



## PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### INAUGURAL SPEECH



## **Hon Tim Clifford, MLC** (Member for East Metropolitan Region)

Legislative Council

Address in Reply

Tuesday, 13 June 2017



# Legislative Council

Tuesday, 13 June 2017

---

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

### *Motion*

Resumed from 25 May on the following motion moved by Hon Dr Sally Talbot —

That the following address be presented to Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, Companion of the Order of Australia, 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 TIM CLIFFORD (East Metropolitan)** [7.30 pm]: Kaya, hello. I pay my respects to the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on today, the Whadjuk people, and the contribution they make to the life of the city and this region. Thank you, Madam President, for giving me this opportunity to address the Legislative Council of the fortieth Parliament of Western Australia, and congratulations on your appointment in becoming the first woman president of the Council; it is truly a historic occasion.

We are back! I am so proud that the Greens yet again have a presence in the East Metropolitan Region. I am looking forward to continuing the great work started by the previous member for East Metro, Hon Alison Xamon, who is now back representing the North Metropolitan Region. I have really valued Alison's support throughout the years and am looking forward to working closely with her, and also with my colleagues Hon Robin Chapple, member for Mining and Pastoral Region, and Hon Diane Evers, member for South West Region. The pathway to where I stand now has been lined with people who have prodded me along, stood strongly beside me, inspired me and helped me feel proud to be standing here today, not just as an individual elected by the constituents of East Metro, but also as a part of a strong, supportive community. There are too many people to thank individually; however, I would like to thank the following people in particular: Chantal Caruso, Chris Redman, Jonathon Hallet, Zia Hakimi, Mary O'Bryne, Andrew Beaton, Sophie Greer, Katrina House, Jo Campbell, Emma Pringle, Grace Turco and Phil Jenkins. I also thank my family, my mum and my dad and my three sisters; and my close friends Luke Barker and Janelle, who I am sure are watching tonight; Aaron Olszewski; Hayley Stinson and little Fred at home; Ashley Large; and Jesse Millea. I also thank the fantastic East Metro candidates Anthony Pyle, Sarah Quinton, Bhuwan Khadka, Iwan Boskamp, Gene Marshall, Lee-Anne Miles, Caroline Perks, Matt Biggs, Rafeif Ismael, Anne-Marie Ricciardi, Matt Roberts, Evan Webb, Don McAleese, Beth McMullan, Robyn Walsh and Sarah Nielsen-Harvey. I would also like to thank Scott Ludlam, Rachel Siewert, Jo Valentine, Alison Xamon—again!—Giz Watson, Ruth Greble and Trish Cowcher. These people have had a big role in helping mentor me throughout the years. I would also like to thank especially again Caroline Perks; she was really supportive throughout this whole campaign and she can stop knocking on wood now, because we did it! Finally, thank you to the thousands of volunteers who took part in this amazing campaign, because without you I would not be standing here today.

I grew up in the quiet south west town of Albany, where I lived with my mum, Linda Graham, and my three sisters, Kerianne, Shenade and Nicole. My father, Dennis Clifford, worked away as a service man in the mining industry for months at a time. We did not have much, but we did not ask for much either. We did, however, live under a roof provided by the state and also relied on health care provided by the state. We knew and respected the value of those services, services that are at the core of our community and that should mean that no person, child or family goes without the home, health care or education that they need—yet, unfortunately many do. After leaving Albany, like so many, I began working in the construction industry as a labourer, which then eventually led to working in the mining industry as a fly in, fly out worker. I worked for a company that used workplace agreements as a tool to crush workers. They knew full well the personal circumstances of any given worker and would use it against them. Knowing the worker had a mortgage or a family, they would deny them pay rises or offer them something not to rock the boat. I know what it is like to carry the stress of a mortgage and battle with your employer, knowing that they might try to get rid of you if you take a stand, make any noise or create any waves against the unfair working conditions under which they operate. The odds are resoundingly stacked in favour of the big mining companies. Most people do not hear about the constant battles workers have with their employers over safety conditions, allowances, salaries and wages. Their voices are kept silent, but it is the workers' voices that the members of this chamber need to listen to most closely.

This was the impetus I needed to say enough is enough and to get involved and challenge the system. We need to challenge the status quo and fight for those who for too long have been denied a voice by the very rich, by the vested interests and by the neoliberalism that has seen the pursuit of financial reward at the expense of those things that truly matter. I am here to make sure that the current government does not sit back and regard its election as a job that has already been completed. Its political capital must not sit on the shelf for four more years. The challenges that existed under the Liberal government still remain today. I expect this government to expend capital on decreasing the housing waitlist, combating climate change, pushing for a 100 per cent renewable energy grid and ridding politics of the corrupting influence of corporate donations. If it does not, what is it here for? Is it to remain popular in the polls? That is not enough. It is never enough. I say to my colleagues from all parties: we are here to solve problems—homelessness, inequality, climate change, growing the renewable energy market and transforming Perth into a more liveable city. I am here to see real change and to ensure that in four years' time the people of Western Australia have a better community than they have today, to ensure that people are being listened to and to ensure that we are working to deliver a better future for those who follow us.

