

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

*Motion*

Resumed from 22 May.

**HON G.T. GIFFARD** (North Metropolitan) [5.42 pm]: Thank you, Mr President, for the opportunity to speak today. I will reflect on some of the comments in the Governor's speech earlier this month. Unfortunately, I was not in attendance that day. However, since then I have had the opportunity to read his speech, which I enjoyed and found most uplifting.

The Governor touched on some very important principles in his speech that will, and should, guide this new Labor Government led by Geoff Gallop. The Governor referred to the Centenary of Federation and how, 100 years after Federation, electoral reform continues to be on the political agenda. That was an important issue in the election campaign. I recall that a variety of interpretations were circulated on the Labor Party's position on electoral reform. Primarily, we are espousing the principle of one vote, one value. It would be fair to say that that issue received a fair airing during the election campaign. It is therefore with some satisfaction that I stand and say that the new Labor Government has strong claims for pressing ahead with its electoral reform in relation to one vote, one value, as it is entitled to do.

The word "mandate" has been tossed around somewhat. Most of the time it is misused. A party or Government elected after it had done its level best to bury policies and avoid talking about them, which then claims it has a mandate on the basis that people should have read the fine print and should, therefore, know what is in the party's policy, would have a tenuous grip on the meaning of the word. However, this issue received a fair amount of airing and misrepresentation. Notwithstanding that, the Labor Party enjoys considerable support in the city and in the non-metropolitan areas of Western Australia and, therefore, we can claim a mandate for electoral reform. It is not, as some would have us believe, about disfranchising people in the bush; it is a matter of ensuring that all votes are treated equally. The areas in which people reside should not determine the extent of their political influence. Everybody's vote should have the same value. As I said, this issue received a fair airing in the election campaign. The Labor Party enjoyed very strong support in non-metropolitan areas where that campaign was mostly run. It is with some comfort that I stand here and say it is an important principle that the new Government is entitled to pursue.

Another important issue the Governor referred to was restructuring of the public sector. On a number of occasions during that election campaign and leading up to it, the Premier made very clear a number of his views on that. We have already seen an example of that in the reduction in the size of the ministry from 17 to 14. The Government has established a task force to examine a reduction in the number of government departments and the abolition of the Metropolitan Health Service Board, which it calculates will allow \$4 million to be returned to the health budget. No doubt, the Government will press ahead with those very important public sector reforms it undertook during the election campaign to introduce and persist with.

The Governor also mentioned the number of new members. It will be refreshing for this Parliament that almost 40 per cent of the members are new. The quality of contributions so far from our new members shows we have a great deal to look forward to. The quality of contributions has been outstanding. I look forward to their continuing contribution, and I am sure the quality of their contributions will continue to be outstanding. I welcome them all to this place.

Another innovation the Government has introduced since taking office is the change to the position of the cabinet secretary, which was a recommendation of the Commission on Government. The Government has made the cabinet secretary a public servant, which was a very important element of the Commission on Government's recommendation. The Labor Party made it clear that it would accept and implement that recommendation, and since it was elected to government, it has done so. Once again the Government pushes ahead with the very important principles and policies that it articulated in the election campaign.

Another area the Governor touched on in his speech was the increase in the minimum wage, under the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993. I do not have the exact figures, but the minimum wage is now just over \$400 a week, a substantial increase, from about \$368, for workers on low wages. This change will improve the circumstances of thousands of workers in Western Australia, not the least of whom are those covered by the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union and other unions - workers in the cleaning industry, the security industry and other industries characterised by low wages.

This Government's agenda of repair and reform in industrial relations does not simply start and end with increases in the minimum wage. The Labor Party took to the election a comprehensive policy, which was much debated and often misrepresented, but nevertheless received a fair airing. The tensions and ructions that were

alleged to be going on within the Labor Party during the development of the policy probably received as much exposure as the policy itself. The Labor Party managed, without too much difficulty, to produce a substantial policy to take to the election. That policy received the endorsement of the electorate, and the Government intends to proceed with it.

One of the principles guiding the Government in this area of policy is that of making workplaces fairer. One of the ways in which this will happen is through the re-emergence of collective bargaining. The Government prefers collective bargaining. The employer-employee relationship is one of power, and the Government needs to be mindful of this in crafting legislation to determine how that relationship is to be regulated. The inherent power, or lack thereof, of an employer, and the power, or lack thereof, of an employee must be recognised, and a reasonable assessment made. The question must be asked: should a system of laws that allows a relationship between one inherently powerful party and another inherently powerless party allow a complete lack of regulation? Is a system fair and reasonable when the two parties are allowed to sort things out in the back room, and then tell the Government what has been agreed? Such a system is designed to allow the inherently powerful to win out against the powerless, but in the past eight years the industrial relations laws in this State have tended towards that end of the ideological spectrum. Chief among these laws has been the Workplace Agreements Act 1993, which essentially imposes very few conditions on the relationship between an employer and an employee and sets a minimum standard. To its credit, the former Government introduced the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993, which for the first time placed into legislation the minimum conditions of employment, which was a stronger system than existed previously, when the Industrial Relations Commission set those standards. The standard set by the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act were, however, far too low, so even though the Act had the potential to create a good system, because the standards were set too low from day one, this did not happen. The principle of the previous Government's industrial relations legislation was to allow the parties to negotiate freely, pretty much without constraint, apart from setting minimum standards.

The Government will take a different philosophical approach to that question by promoting collective bargaining, for which the Government has a preference. This does not mean it will be made compulsory. The Government has a preference for the award system, which it believes to be a strong system that has withstood the test of time. The Government will re-establish the Industrial Relations Commission as an independent umpire. One of the problems facing practitioners of industrial relations who have experienced both the old and the new system, is that in dispute resolution, the Industrial Relations Commission over time became more and more constrained, with much less power in 2000 than it had in 1993, when the previous Government came to power. This is because the first, second and third waves of industrial relations legislation successively restricted the ability of the Industrial Relations Commission to use its discretion, intelligence and experience to resolve disputes. The framework of the laws became more focused on telling the unions to get back to work when there was a dispute or face trouble. This contrasts with the previous legal regime, which implied that the Industrial Relations Commission had to work to bring the two parties together to achieve a consensual outcome, so both parties could get back to work quicker. Unfortunately, the punitive approach is what workers in this State have become accustomed to over the past few years. I look forward to correcting that imbalance so that the considerable talents of the Industrial Relations Commission can once again be used to help employers and employees reach a genuine resolution of whatever difficulties they may be facing.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.30 pm*

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: Before the break I spoke about one of the main principles that will be guiding the new industrial relations framework that this Government has in mind. I talked about the concept of fairness and having a fairer workplace. The characteristics that are reflected in a system like this are issues like showing a preference for the award system; re-establishing the independence of the umpire, or the Industrial Relations Commission; and, as the Government has already said, having a commitment to collective bargaining in the workplace - in the case of the Government, collective bargaining in the public sector.

