a bit harder to live in the bush; everything is further away, more expensive and harder to obtain. In regional Western Australia, a delicatessen cannot provide only sandwiches and choc milk. Small shops in regional Western Australia need to stock everything from hardware to cosmetics, and the owners and their staff need to have a wealth of knowledge to help local shoppers and tourists alike to obtain the goods and services they need.

Commitment to community is a core value among most residents in the country. Individuals and families who live in smaller towns in Western Australia often stay in the town they are connected with at great personal cost. They establish and run businesses that form the social and cultural fabric of their area. They provide opportunity for local growers and

producers, entertainment and a social outlet and they keep our towns alive. What they do not have is easy access to government and non-government support services, and they may struggle to obtain advocacy, professional services, banking and more. One of the functions of government must be to assist small business in a fair and open manner. Although it is not government's role to provide profit margins to business, it is government's role to ensure there are meaningful policies in place to give business a fair go. Strategies such as buy local, outreach programs for state businesses, support services and online sales and marketing facilities are examples of how government can make life easier for small business.

Although it is easier to take for granted roads, rail services, water systems and other state government-funded infrastructure, government investment in infrastructure is critical to achieving sustainable communities and enhancing their business and investment potential. The positive impact of public investment on the Mining and Pastoral Region is two pronged: it not only supports our communities but also opens them to the vast tourism potential this region holds. The opportunities for further development of tourism are limitless. Just as we harnessed raw resources in the gold rush days at the turn of the century, during the nickel and iron ore booms in the late 1960s and early 1970s and with the recent development of oil and gas resources, we have another natural resource that we can develop, promote and, at the same time, protect. There is great potential for the development of tourism infrastructure in Carnarvon so that that centre can be a base for tourists visiting Coral Bay, Ningaloo, Exmouth and other attractions in the region. We have already witnessed the success of the development of centres such as Broome and Kununurra as gateways to neighbouring areas. This success can be represented in a number of regional centres. Monkey Mia, the goldfields and many other locations within the mining and pastoral area are historical and tourist icons to Western Australians. We should invite the world, not to mention our mates in the eastern states, into our great backyard to share the sights and sample the delights of our western shores.

No discussion can be had about business without regard for the people who do the work and make it all happen. All employees must receive a fair go. Fair pay, fair conditions, job security and safety must never be sacrificed in the name of profit. In our current political climate we have a federal government that is threatening to remove from workers fundamental rights, and that will have dire consequences for standards of living and security of employment for people across our state. The federal government's proposal to overrule the states' rights to govern their industrial relations systems is nothing more than a power grab to further the outdated political ideas of our current Prime Minister.

This proposition is an attack on all working people in Western Australia and the unions that represent their interests. Protecting and supporting working people is the foundation of the Australian Labor Party and, together with my colleagues, I will fight against this draconian proposal. Central to this is the worker's right to a safe working environment, the re-establishment of family-friendly working hours and rosters that have sustained a profitable mining industry for more than 100 years. Many people in the goldfields have shared their concern with me about the encroachment of the fly in, fly out policy in our community. I support the concept of fly in, fly out exclusion zones to ensure that our communities benefit from the resources in their own backyard. There must always be a balance between development of resources and the needs of regional communities.

It is a fact of life that not all members of society share the benefits of our economic prosperity. Members, we live in the twenty-first century, and even with all the advancements in health, education, recreation and social infrastructure, some of our local communities have among the highest infant mortality rates in the world, and some people in our community are suffering from Third World diseases. Some children are born with foetal alcohol syndrome and die from malnutrition. Families are being ripped apart by the scourge of alcohol and solvent abuse. Regardless of the current economic prosperity, no amount of fiscal fortitude can wipe away centuries of tears and lost fortunes and the decline of culture. However, our recognition of these facts will assist in the healing process. Two per cent of the Australian population is Aboriginal, yet, shamefully, 70 per cent of the Western Australian prison population is Aboriginal. Does this mean that Aboriginal people commit more crime? Yes. That may be one answer but the question we should be asking is why. We need better mechanisms to cater for the needs of all Western Australians, black or white, from the country to the city. There is an overflowing too-hard basket within government at local, state and federal levels. It is up to all of us to roll up our sleeves and take up all the hard issues.

I cannot stand here and tell members that I have all the answers to what may well be insoluble problems in our community. I can only say that I will not shy away from the too-hard basket. I will give my utmost endeavour to all the issues facing the area that I represent.

