



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Tony Krsticevic MLA
(Member for Carine)

Address-in-Reply Debate

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 25 November 2008

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Motion

MR A. KRSTICEVIC (Carine) [7.04 pm]: Mr Speaker, firstly, I congratulate you on your election to the chair and I also congratulate everyone in this chamber on their personal victories in their respective electorates.

I feel both honoured and privileged to stand here today to represent the constituents in the state seat of Carine. I would like to thank them for placing their trust in me and to say that I am absolutely committed to representing my constituents' interests over the next four years. I feel humbled to have become a member of the government in the thirty-eighth Parliament of Western Australia and I look forward to both the challenges and the opportunities that the next four years will present.

At the outset, I would like to thank a number of key people in my life, because without their support I would not be standing here today. To my beautiful wife, Nada, who has been by my side supporting me every step of the way: I love you, Nada, and I thank you for being my best friend for all these years. To my lovely children, Mara, Michael and Natalie: thank you for being so understanding and for all your hugs and kisses. To my parents, Slavko and Mara: I love you both for supporting me always and for being there when I needed you the most. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the Liberal Party who have given me the opportunity to represent our great party. Finally, I would like to thank God for making all this possible and for being with me every step of the way.

I was born in Croatia in 1966 and migrated to Australia in 1969. My father arrived first, having borrowed the funds from his cousin in Perth. He bought a house, borrowed more money to pay for our journey, and we—his family—followed soon afterwards. We arrived with nothing more than the shirts on our backs. I have very fond memories of those early days in Australia.

I was raised in a working-class family in which hard work and respect, and a belief in one's ability to succeed, formed the fundamental principles of my childhood. My father always said, "Hard and honest work will reap you the benefits of a happy and prosperous life." He also taught me that everything in life worth having is worth working hard for. On the basis of my life experiences, I strongly believe that policies based on equality of opportunity, the generation of wealth, free and competitive enterprise, consumer choice, and reward for effort are crucial for the future success of our state.

I still reflect fondly on my childhood, remembering how we knew nearly everyone in the street, slept on the lawn during the hot summer nights, eagerly waited for the bread and milk to be

delivered, left home in the early evening to go for a family walk around the neighbourhood and never needed to think whether the front door was locked or someone was going to steal the milk or bread money—it seems like only yesterday. Today I am sad that I cannot let my children have all those same experiences: I not only lock the door, but also make sure the alarm is turned on before we leave home. In today's complicated and busy society, neighbours are getting harder to find and family walks are something for which we have to remember to find the time.

Like Sir Rolf Harris, I too am a boy originally from Bassendean: swimming in the Swan River, playing footy on the BIC and supporting my beloved Swan Districts Football Club are all treasured parts of my life.

I attended a Catholic primary school and a public high school before entering university to complete a Bachelor of Business degree with a major in accounting and computing. After completing my degree I joined the Australian Taxation Office, where I forged a successful career for the next 20 years. Interpreting and applying legislation were a part of my everyday life. I learnt to take a very keen interest in the legislative process and its impact on the community. All too often, politicians and bureaucrats implement changes without any real idea of the impacts on families, business and the community in general. I remember when the federal government introduced a simplified tax system all those years ago. Many of my former colleagues were continually frustrated by the complexity of the so-called simplified tax system. As a member of the thirty-eighth Parliament I will be doing my best to make sure that such complexities do not find their way into our legislation.

Mr Speaker, I have never been far from my local community. During the last 20 years I have always been involved in one way or another; it seems that I have been destined to find myself in a leadership role at many crucial points. Helping others is what my life has always been about: it is my passion and my reason for being. As a member of this Parliament I will have the opportunity to turn that passion into a profession. Entering Parliament has given me the chance to really make a difference—to listen to members of the community and to try to turn their dreams into reality. I know that it is not going to be easy. I know that reaching for the stars is difficult, but I also know that anything in life worth having is worth working hard for. Barack Obama is reaching for the stars; some people in history, such as Martin Luther King, have managed to touch the stars. I, too, am hoping one day to touch the stars. I have two fundamental life principles; namely, to make a difference with everything I do, and to remember that it is not about me—it is about what I can give to the community.