The worst aspects of those changes I alluded to were reflected in what is now infamously known as the previous coalition Government's third-wave reforms of industrial relations. Members in this place, particularly those on this side, have talked about those changes on many occasions. I recall the first time I was in this place and I reflected on the effect of those changes. When the Court Government was elected in 1993, one of the buzz words used to describe how this new industrial relations system would work was "choice" - an interesting interpretation was put on the meaning of the word when one reflects on how the system was implemented in the subsequent eight years.

In the industrial relations context, choice needs to be more even-handed than it has been in the past eight years. The community needs choice, and that has been recognised by the Government. In some instances employers and employees want to have a range of choices available to them in the workplace. Governments need to respond to and reflect the people's needs. However, when choice is discussed some people must be more

dinkum about the concept than they have been, and certainly more so than the previous Government. One should also bear in mind when talking about choice that individual employers and employees are not all industrial lawyers or practitioners, and the system should not be mixed up too much and thereby create confusion.

A multitude of industrial relations choices are available in the workplace now. There are federal and state regimes and different types of agreements within those regimes - individual, collective and non-union agreements and similar sorts of variations are to be found in both areas. Industrial relations nowadays is quite a complex area of law. One of the important considerations for the Government when it considers reforms to the industrial relations laws to make them fairer and more balanced is the need to bear in mind that the system must not be made so complex that people cannot understand it and it does not work. There must be a simplicity and workability about the system. The Government is aware of that, and when the legislation comes before this place we will see that it will be a fairer and simpler framework of laws. Those laws will need to accommodate and facilitate the opportunity for people to reach consensus outcomes.

When one considers the rhetoric that was used in 1993 to justify what subsequently happened, one would say that a lot of it is not dissimilar to what I am saying tonight. My point is that what happened in those eight years had very little to do with the rhetoric of 1993. The example that I have just spoken about is choice, and "choice" was a buzz word, and it should not be underestimated. It turned out that there was no choice. What the reforms meant for people who wanted to work in the public sector was that they had to accept workplace agreements or not be offered work. For many workers in the private industry, if they did not accept a workplace agreement, which was based on the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act, they did not get a job. That is not a real choice. For a lot of people who were not industrially powerful - for example, those in the hospitality or security areas, where a strong, stable employment environment did not exist - it was very difficult to stand up to their employers who were saying that they wanted to change their conditions. Employees were told that they had to go casual, that they had to go onto a workplace agreement, and that they had to give up all the rights they had known for years. This was the game, the new deal; there was no choice. They had to either accept it or be made redundant. That was not a real choice, and it happened far too often due to the new system of laws that were put in place over the eight-year period, and that allowed employers to get away with it. The employer could get away with it with a new employee by the simple virtue of the law, and for an existing employee there was very little help or assistance offered by the Government to remedy injustices.

I would like to continue to talk about the very important job the Government has ahead of it, particularly in the area of industrial relations, which is an area that I have been interested in and active in for a very long time. However, I am mindful of the fact that a number of new members in this House want to contribute, and I do not want to hold up proceedings. I therefore conclude my remarks by saying that I look forward to the first contributions of the new members in this place.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the next member to speak, I remind members that this is an inaugural speech and due consideration should be given to that fact.

**HON DEE MARGETTS** (Agricultural) [7.40 pm]: I will start by acknowledging that this Parliament stands on Nyoongah land. I will begin with a brief explanation of what led to my being here. In 1983, or perhaps early 1984, a mentor of mine, Elaine Michael from Bridgetown, asked me whether I would consider standing in the federal election in support of Jo Vallentine, who went on to become the first senator for nuclear disarmament on the planet. At that stage, I thought it was an honour to be asked, but I was not ready to participate. It was not until 1988 that the issue came to the fore again. I have to put on the record my thanks to David Parker who was the Deputy Premier at the time. The reason members have to thank David Parker - or perhaps otherwise - is that he gave a talk to the local nuclear disarmament group in Fremantle on uranium mining, among other things. He so incensed the local group for nuclear disarmament that it said that something must be done about this man and they wanted a candidate to stand on such issues as industrial development, nuclear disarmament, uranium mining and the Petrochemical Industries Co Ltd plant - not just for its financial situation but for its environmental problems, which were not getting into the media at the time. A meeting was held in Fremantle. About 35 people turned up and they were all very keen to stand a candidate. I think everybody else took a step back, and I found myself standing there and eventually was nominated to be the candidate for the state seat of Fremantle. At that 1988-89 election, Chris Bridge - as Christabel Chamarette was then - was the candidate for the South Metropolitan Region. The next year was a federal election. I got a similar knee in the back and discovered that I was standing for the seat of Swan in the federal election against the then Minister for Defence, Kim Beazley. Being an antinuclear activist, it was a good opportunity to put defence and antinuclear issues on the agenda. We even had a hustings in Belmont to which 200 people turned up. That was the only defence hustings in that whole election, so it brought to the fore some of the issues that were otherwise not being debated at that time.