I stand here today because of the help and assistance of many people, in particular John Borkowski, Alf Parolo, Michael Melita, Anestis Rompotes, Clinton Floate, Isidoro Messina and Artha, Helen, James and the Liminos family, some of whom are in the public gallery tonight. I also thank Carlo Pennone, and Tony, Mary and Sal and the Vallalonga family. We all know the importance of friends, and I am very privileged to have a core group of friends who have supported me over the years and who are also in the gallery this evening: my schoolmate Andre Feghaly, Patrick Baroni, Peter and Carol White, and my godson Nicholas, Tim and Michele Fanowris, Brad Hutchinson, Simone Carter, Daryl Benstead, Brad O'Callaghan, Sheldon and Megan Patrick, Garry and Charmaine White, Craig and Dan Floate, Dan Lucve and Robert Lashansky. I have had the privilege of meeting many new friends along my journey and would particularly like to mention and thank Lyn Jager, Brian Yakich, Ashley Vincent, John Thomson, Megan Anwyl, John Carey, Roz Harley and Mike Anderton.

Mr President, I would like to particularly single out two of my closest friends, John Little and Jaye Radisich, for their advice, unflinching support and loyalty. I would particularly like to thank the Mining and Pastoral Region team: the member for Kimberley, the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara, the member for North West Coastal, and my fellow Mining and Pastoral members, Hon Jon Ford and Hon Shelley Archer; and sincerely thank the member for Murchison-Eyre, with whom I spent many hours in the car travelling the region with his wife, Maryann, and sons, Joey and Sam, and had one hell of an adventure. I would also like to thank two people who always make me feel welcome in Kalgoorlie, James and Lynne Donnelly.

My greatest debt is to my family. I am very lucky to have them in the public gallery tonight. I would like to thank my ever supportive and loving mother, Rita; sister, Angela; brother-in-law, James; brothers, Stephen and Marc; my grandfather; and I would particularly like to thank my cousin, Kristy. They have supported me in my pursuit to enter Parliament. I thank them. To my greatest supporter and the greatest influence in my life, my father, Nick, without whose friendship, guidance and support standing here today would not have been possible, thank you.

[Applause.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Bruce Donaldson**.

DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

Election

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

That Hons Simon O'Brien, Ray Halligan, Graham Giffard, Louise Pratt and Ken Travers be Deputy Chairmen of Committees.

TREASURER'S ADVANCE AUTHORISATION BILL 2005

Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Hon Graham Giffard) in the Chair; Hon Ljiljana Ravlich (Minister for Education and Training) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1: Short Title -

Hon GEORGE CASH: We are dealing with the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill 2005 and, in particular, clause 1, the short title. Members will be aware that during the second reading debate I raised a number of issues, which I indicated to the minister we would want answers to during the committee stage. The minister indicated that would be possible. Before proceeding to a number of those questions - they certainly do not all deal with clause 1 - I make the point that during the second reading stage of the bill I made reference to the taxing regime of the Gallop government in Western Australia and pointed out that it was the second highest taxing government of all the states of Australia. I demonstrated that with a number of statistics, which are clearly not disputed, given that many of them were taken from the Department of Treasury and Finance publication "Overview of State Taxes Western Australia 2004-05", which was published in March 2005. Members may recall that the minister suggested at one stage when I was reciting from that publication at length that it might be a good idea if the government did not publish it any more. I am quite sure that the minister was only joking when she said it. I say that because it is a very useful publication, as the minister knows. It is one of the more interesting publications that the Department of Treasury and Finance puts out. The reason that I raise the publication and the minister's aside during the second reading debate is that we will shortly be dealing with the Financial Administration Legislation Amendment Bill 2005. That bill contains a proposition to abolish a number of the financial statements that are published in Western Australia and substitute them with what we say are much lesser publications. However, we can deal with that in due course.

The other point that I raised during the second reading stage was the question of whether Western Australia had complied with the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Reform of Commonwealth-State Financial Relations. When I spoke on this issue last week I made the point that having read the intergovernmental agreement and having had regard for what the state of Western Australia has done about the reviews that it committed to as a signatory to that agreement, legally the state of Western Australia had done what was required of it within the agreement. This is the case despite the federal government running full-page advertisements in newspapers across Western Australia claiming that Western Australia had not lived up to its obligations under that agreement. However, I also said that because the Gallop government is an extremely high-taxing government and is swimming in money, the government has a significant moral obligation to do something about reducing taxes in Western Australia. I also note with interest that since we last spoke on the Treasurer's Advance Authorisation Bill the Public Accounts Committee in the other place has tabled the "Report on the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Reform of Commonwealth-State Financial Relations, Report No 1 in the 37th Parliament 2005". Within that document is an opinion from Malcolm McCusker, QC on his interpretation of the intergovernmental agreement. He clearly reaches the view that the government has complied with its legal obligations; in fact, in clause 13 of his opinion he states -

In my opinion, therefore, the State is not in breach of the IGA. It has not undertaken to abolish all (or any) of the stamp duties described in clause 5(vii), and its failure to abolish 3 of them as yet does not breach the IGA.