I believe that I am fortunate to be representing one of the best electorates in Western Australia. The state seat of Carine is a picturesque beachside electorate, located in Perth's northern suburbs. It is bounded to the east by the Mitchell Freeway, to the south by Karrinyup Road and to the west by the beautiful Indian Ocean. Its northern boundaries consist of a series of roads, including Warwick Road and Clontarf Street. It includes the suburbs of Gwelup, Marmion, North Beach and Waterman and parts of Duncraig, Karrinyup, Sorrento and Trigg. The schools in the area include Carine Senior High School, Carine Primary School, Davallia Primary School, Karrinyup Primary School, Lake Gwelup Primary School, North Beach Primary School, Poynter Primary School, Marmion Primary School and Our Lady of Grace Primary School. I have already been in contact with all these schools and met most of the presidents of the school P&C groups. As a result, I have discovered that there are a number of issues that the schools need help with. I have certainly made it one of my priorities to assist the schools in my electorate all I can. I have also started to work with many community groups that exist in the Carine electorate, and was delighted to have been welcomed by the people involved. Two groups, the Gwelup Progress Association and the Hamersley-Carine Amateur Football Club, have asked me to become their patron, an honour I was delighted to accept.

As the member for Carine, I am proud to have followed in the footsteps of Hon Jim Clarko, AM, and Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas, who between them represented the area for 35 years. Both of them have assisted me along the path that led me here today. Jim worked closely with me in my campaign, as did the outgoing member, Katie Hodson-Thomas, who offered me considerable guidance and advice, and endorsed me to her constituents as her successor.

Many people have given up their time to give me the privilege of being here today. To each and every one of those people, I wish to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. I promise to do my best at all times. I especially acknowledge my campaign team: Hon Jim Clarko, AM; Hon George Strickland, OA; Martin Noakes; Shane Earnshaw; Des Riley; Sammy Yap; and my ever reliable campaign chairman, Chilla Porter. I also give special mention to Zak Kirkup, Ben Morton, Genevieve Lyon, Zara Saliba, Jan Graham and my amazing son, Michael Krsticevic, whom some members in the chamber have already encountered in political debate.

I know that Katie Hodson-Thomas feels some regret that the opportunity to give her valedictory speech was prevented by the calling of the early election. I would like to take this opportunity to pay credit to her 12 years in Parliament. Katie has often told me what an enormous privilege she feels it was for her to represent both the Liberal Party and the electorate of Carine as a member of Parliament. I know she would want to thank members of the Liberal Party organisation for their ongoing support and, likewise, pay credit to the people of the electorate of Carine who elected her three times. She has always emphasised to me how rewarding she found her job. One of Katie's insights was that at times the tasks appear small and at other times simply impossible, but when success is achieved the rewards and sense of worth that result are immense. I have already been lucky enough to have some minor successes and understand exactly what she means.

On Katie's behalf, I would like to mention some of the worthwhile achievements she made in her term as the member for Carine. The extension of Reid Highway from Erindale Road to Marmion Avenue was a project many years in the planning and execution. It was detailed and frequently controversial and affected many residents very personally, so it inevitably created a very high workload for Katie and her staff. She was very firm in her support of the extension. I admire the fact that she chose not to sit on the fence despite criticism from some quarters. She believed the extension was in the interests of the whole community, and this has proved to be the case. I want to continue her work in supporting the enhancement of Reid Highway by developing it as a dual lane carriageway, and will work with the new Minister for Transport to that end.