In the next year, with a similar knee in the back, I found myself a candidate for mayor of Perth. We did quite well with about 9.5 per cent of the vote in a Melbourne Cup field. The stocks for the Greens (WA) - if one can

believe the polls - went from about one per cent across the State up to almost eight per cent across the State. That was only because the mayoral election had a Greens candidate. By that stage I thought that I was okay at campaigning, and I voluntarily put my name down for preselection leading up to the 1992 state election. I was preselected for the Greens for the South Metropolitan Region. At the same time, a number of people - one at least is in the gallery tonight - suggested that I should also preselect for the Senate. I kept asking people what I should do, but they would not tell me. It was six of one and half a dozen of another, but nobody would tell me, until I was also preselected for the Senate; then all the phone calls came at once. I was told that they wanted me to stand for the Senate. Why did they not tell me that in the first place! I found myself preselected for the Senate. As it happened, the state election occurred first and the rest is history. Hon Jim Scott was preselected for the Greens (WA) and he won a seat. Once again I got the phone calls saying, "Gee, I bet you're sorry you didn't stand for South Metro." As a Green, I leave it to the cosmos, and the cosmos did provide. Not only did the Greens win a seat in the South Metropolitan Region, but also in the election the following year I was elected as a member of the Senate. Six years later, the cosmos did not provide quite so well, but there is always a reason. Having felt disappointed not to have held that senate seat - the Greens will win it back at the next election - I also felt extremely relieved not to have to get on the aircraft every two weeks to fly to Canberra.

In the meantime the Greens developed as a party. We came together in 1990 and Jo Vallentine, who had been the first senator in the entire universe for nuclear disarmament, became the first senator for the Greens (WA) in 1990. The Greens (WA) has a lot of history. I would like quickly to remind members that the Greens stand on four basic principles: peace and disarmament, environmental sustainability, social justice and participating in democracy. They are, and always have been, the four principles upon which the Greens base their policies and actions. Ironically, right now, I feel more right in this position than I could possibly express.

I would like to explain briefly why I believe we have an important job to do and why I feel excited and honoured to be in this situation. I will refer to the first speech I made in the Senate in 1993. It was a day similar to today. It was the second day of the Senate and the budget had just been put down - the now famous 1993 Labor budget - and I was in a hurry. I was involved with at least half of the Greens' legislation and with being a major spokesperson on economic issues. I will quote briefly from what I said in 1993 -

I will speak out, wherever possible, about the lunacy of a blind faith in the benefits of financial and economic deregulation.

I am horrified at the prospect of Australia being a signatory to the Uruguay Round of GATT. We in Australia do not even have a register of the ownership or control of our primary resources. Further, there is little, if any, scrutiny of the public resources which are used to subsidise industry by way of royalty deals, infrastructure, subsidised electricity and other resource use.

I talked about the costs and benefits which were untested, uncosted and unaccounted for at the same time we were making major policy changes which would affect certain sectors and not others.

I have to say that I did try to make the issue of the social and environmental impacts and potential problems of globalisation one of the major themes of my term in the Senate for six years. At the end of that I felt, in that I had wanted to make people understand what those issues were, that I had failed. It is ironic that in the meantime, after two years out of the Senate, in Australia and in this State we are beginning to have a debate - an in-depth debate at times - on the impacts of globalisation. We are beginning to talk about the impacts of globalisation on labour conditions and rights, and its impacts on communities and societies. We are beginning to debate the impacts of globalisation on the environment and on our future.

Now that I am in the Legislative Council, I feel excited that there is an opportunity for me to work further to try to bring this debate about in a real way within the Legislative Council so that we can move on and find a direction to go. I do not want only to say that globalisation is a problem, but to say what are the problems of globalisation and how we can address them as a state Legislature.

That is not the only reason that I am happy and proud to be in this situation. During my years as a senator, I found particular satisfaction in working and developing relationships with communities in such areas as Geraldton, Esperance, the Avon, the Gingin coast, Lancelin and so on. Those relationships are very important. Perhaps the most important part of the work of a parliamentary representative is to reach those people who otherwise find it difficult to have a voice within the parliamentary system, to represent their issues and values and to bring forward their concerns in the parliamentary process.

No doubt a large range of issues exist in the Agricultural Region for me to work on in the next four years. Some relate to coastal planning processes that are incomplete, faulty or just plain wrong-headed, and some are constantly recurring issues relating to roads, heavy haulage and other forms of transport - themes that members will hear about often from Hon Jim Scott. The people in some areas of the Agricultural Region have extreme concerns, relating particularly to decisions on heavy industry. For many years past and present, Governments

have put much effort into attempting to pick winners in particular areas by finding large resource projects and providing them with large amounts of assistance and subsidies in particular areas.

In the past two years I have researched some of those decisions to see whether in the end the community and the economy have benefited from the decisions taken to support large resource projects. Many issues relate to the effects of past and current - I emphasise current - overclearing of forests. Those issues include salinity, rising water tables and the impact of flooding on rivers and wetlands when rainfall patterns do not follow past patterns, but are most likely due to climate changes. Many issues of privatisation and deregulation are felt most keenly in regional Western Australia. The further the distance from Perth - perhaps Esperance is a good example - the more communities and local shires are able to clearly articulate the impacts on them of privatisation, deregulation, global free trade and such policies as the national competition policy. Bureaucrats and state politicians cannot explain the impacts, but the people in places such as Esperance are able to give chapter and verse on what is happening.

There are many employment and population issues in regional Australia, particularly in the Agricultural Region, and issues relating to the diversities of employment opportunities and the local economy; that is, the relationship between economic activities and the feeling of self-worth and confidence in a community. That is related to a decrease in population in many areas in which there are fewer opportunities now than in the past. It is the right time for the House to have this debate at a state level now that globalisation is recognised as a real problem. That does not mean that we can, or intend to, cut ourselves off from the rest of the world. People may ask whether we, as a nation, believe in competition. That is not the issue. The issue is whether the way we are progressing is beneficial or harmful, which groups in the community benefit and which groups are harmed, and what we can do as responsible parliamentarians to deal with those issues. First, we must recognise them; second, we must deal with them in a realistic and fair way.

I am pleased that I have been asked on many occasions recently to explain my view on the impact of globalisation on the Australian economy to groups in the community, including the Western Australian branch of the Economic Society of Australia and to people in university business courses and so on. I am pleased that this debate is happening at an academic level and that those people then explain to other people in the community how the economy works. My thesis of the past two years, which I hope to complete soon, relates to that issue and the impact on the public interest of the national competition policy and state agreement Acts in Western Australia. I looked at the concept of the national competition policy and state agreement Acts, and put them in a room together to see what they do to each other. The answer is that each shows some of the major problems in both. I believe it can be proved that there are fundamental flaws in the way the national competition policy was put together and implemented. Because it is such a large and complex issue to grasp, most public administrators and parliamentarians do not understand what they are dealing with. That is no real criticism of parliamentarians. I have written a thesis on it and it is an extremely complex issue. However, most decision makers do not understand what they are dealing with, and every time one tries to find the reasons for the problems, someone shifts the blame. The States say it is a problem with the Commonwealth; the Commonwealth says it is not its fault, as it is now being administered by the National Competition Council and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission; the ACCC say it is merely administering the legislation; and the National Competition Council say it is doing merely what it was told to do under the national competition policy agreements. However, nobody is prepared to take responsibility for the problems of inequity and implementation that are occurring.