The generations who follow us are our children, our friends and our future. I believe that in recent years they have had a bloody raw deal. During the election campaign a 22-year-old woman told me —

I'm sick of older people telling me that we are wrong. Just because we're young, it doesn't mean the science is wrong. Because we're young, doesn't mean that donations are any less corrupt when we point out what they're doing to our democracy. We're definitely not wrong when we say it's unfair that students are barely surviving and need a full-time job while they study just to make ends meet.

I am 13 years older than her and I am bloody sick of it too. This is just one of many hundreds of similar conversations I have had with younger people throughout Western Australia. Make no mistake: there is no justice when massive tax cuts are being handed out to the rich while life is being made much harder for young people across the state. I call out to all young people in the state: this is the people's Parliament; it is your Parliament. Parliament is not a place reserved for the elites of this world; it is for everyone, and each and every one of you

should have the opportunity to stand where I am standing right now. Change does not happen easily, but I know that through movement, building and continuing to push for what we want, we can effect real change. If I can start a campaign with three people in a park and build it to hundreds of people willing to fight for the changes that really matter, then I know that there are others out there who can do the same as me. Remember, this is your fight to address the biggest issues of our time.

We live in a privileged country with immense resources and incredible talent. We should be the envy of the world in relation to our approach to reducing carbon emissions, and yet Australia is one of the world's biggest carbon emitters. Our level of carbon pollution per capita is nearly double the average of what other developed nations are emitting today, and more than four times the world average. In Western Australia we emit 86 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. This is the equivalent of 18 million cars on the road every year. We need our young people, our brightest minds and our sharpest entrepreneurs operating in a policy environment that encourages innovation, and we need our government to truly listen and implement these good ideas. We need to be living in a state where people can store energy generated from rooftop solar panels. That energy would be put into batteries in their own homes and provide excess unused power back to the grid so that other people could use that energy. We must focus on structural incentives to continue to foster and grow consumer-led decentralised energy generation, whereby households harness their own renewable energy and sell it to their neighbours, providing a choice for consumers. We need our state's energy market to be economically sound and to operate in a way that reduces emissions and lowers our carbon footprint. We need to make sure that the cheapest renewable energy options are available for all and that electricity is charged at an appropriate rate so that those most at risk are not disadvantaged.

We cannot keep subsidising dirty energy. This is a cycle that needs to be broken. We need strategies that support low income earners to pay for solar installation and battery storage solutions for their homes. Western Australia has just nine per cent renewable energy in its power mix. Over eight years, the Barnett government hampered construction of renewable energy projects in the state. We must turn this around. The Greens look forward to seeing the new Labor government take up this important and urgent challenge. We need to improve our performance. We need to encourage the market to invest. Currently, there are 3 900 megawatts of renewable energy projects in the pipeline across Australia to meet the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target. Embarrassingly, only 180 megawatts of these are in Western Australia.

Across the world, exciting technical innovation in electric vehicles is changing the way we commute around our cities. However, electric car sales in Australia have stalled. Other countries such as China, which set a target of five million electric cars by 2020, are putting us to shame. We can do many things, such as offering free registration for these vehicles, funding infrastructure and transitioning our government fleet to electric vehicles. We know that the renewable energy sector has the potential to provide real jobs for people, so let us put these jobs at the centre of a strong, green economy. We can keep vibrant communities such as Collie alive, with clever installations of renewable energy such as pumped storage hydroelectricity. We can invest in people by upskilling and providing training so that they can continue to live in Collie after the coal has been phased out, and it will be phased out.

Climate change is a global reality and we all have a part to play. I do not hold with statements that suggest we are just a small bit player and that our contributions will not count. In fact, that is a short-sighted and potentially dangerous view. Every individual country, state, city or town across the world is either adding to the problem of climate change or working to fix it. The choice is ours. At the moment, WA is adding to the problem. We are the leading state in the country for all the wrong reasons and we need to fix this. With a federal government that

is actively undermining the efforts of states to take meaningful action on climate change, it is more important than ever that WA stand strong on this issue.

The Greens have a plan. It is called Energy 2030. It is a plan that would install solar in community housing, install battery and electric vehicle infrastructure across the state, and give household power generators the choice to sell on their power to whomever they choose. Our modelling shows that this is possible. We could power the south west interconnected system with 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030. These are the kinds of initiatives that people in Western Australia want to see. In the lead-up to the election, my team doorknocked on over 12 000 doors in the East Metropolitan Region and listened to people from all over tell us that they wanted more renewable energy and battery storage solutions for their rooftop solar. I intend to continue to have these conversations with constituents so that I can respond to the issues that matter most to our community.