The saga of the Karrinyup Lakes Lifestyle Village is an issue some members will recall. Residents of that retirement village were placed in a very difficult position by the actions of management and sought Katie's help to resolve the situation. I know that Katie had hoped that this matter would be resolved prior to her departure as the elected member, having moved a motion in Parliament that the issue be referred to a standing committee. It must be said that this would not have happened without the support of two former ministers, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, the member for Armadale; and the Minister for Consumer Protection, the former member for Kenwick. Katie would also like to thank the former member for Yokine Hon Bob Kucera, for his outstanding work as chair of the committee and, indeed, all the committee members. The committee's report upheld the concerns of the residents that Katie had represented to Parliament. However, the matter of the Karrinyup Lakes Lifestyle Village is far from over. Residents are still awaiting the resolution of long-delayed planning approvals before they can sell their units and have been anxiously awaiting the re-formation of the Economics and Industry Standing Committee to ensure its recommendations are carried out. In addition, with the Retirement Villages Act 1992 coming up for revision, I believe that all members of the house should become familiar with the sad saga of the Karrinyup Lakes Lifestyle Village so that we can ensure that the new legislation improves the protection of seniors' interests and rights, and also ensure that the terrible experiences of these Gwelup residents are not

repeated. I am committed to seeing this matter through and to ensuring that the residents of the Karrinyup Lakes Lifestyle Village receive justice.

Another long-term project Katie was committed to was the extension of the North Beach jetty. I know that she would like to acknowledge the work of two local residents in particular, Mr Laurie Birchall and the late Rick Hammond, who were both committed to this project and gave her enormous support in trying to raise the necessary funds. The project stalled because of financial implications, but I will be working with the federal member for Stirling, Michael Keenan, to continue Katie's battle to restore the North Beach jetty.

Like Katie, I believe that communities need to make financial investments in infrastructure that properly consider the long-term social benefits to the community in terms of recreational activities, social benefits and support for people with disabilities. Katie was the member for Carine when the decision was made to close the Carine TAFE, an event that may have been inevitable but that was naturally greeted by the community with some dismay. She worked hard to ensure that all courses were transferred to the Joondalup campus to ensure that residents retained easy access to an education facility. She also became involved in the process of determining what that large area of land could be used for. This is a process I have inherited and I will keep a very close eye on the plans for the old Carine TAFE site to ensure they meet residents' needs. Vandalism on the site is also an issue that I am working with the authorities to address.

Carine, like all electorates, occasionally suffers from lack of law and order, usually when young hooligans get out of control and make the community environment uncomfortable for its legitimate residents. I look forward to working with the new Minister for Police, who I know shares my firm belief that we need to extend the work of the police force into the community to ensure that law abiding citizens are not subjected to these types of events.

The wider issues for the state of Western Australia are also matters I wish to make my concern. I believe we have a great society and, despite a somewhat gloomy financial situation globally, Western Australia is still well positioned to continue to improve its services and infrastructure. I am committed to helping the members of this government improve our systems of health and education, along with our police force, so that they can provide greater benefit to the community.

One area of great interest to me is that of small business. From many years of working with the Croatian community, many of whom have established their own successful businesses in Western Australia, I know how important the small business sector is to the future of Western Australia and its people. I also know how hard small business people work, often in the face of bureaucratic structures that they feel hold them back or make running their businesses more difficult rather than easier. This is an area I would also like to improve while I am a member of Parliament. I will try to make it easier, not harder, for small business to operate.

Inevitably, the question of trading hours is going to be an issue before this house and somehow we must find a way to ensure that the interests of small business are seriously considered in the process. From talking to small business proprietors, I consider they have a number of legitimate concerns in accepting the notion of extended trading hours. I believe we must acknowledge the validity of these concerns and find ways to resolve them in the process. The first concern is the problem of the owner-operator. The normal extension of trading hours at Christmas time is now taken for granted, and there is no doubt that consumer enjoys this variation from the norm. It is nonetheless a good example of the difficulties small businesses might face in making regular extended shopping hours worth their while financially. I have been told on many occasions that the increase in trading revenue at Christmas does not really justify the employment of extra staff. Consequently, owner-operators are forced to work seven days a week for little or no extra benefit. The extension of trading hours during the rest of the year will, they are sure, result in exactly the same situation, or even worse. Therefore, it is imperative that owner-operators of small businesses are given some

degree of choice about whether or not they will open. I have been told that large shopping centres often use the terms of leases to demand that smaller shops remain open when extended hours are in place, which puts these smaller operators in a truly lose-lose situation.