Some of the major issues in this State echo many issues in the other States and relate to the implications of the legislative review. Even as a federal parliamentarian, I had a great deal of difficulty finding out the details of legislative reviews of major pieces of legislation; for instance, who participated in those reviews and what was happening. Some members may have heard a few questions asked in this State Parliament about a review of state agreement Acts. These reviews took place in secret. I therefore found myself writing a thesis and trying to find out what was taken into consideration in the review of state agreement Acts, which give a great deal of public assistance to major resource development projects, and whether they were indeed anticompetitive. I found that nothing has ever been published to indicate what was done; these are therefore secret reviews. This is a situation in which large corporations were treated differently from the way in which dairy farmers or members of the community were treated under the national competition policy. Across Australia something like 2 000 pieces of legislation were reviewed, many of which were required to be amended, repealed or otherwise altered. Yet, special arrangements with big business that might appear to be most anticompetitive escaped unscathed.

A range of changes relate to globalisation. The average person, particularly in regional Australia, can see - like the nose on his or her face - that different parts of the economy are treated in different ways. The average person in regional Australia can see that large supermarket chains are treated differently from dairy farmers and that big business appears to have benefited at the expense of small business. Some businesses have prospered by gaining

more business when local contractors have lost bids for contracts under the rules imposed by the national competition policy. Ironically, the impact on consumers has not been studied. I do not mean by that whether people can buy a greater range of personal computers or mobile phones but whether, as consumers, they have to wait longer for services and whether they can buy the range of goods and services they used to be able to buy. As a stress management activity, I make a lot of my own clothes. I find it very difficult to find a shop that sells haberdashery. I may be peculiar, but I believe other people want to buy those goods and services. It is not that there is no market for those goods and services, but that there is not a sufficient market. My belief, although I do not think it has been checked, is that we can buy many ranges of goods that have a very high turnover. However, it has been more and more difficult in the past few years for consumers to find the range of goods and services they need, even if they need them only once or twice in their lifetime. If we ask regional communities about the services and the range of goods they get and how far they must now travel to obtain them - I believe that in urban areas consumers have not necessarily been net beneficiaries - what would be the response? I imagine the response would be that they have not benefited, but have, in fact, been more disadvantaged. When we have put together a range of policies and introduced deregulation, which supposedly encourage the market, on the assumption that, in the end, as a community and even as consumers, we are all net beneficiaries - even if there are losses, there are gains that bring us to be net beneficiaries - that assumption has not been tested. Is it fair when farmers are required to deregulate their marketing arrangements because they are anticompetitive and somehow a farmer must negotiate prices at the farm door with some of the country's largest supermarket chains? I do not think so. In the end, if it means that we lose the ability to produce, say, fruit and vegetables and our own fresh milk supply in our State and end up being dependent on powdered, frozen or ultra heat-treated milk from the eastern States or overseas, how will we, as a community, particularly as consumers, benefit? How will the regions benefit? Many of those questions have not been asked.

What are the impacts on the young? The environment is seen as a commodity, and in many ways it has been put to the market test to see whether it can pay for itself. Clearly that is a ridiculous assumption and does not take into consideration the cost of neglecting the environment - the huge cost to which I referred earlier of neglect and overclearing over many decades, and which we are now beginning to think about in trying to repair the damage. Along with those considerations, we forget that the environment provides many services, which people are now beginning to count. Those services are noticed mainly when they have gone, when the spread of many diseases occurs that we have not had before and when there is an imbalance. We find out that the cost is real when we think about what we can do about the problem. However, we must talk about that and repair the damage. Those are the issues that are not dealt with effectively or adequately under policies such as the national competition policy.

What are the impacts on the young? We have decided we are a competitive society and that, rather than cooperate, we must make it on our own. In many cases, the concentration has been on downsizing. It has been almost impossible for young people to get a start in traineeships and apprenticeships. In many cases, young people do not know what is their future. They do not see that the world is offering them something or they do not know how certain their lives will be. A certain amount of alienation will result from our using the young simply as an economic extra - as something that is not part of our plans for economic rationalism.

There are impacts in general on local employment, wages and conditions. Of course, if anything, most literature is on the impact of wages and conditions of employment in relation to globalisation because the concentration has been on downsizing of organisations. I do not think this Government is an orphan in that. I am concerned about what is happening as an immediate consequence of getting rid of many public servants at the beginning of the Government's term and trying to work out the impact later.

It is not good enough for me to say I recognise there are major issues within the Agricultural Region, many of which are very intense. The most difficult job will be to work out where to go from here and how to work with community groups in relation, for instance, to the impact of the privatisation of water. We must decide how we will deal with some of the major problems that will result from putting our eggs into one basket and hoping the market will fix things from here. How do we work with communities to re-establish diversity? How do we revalue the concept of "community" itself? How do we put economics in its place as simply a way of describing how we meet our needs as a society rather than being something that rules us in every aspect of our lives? The onus is on us at the state level.

It is true that in 1995, following the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, a national Government in Australia signed up to national competition policy. The preparations of national competition policy involved linking up with the signing of the Uruguay round of GATT. The States all signed up to that brand of economic rationalism. It is also true that, at the time, the States, even the conservative States, were not exactly enthusiastic. However, the Keating Government raised a bucket of money in front of the States until they signed up. Few in the States who signed up for that agreement had any real inkling of the implications of

those decisions. It is also true that none of us will know the entire implications of what happens when we sign up to something as major as a policy change that says, "It's the dollar or it's the economy, stupid" rather than, "It's the community, the environment and the welfare of every citizen in the communities within which we live." We have a lot of responsibility. We were all part of this decision. We were all perhaps dozy in the 1980s and 1990s and let it happen without understanding much of what would happen to us. However, in the Legislative Council we have the chance to be a real House of review, with the chance to challenge those decisions. I guess that puts us in the hot seat.