The previous government appears not to have listened to anyone other than the fossil fuel companies that fuel climate change. It is time we changed this. Climate change is the greatest challenge of our time and self-interest should not prevail. I have watched successive governments fail to address this issue, and enough is enough. We need to take action. The state needs a dedicated minister for climate change. We need a dedicated government department that will develop policy, implement strategies to ensure a reduction in Western Australia's emissions, plan for the future and be accountable.

We are currently witnessing a dramatic unwinding of the social fabric of our society. Our most vulnerable people, including students and pensioners, are seeing their living standards decline. Let me be clear: there can be no justice as long as the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen. With successive governments putting political donations ahead of the needs of their constituents, it is no surprise that our society has shifted towards valuing stuff and material wealth over valuing its people. The pursuit of growth has left many casualties in its wake, and at the heart of the issue is fairness. Tax concessions for multinationals and the wealthy few have led to an unacceptable level of inequality within our society. We are currently witnessing a criminal extraction of resources from the poor and middle class of our society in order to line the pockets of people who do not need it.

There has recently been a lot of discussion about people having difficulty accessing the housing market. Property prices are so high that even police, nurses and teachers are struggling to afford a modest home in today's market. This serious problem needs addressing, but I am even more concerned about the thousands of people in our community who are having difficulty accessing even a roof above their head every night. Someone on a youth allowance will not have any luck finding a rental on their budget. Even someone on a minimum wage will have access to only one per cent of rentals. It is perhaps unsurprising that 42 per cent of homeless people in this country are under 25 years old. I believe that the success of a society is based on how it treats its most vulnerable and the number of people living on the streets every night. A decade ago we would not have seen the level of homelessness we see today on Perth city streets.

Let me share a story with members. This happened a few years ago when I was walking to work on St Georges Terrace. I was walking past an alleyway and a woman called out to me. She was asking for money. I had an awkward conversation with her, but I really wanted to know how she and her two small children came to be there. She slept the night in her car and had found a spot in the city to camp for the day, begging for some coins to keep her and her two kids fed. She lived in fear that the authorities would take her children, but had no way of finding a permanent solution to her problem. The shame of her situation showed on her face, but the shame should not be hers; it is ours. Every night our car parks, alleyways and park benches are the beds of thousands of people across this state. What is most alarming is that

women and children are the most at risk. Domestic violence is the biggest single cause of homelessness in WA, and it does not have to be this way. If we are going to be serious about homelessness, service providers need to be sufficiently funded. Every day, people are turning up to ask for help and walking away without having received the assistance they so desperately need.

Housing is an issue close to my heart. I will work to address structural issues to support affordable housing for everyone, including pushing for reforms to increase the supply of social housing for the people most in need in this state. We are in the midst of a housing crisis—a housing emergency—and the public housing waitlist times must be reduced. It is simply not good enough that there are still over 2 000 people with priority needs waiting for a home in this state. This is unacceptable, and we must understand that housing is a human right and it should be for everyone.

I am not here to do what is popular at any given time. My positions on issues will not be based on which way the political wind is blowing; they will be based on my values and informed by strong, well-thought-out policies. I regard my election to this chamber as an opportunity to take politics to the people and say, “This is your Parliament.” You expect someone with values and integrity and with a strong moral compass to be standing for you and speaking up for you. I can guarantee that my voice will not be drowned out by lobbyists and business interests. I am prepared to take risks and to look beyond the short-term gains of politics. I am here to change society in a thoughtful and considered way that provides all people with access to the things that matter. And I do not do this alone. I have colleagues here to support me and the backing of a party grounded in social justice and equality to guide the policies that I will be advancing during my term in office.

I am here speaking for the community, for those who voted to see real change, who have been discontented with politicians and who are cynical of politics. I promise to take on long-term issues and to expend political capital to change things. I am here to make sure that people get a decent show at succeeding in life, whether it is defending the healthcare system, reducing wait times for social housing, ensuring a healthy environment or tackling climate change. I am committed to holding this government to account and to making sure that decisions are not based on single budgetary cycles and that projects have long-term visions to solve complex and difficult issues.

We can choose a world that continues to allow the vested interests and the failed ideals of neoliberalism to flourish; one that ignores the workers and ignores the need for better schools, more access to health care and social housing; one that ignores the reality of people facing poverty and homelessness, and ignores Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; or we can choose the alternative. If we choose to do that, there is nothing that can stop us. There is nothing that can stop us from ensuring that everyone has safe shelter and that every child can go to school, have a meal and see a doctor or a dentist. There is nothing that can stop us from working with our first peoples to close the gap and deliver treaties and reparations. There is nothing that can stop us from ridding politics of dirty money and the undue influence of vested interests. There is nothing that can stop us from standing up to big business and business-as-usual politicians and saying, “We are done with you acting in your own interests and not in the interests of us all.” There is nothing that can stop us from taking genuine action against catastrophic global warming and climate change. I choose this alternative and it is a choice I will make every single moment I have in this job.

I will never apologise for my idealism, nor will I let it be shouted down. The job of a politician is to be idealistic and to turn those ideals into reality. This is a job that I begin today with pride, purpose and humility. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]