I am pleased by the Premier's recent announcement that the Liberal-National government will honour the decision of the 2005 referendum and will not seek further deregulation on Sundays. I believe that this is to the benefit of small businesses that do not wish to be forced to compete—and remember that many small businesses with few employees can still choose to open on Sundays if they wish. I also believe it is to the benefit of the community, ensuring that there is one day at least partially preserved for families and leisure. Even middle-sized businesses have expressed concern to me about being forced to compete with the larger businesses on their territory. They feel that these larger businesses favour extended hours because they know they can afford to stay open and lose money until financial pressures force smaller operators out of business. Clearly, this is a situation that would not benefit Western Australia. I have every confidence, however, that we can deal with these issues. We must, however, never forget that small business is the backbone of Western Australian industry and employment, and that understanding this sector is vital for the welfare of the wider community.

When we hear the voices of change calling, we must never forget that we live in the best state in the best country in the world. The last thing we should do is lose that simply for the sake of change.

The expansion of regional Western Australia was the dream of one of our greatest Premiers, the visionary Sir Charles Court, whom I have always admired, both as a politician and as a man. In this government that has been formed in an alliance between the Liberal and National Parties, with its stated objectives to develop regional Western Australia, I believe that we have the potential to further advance Sir Charles's dream. However, I also believe that this can and will be done in an environmentally sustainable way. No person in the twenty-first century could fail to be aware of the fragility of our environment and the challenges that global warming and environmental degradation hold. If we fail to protect our environment, this society itself could fail. I believe that through good government we can walk the tightrope and find the balance between development and protection.

Together we can build a better Western Australia. We can show the rest of Australia that by working together we can make a difference to our future prosperity. Working smarter, listening to the community and respecting each other with a positive attitude will lead to a prosperous society. I am ready, willing and able to work with each and every one of you to deliver the results that will benefit all Western Australians.

Finally, I would like to mention how I see the positioning of this state in its interaction with the Australian government and the world. We cannot live and grow in isolation, despite our physical separation. I consider that Western Australia needs to strongly maintain its position in the Federation of Australia, and work closely with the rest of the states on our developmental agendas—for investment, for development and for environmental protection.

I find it ironic when some members of Parliament who supported the introduction of one vote, one value complain about the commonwealth grants scheme, complain about how Western Australia is getting a raw deal, and complain about how Western Australia generates some 35 per cent of the nation's wealth yet gets only a fraction of that back. I do agree with all these concerns, but also feel that these inequalities are similar to those inflicted on regional Western Australia with the introduction of one vote, one value by the previous state Labor government. One vote, one value is an example of how regional, high-production communities are being robbed of the fair rewards for their labour. Western Australia is not like other states in Australia. Our regional areas produce the greater part of our wealth; yet under one vote, one value we have removed from them the basic right to fair representation for their efforts and their contributions. I support the Liberal-National move

towards giving our rural communities a fairer proportion of state revenue and attention, as do the many constituents who have contacted me.

In addition to improving funding for regional communities, I believe that we need to return to them a greater stake in the political process. Therefore, I will be calling for a review of this flawed legislation. We should not ignore the regions based on the size of their population. We should acknowledge their contribution to this great state and to our nation. Likewise, our federal government should not take Western Australia for granted. This remote state, like our remote regions, needs to be valued and respected for the contribution made each and every day.

Mr Speaker, I believe that Western Australia has a glowing future. I look forward to being part of the generation that makes that future.

[Applause.]