I must acknowledge my colleagues Jim Scott, who has done so much good work in this Chamber since 1992, Giz and Chrissie - I am sorry, I should have said Hon Jim Scott, Hon Giz Watson and Hon Chrissie Sharp; I will refer to the issue of "honourable" later - and also, of course, my colleague Hon Robin Chapple. We now have an opportunity and a responsibility to bring an alternative viewpoint to the community about the steps we take to where we want to go rather than to just go along with the flow. It is often hardest to work out the vision for where we need to go and how to push the process.

I referred to the term "honourable". I formally announce that I will not use that term in relation to myself. I will not use it on my stationery or on the door of my office. I will not expect or require people to refer to me by that title. I did some research on the subject, from which I understand it was introduced around 1893. The ability to use it was considered important at the time. I am not trying to denigrate anyone or to be holier than thou. I feel very uncomfortable calling myself "honourable" because I believe it is something we should earn by our actions; it is not something we should put on like a garment. Therefore, I do not mind what people call me but I do not feel comfortable about calling myself honourable unless I have earned it. I ask, if possible, that the title not be used in reference to me. It is time that members realise that those types of archaic titles distance us from the community. We are members of the Legislative Council and that is a form of title in itself. I believe we have a responsibility to try to be more realistic about what the community wants from us and that respect is not something we can give ourselves by conferring titles upon ourselves.

I thank all those who worked so hard to create the Greens (WA) team, and especially those who helped me in my election to this place. We have achieved the best result from any State election by having five Greens legislative councillors. I thank all the Greens members and supporters, my friends and my family. I thank my mother and brother who are present tonight. In particular, I thank my partner, Nick. Without them, I would not be here.

I especially thank the electors of the Agricultural Region. I do not think they knew exactly what they were getting. To those people who, at times, make derogatory remarks about Greens or minor party representations, I would like to tell them to look at the vote. The voting patterns were very deliberate. I was extremely nervous in the run-up to the count and I could hardly bear to count the number of people who voted on a non-ticket vote. I noticed that the potential flow to my vote could have been in the order of 1 500 votes from the National Party. The potential flow from my side of the equation was about 5 300 non-ticket votes. As a result of the count, my vote increased. I got more flow from 1 500 votes from the other side than that which flowed from my side of 5 300 non-ticket votes. That is not a rah-rah to me. I want people to understand that more and more people are making deliberate choices in elections. They know for what they are voting. They may not know what they were getting, but I am darn sure that they understand they have got a representative who will listen to them and work for them. At the end of four years, they will understand that the Greens exist to be with the community. We will not get the changes we need within our society unless farmers, producers, coastal dwellers, teachers, occasional workers, children and the general community work with us and we work with the community. I look forward to the next four years. I have no doubt that it will involve a great deal of hard work. I thank the electors of the Agricultural Region and all those people who played a part in enabling me to be here through their work through the years in various ways. I thank them for their trust and support and I hope I can be worthy of them.

[Applause.]

**HON LOUISE PRATT** (East Metropolitan) [8.14 pm]: I congratulate you, Mr Deputy President, on your election and I look forward to working with you in this House. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Nyoongah people as the traditional owners of the land on which this Parliament meets. I am very excited to be a member of this place. It creates great opportunities for supporting and connecting with diverse Western Australian communities. It is also somewhat daunting. I have had to pinch myself on more than one occasion to check that it is real. I wonder whether I am presumptuous in thinking that I deserve a place here. Upon briefly and tentatively expressing my self-doubt, I was strongly reprimanded by my friends and supporters. This place must, after all, be open and accessible to all members of our community and it is as a young Labor woman from the eastern hills that I rightly take my place here.

My first speech in this place will cover a range of topics with connecting themes of activism and change. In particular, I shall focus on how activism has brought positive social change and thereby makes people's lives better, and how activism can mitigate against some of the worst excesses of change. I will firstly tell the House

something about myself as people's life experiences obviously shape their political attitudes. I was born in Kalgoorlie in 1972. At the age of 29 I believe I may be the youngest woman ever elected to this place, although I hope this does not remain the case for long. My mother has instilled in me strong feminist principles and although she was a member of the Women's Electoral Lobby when it was first founded in the 1970s, I would have to say that her feminism was taught to me most strongly by her example rather than her words. My grandmother was a pharmacist until she had children. I believe she regretted having to give up her career. My mother understood the importance of gaining her own economic independence and she studied to become a physiotherapist. Her qualifications became a lifeline as her marriage failed and she found herself as a single parent of two daughters. As I had a working mother, I appreciate the importance of high-quality child care; especially as, at the age of four, I once escaped by climbing through a fence and wandered around Herdsman Lake. When I was six, my mother, Sandra, met Greg, who I now claim as my dad, just as I am his daughter. Following the birth of my younger brother, Nicholas, we moved to the hills. I tell the House this because my family experiences have done much to mould what I think of as family values. They have little to do with marriage or genetic parentage and have a lot to do with who is present to provide love and care in a family. I believe the definition of such values has been cast so narrowly in the past that it has been to the detriment of many families. Such values were responsible for unmarried mothers being forced to relinquish their children and for many Aboriginal children being stolen from their families.

The sometimes harsh economic climate of the 1980s took its toll on our family, especially my mother, who felt the pressures of being a supermum as she had a stressful profession and a young family. Meanwhile, dad struggled with building our family home while my two-year-old brother wandered around the construction site. I believe dad was the only father on parent duty at my brother Nicholas' kindergarten.

While growing up in the hills may seem an idyllic existence in many ways, with plenty of open spaces to explore, it also presents many frustrations for young people such as the lack of transport, entertainment and employment. These are issues that are still common in the hills and outer suburbs that make up my East Metropolitan electorate. When visiting friends it was almost always necessary to harass a parent into driving me somewhere. At the age of 12 I joined what I feel was my first political organisation, the Girl Guides. That group afforded to me many opportunities that would have otherwise been beyond my reach. I was schooled at state primary schools and attended a private girls school for a short time before attending Eastern Hills Senior High School in year 10. I was shocked at the contrast between the resources and class sizes of the schools, not to mention the bullying and violence. For a short time, I was the victim of intense school bullying. Bullying continues to be a problem with which schools battle. I strongly believe more must be done to tackle it. Despite these experiences, I strongly value my state school education. I had many excellent teachers and a diverse group of friends. It has shaped my values in more positive ways than a privileged private school education ever could.

After leaving school, I worked for a year as a checkout operator at a Coles supermarket. I think it was the hardest job I have ever had and it fed my thirst to make the most of life. I enrolled at the University of Western Australia and did a history major. I also threw myself earnestly into student politics. My first sense of state politics was during the early 1990s when the previous Government introduced the voluntary student unionism legislation. I assisted in organising a protest involving about 1 000 students on the steps of Parliament. Sadly, we did not succeed in convincing the then Government not to proceed with the legislation. As a result, student representation, support services, amenities and cultural activities have been devastated in this State, especially at Edith Cowan University. I am pleased that the new Labor Government will take action to remedy the situation. After university, I spent some time being unemployed and to stop the constant frustration I experienced, I spent my time doing volunteer work. I obtained work experience with members of Parliament and on the anti-French nuclear test campaign. It was this that eventually led me to a part-time job working for a member of Parliament. I never really saw politics as a career path; rather, I threw myself into a range of causes that I thought important, instead of thinking about career development. The contributions of members here are all partly manifestations of our own beliefs and those of our political parties, our ability to empathise with others, and our intellect, but they are also influenced by our life experiences, and my experiences are fairly typical of the so-called generation X. I believe a strong dose of humility is important in politics. Parliamentarians are nothing by themselves. It is only in connecting with issues, communities and ideas that we can really achieve things.

I will now speak about change and the ability of Western Australian citizens to participate in creating the kind of local, state, national and global community they would like to live in. This might seem like a grand, idealistic platform to tackle; nevertheless, it is entirely appropriate to discuss this as it is at the heart of the general malaise and cynicism that surrounds people's feelings about politics and politicians. Many people in our society are disempowered and disenfranchised. We claim to be an egalitarian society. However, we permit high levels of unemployment and poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, inequality of life expectancy, and unequal education and employment opportunities. Many people face issues of social exclusion because of disability, sexism, homophobia, loss of family networks - the list goes on. It is easy to see how people feel they are at a loss in being able to participate in society, when it is a struggle just to get by. Many people complain that things in the

world are so dreadful, and ask what difference they can make. Some feel the problems facing the world are too hard and many of our problems too intractable. The temptation is to give up and get on with one's own life. Such pessimistic feelings can be overwhelming; I have had them myself at times, and I believe this is one of the reasons many people express cynicism when it comes to politics and politicians. I have had more than a couple of people express alarm at my becoming a member of Parliament, as if to say "What did you go and do that for?". Fortunately, not everyone has a pessimistic view of the future. I believe that when people dare to hope for a better future, and act on that belief, anything is possible. Mark Allen, a young union organiser with whom I was fortunate enough to go to university, had a favourite saying: "Dare to struggle, dare to win". Sadly, Mark died in a tragic accident on a demolition site while defending workers' rights - something he passionately believed in. I would like to acknowledge the imprint he left on many people's lives. I want to pay tribute to the many other activists who have fought for so many causes in our community. Such activists do believe that we can change things, and in fact do so. Western Australia may be a diverse and vast place, but in many ways it is still a small community. I have found this means that even small groups of people with commitment, hard work and creativity can create change and right wrongs in our society.

This is what brought me to join the Australian Labor Party. As a party of reform the Labor Party has historical gathered muscle to tackle large and confronting social issues, such as sexism, racism, discrimination, social and economic inequality, native title and reconciliation, although I must say we have not always moved as quickly as I would like on many issues. The key to the Labor Party's success in tackling these issues lies in its strong links to people and communities. This strength has grown out of Labor's historical and continuing commitment to representing working people and doing it collectively. I will stand up for the rights of people to organise collectively as unionists and as activists for social and economic justice and change. Being involved in the Labor Party and the wider Labor movement has enabled me to participate in a whole range of important causes and networks of people, including feminists, workers for reconciliation, environmentalists, anti-nuclear activists, unionists and others fighting for social justice and human rights.

Since the age of 22 I have been a lesbian and gay rights activist, a cause which at times seemed hopeless. I have sat in the gallery of this place many times listening to debates. Once I even wore a pink triangle pinned to my chest. The pink triangle has now been claimed as a lesbian and gay liberation symbol, but it first appeared when the Nazis used it in the same way as they used the Star of David: to mark people out for extermination. I was outraged by the lack of progress made on these issues under the previous Government. It was at times extremely upsetting to listen to the myths and stereotypes about lesbian and gay people emanating from this place, although I must also acknowledge the very heartening voice of those who worked for reform, despite the failure of the legislation to pass both Houses. Western Australia has the worst laws in the nation as far as lesbian and gay rights are concerned. We have no antidiscrimination legislation, and no relationship recognition. This discrimination disadvantages not only lesbian and gay people, but also their children. Our laws restricting lesbian access to reproductive technology and the discriminatory age of consent for gay men contravene both international and commonwealth law. We cannot kid ourselves that we are a just community until these laws are changed. Mr President, you can imagine my joy on Labor winning government and my being elected to this place. To go from being a community activist feeling like I was banging my head against a brick wall to becoming a member of this place who will have a voice and a vote on these matters is truly exhilarating. It is time that my partner Linda and I were properly recognised as a couple with the same rights that others take for granted, including property rights, inheritance rights, guardianship rights and superannuation. I, like other lesbian and gay people, am sick of being treated as a second-class citizen in this State. I hope to be part of a Parliament that will finally begin to bring real equality to lesbian and gay Western Australians. For me this is no small turnaround.

Being an activist for lesbian and gay rights has not always been easy. All lesbian and gay people struggle with issues of coming out, and it is not something that is done once. There can be many awkward moments through life meeting new people. Being up-front and honest has always been important for my own peace of mind. Being a gay and lesbian activist has not just been about law reform; it has been, more importantly, about reaching out to the wider community, demonstrating to people that it is okay to be lesbian or gay. It has also been about creating positive images in the media to make it easier on young people who are lesbian or gay and who struggle with self-loathing and low self-esteem, because they think the world despises them. I have heard too many stories about school bullying, which often includes violent incidents that are essentially criminal in nature and is based on a student's perceived gayness. It makes little difference if the person is gay or not. This is something that must be addressed as a matter of public policy in our schools, particularly in rural and regional areas, where there is a high rate of youth suicide.

I sincerely thank my family for being so supportive of me, of my partner Linda and of my political activities. I have been very fortunate, as many lesbian and gay friends have suffered terribly because their families have rejected them. I pay tribute to the visible, vibrant, diverse and supportive lesbian and gay community here in Western Australia. In particular, I pay tribute to the Gay and Lesbian Singers of Western Australia, Lesbian and

Gay Pride, and Gay and Lesbian Equality, and the many people who have over the decades campaigned for lesbian and gay rights in this State, including Damien Meyer, Kamila Kaninski, Brian Greig and countless older and wiser lesbians. I would also like to thank the lesbian and gay press, which has played an important role in keeping people informed and facilitating community activism. Lesbian and gay issues are not the only issues for which I have been an active campaigner. Of course, as a lesbian that issue has been of personal importance to me.

It is unfortunate that many people feel reluctant to speak out on issues of personal and emotional importance. Most often these subjects are talked about on a detached and theoretical basis. Too many issues in society are blanketed as taboo subjects. More people need to speak out about domestic violence, child abuse, drug abuse, racism and sexism. We can build positive change out of people's experiences. A really good example is how much the stories of people from the stolen generations have contributed to the spirit and progress of reconciliation.

I know that as members of Parliament we should listen to the experts and consultants. However, importantly, we must also listen to and draw on the experiences of people affected. In order to achieve this we must create the space within our media, community and democracy for oppressed and silenced voices to be heard. My experiences have taught me that committed community activism and confronting issues head-on can change things for the better. At times during these campaigns it was difficult to see the big picture - or whether we would reach any of our goals - but the important thing was to keep on pushing.

A strong personal and collective commitment to a cause can indeed create change - or stop regressive change - as we can see from as far back as the campaign to give women the vote in the 1890s, through to the more recent Patricks waterfront dispute, the fight to save Leighton Beach and the abortion rights campaign in 1998. The examples in Western Australian history are endless.

I especially acknowledge the forest activists who have played such a vital role in protecting our old-growth forests. At times there was alarm expressed at their tactics - people chaining themselves to machinery and climbing huge trees, not to come down for days on end. At times it seemed as though the wider community could not relate to the pleas of people stereotyped as feral tree huggers who were perceived as interfering with other people's livelihoods. Community sentiment gradually changed and people realised a lot was at stake in the old-growth forests of our south west. The commitment of these activists was at the heart of turning the forest issue into a real election issue, and an issue which helped decide people's votes at the polls. I was therefore ecstatic when logging finally stopped, and this became one of the first of Labor's policies to be implemented. However, we still have much work to do to ensure the sustainability of both our environment and local communities who need viable livelihoods.

This leads me to speak more broadly about the ability of people and communities to shape and control their individual family and community lives, particularly in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalised world. As I said before, there is some talk, but I suspect there is an even greater subcurrent of feeling, about the sense that people cannot influence the rapid changes fuelled by globalisation that are shaping our world and our local communities. Globalisation has, in part, meant that it is accepted that Governments must curb their spending and restructure their economies in order to participate in international markets. I believe many people have correctly perceived that our social and economic choices have narrowed because of what international markets will allow. This in turn has fed cynicism about the political process, as people question the ability of Governments and politicians to solve the problems facing our communities.

Government, business and the media place a huge emphasis on our economy. I am not saying this is not justified. However, I suggest that this has at times been at the expense of community values and at the expense of dialogue about what we can do to build communities. For example, increased emphasis on productivity and efficiency has demanded from people longer and longer working hours, which cannot help but be at the expense of people's personal, family and community relationships. Paradoxically, many others remain on the unemployment queue. Other examples include the privatisation of school cleaning and the contracting out of many social services, so that the bottom line is no longer community outcomes but profitability and competition. We have a strong discourse in both our local and international communities that promotes the principles of the market economy. However, the value systems that support community and social justice are more diffuse and for some reason are seen as less tangible than the market. Therefore, we often rely on economic and market indicators to show us how well we are doing as a community. Hon Geoff Gallop touched on these issues in a speech he presented a few years ago to the Western Australian branch of the Economic Society of Australia. He pointed out the flaws of using growth in gross domestic product as a measure of society's progress and wellbeing. The clean-up costs of a massive oil spill would show up as a positive in our GDP while the work of householders in caring for children and the elderly and volunteer work would not. Many of the things that make living in Western Australia worthwhile are the result of voluntary contributions, community activism, sporting

club activities, environmental restoration projects, firefighting and meals on wheels. People's contributions to local communities are endless. I hope that the Labor Government can turn serious attention to valuing properly the healthy and happy communities that are so important to our quality of life.

There is no doubt that there have been both winners and losers in the course of globalisation. It has opened the way for huge economic exports of iron ore, other natural resources and primary produce. Over the past few decades it has contributed to significant economic growth. However, the importance we have placed on the market and maintaining economic growth has been used as an excuse not to tackle pressing social, environmental and justice issues. A good example is the way the previous Government saw native title as a threat to the economy. I believe this purported threat is neither real nor likely. Indigenous people know it is a matter of balance; the naysayers do not. The previous Government did not approach the process with the same sense of goodwill, and I hope that we can improve things. More and more, people are now realising that we cannot simply let the market rule. The Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse emissions is an example of the collective, worldwide recognition that market forces must be reined in to prevent the destruction of our planet. I have been mortified at Australia's lack of commitment to the Kyoto Protocol to decrease greenhouse emissions. The weakness of our position contributes to enabling the United States to snub its nose at this very important issue. John Howard has turned his back and Australia is not pulling its weight in this regard. That does not mean Western Australia must follow his lead. All Western Australians must pull their weight; as the saying goes, "Think global; act local." Indeed, should Western Australia fail in reducing emissions, it will put us behind economically because we will fail to maximise our use of new and important technologies. Globalisation, which has significantly increased our level of consumption and industrialisation, has greatly increased pressure on our environment. The demand for economic growth has been at the expense of our biodiversity and forests and has contributed to the laying to waste of large tracts of land to salinity.

Growing up in the 1980s was a strange dichotomy, as it still is for young people today. Ours was always a globalised world. The focus of our world is on consumer culture, but we are being increasingly educated about and made aware of the perils this culture presents to our natural environment. Globalisation has brought with it an escalation in our consumer culture. Our acceptance of that culture is dangerous not only to the environment, but also to our social fabric. More and more of life's opportunities are available only if one has money. We have reached the point at which young people cannot hang out in shopping malls. They are asked to move on by security if they have no money to spend. We cannot continue to restrict people's ability to participate in society according to whether or not they have money. Families with unemployed breadwinners find that their children cannot afford to participate in local sporting clubs. This is one of the reasons for the backlash against the federal Government in response to the impact of the goods and services tax on hotel beer prices. Australians were offended by a tax on basic social interaction - meeting one's friends at the pub for a quiet beer.

As Western Australians, we cannot surrender our powers as a community or a democracy to the so-called inevitable forces of the market and globalisation. I am not antiglobalisation but we must shape our own State and community and not let market forces be the sole dictators of our values and direction. We must remember that we live in a community, not an economy.

Tackling these issues will present many challenges for Governments around the world as we head deeper into the twenty-first century. I do not believe that Governments should just seek to ameliorate the inequities that economic globalisation can impose on communities. We must do more to push the principles of international democracy in order to exercise some international control. Members might wonder why I bother to make that point in State Parliament. I agree with Dee Margetts that confronting this issue is a job for not only our federal Government, but also state and local Governments which are continuously confronted with the consequences of our increasingly globalised world. If we want a global economy, we must also be a fully functional global community with all its accountabilities.

I passionately believe in improving the quality of our democracy. Recently, I have enjoyed reading about the history of women gaining the vote in Western Australia. In 1899, women gained the right to vote by a concurrence of women's demands and political expediency on the part of the Government. In the late 1890s, the Premier, Sir John Forrest, appeared an inflexible opponent of women's suffrage, although his wife, Lady Forrest, was a determined advocate of enfranchisement. During a parliamentary debate on the matter in December 1897 the Premier said, "I would like to know what would be the feelings of any man who works for his living if, on returning home after a hard days work, seeking to provide for his wife and family, he found his wife had gone to a political meeting."

These views prevailed until he thought that women's voices would balance the radical and growing voices of workers in the goldfields. In 1899 women gained the right to vote. It was hoped that by doing so, it would swing the balance of power back to the more gentrified coastal towns. The hard work and energy of women suffrage campaigners also did much to win John Forrest and his allies over to the side of democracy. Although

we can reflect proudly on the fact that Western Australia was one of the first democracies to give white women the vote, it was, sadly, a long time - 1963 - before the property franchise was completely removed in this place, something which would have also contributed to excluding women.

There are parallels between the campaign for women's suffrage and our current one vote, one value debate. I am incredulous that a vote in the Mining and Pastoral Region is worth four times that of a vote in my electorate of the East Metropolitan Region. If we want to continue to claim to be a democracy, we must stick to a principle of one vote, one value. No citizen should have a greater democratic voice than any other. Members of this place must continue to examine the quality of our franchise in terms of how representative it is of the community. We should do so on democratic principles and not political expediency. I believe the problem of vote weighting in the election of members to this place has caused more than one travesty of justice. We must pursue one vote, one value for the sake of our democracy. Without vote weighting, I am sure that the State would have made more progress on lesbian and gay rights and rights for Aboriginal people, particularly concerning native title.

We should introduce public funding for elections at a state level. Although some people would express alarm at public funds going to political parties, we must counter a growing cynicism in the community about business exercising influence, whether subtle or overt, over political parties and politicians. Although I understand that Government must smooth the way for business to operate free of impediments, business - as I reflected on in my earlier comments about globalisation - should not impede democracy.

I believe that we should examine lowering the voting age to 16, as the majority of people of this age are at least as politically aware as other voters. They have their own articulate views and opinions, to which members of Parliament should be responsive and accountable.

Women in Western Australia have come a long way since the suffrage debates of more than 100 years ago, and I make special mention of the many women, especially Labor women, who have contributed broadly to politics and the feminist cause. At the first Labor women's conference in Western Australia in 1912, the following motions were passed advocating female representation in Parliament and equal pay -

That this first Labor Women's Conference urges upon the Government to promote legislation that will remove sex disability and grant to women full citizenship, thereby permitting them to nominate as candidates for the Legislative Council and Assembly, municipal councils . . .

That equality of employment and wage be persistently advocated for men and women, practised in our own labor union's business transactions.

Although women have come a long way, these issues are as relevant as ever. There are more women in this place than ever before, but they still do not comprise 50 per cent of members, which is how it should be. Equality of wages between women and men in this State has gone backwards. We must urgently address that. I am pleased that the Government has begun tackling this by increasing the minimum wage.

We live a complex and fast-changing world that can at times be a struggle for everyone, but especially for those who are impoverished by economic or social marginalisation. Fortunately, Western Australia has many committed citizens working together to improve our community and protect our environment. As parliamentarians, our worth will depend on our links with the people at the coalface of the hands-on work of trying to build a better world.

I conclude by saying thanks, firstly, to mum and dad, my sister, Fleur, and my brother, Nicholas, who are brilliant people and have been of great support. I thank Carmen Lawrence for being a mentor and supporter, and someone who has inspired and challenged me. I have a deep respect for her. She has shown me that the satisfaction gained from assisting people and communities far outweighs the stress and adversity of politics. I thank my friends and supporters in and outside the Australian Labor Party, who are too numerous to mention; however, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge Penny Sharpe, Jo Tilly, Alan Kirkland, Philip O'Donoghue, Ruth Webber, Jacke Alderson, Roger Janssen, Teresa Browne, Emma Stallard, Marinomoana Ward, Kim Bryant, Maddelena Torre, Jaye Radisich, Marlene Robinson and Jan O'Meara. I also thank Young Labor and Emily's List. I especially thank Alanna Clohesy for TLC at stressful moments, and I extra especially thank Steven Dawson and his family. I thank my partner of eight years, Linda, without whom I would not be here. Our partnership is not only one of passion and love, but also has been full of political debate and practical assistance. I am very lucky to have a partner who understands politics and political life, and whose political talents in many ways surpass my own. I thank those involved in the lower House Labor election campaigns in the East Metropolitan Region for working so hard and thereby assisting my election to this place. Lastly, I thank the electors of East Metropolitan Region. I humbly assure them that I do not take my place in this House for granted, and that I will remain committed to working for a better future for all Western Australians.

[Applause.]

Debate adjourned until a later stage, on motion by Hon E.R.J. Dermer.