



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Ms Jessica Shaw, MLA

(Member for Swan Hills)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Thursday, 11 May 2017

Reprinted from Hansard

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 11 May 2017

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

MS J.J. SHAW (Swan Hills) [3.34 pm]: I move —

That the following Address-in-Reply to Her Excellency's speech be agreed to —

To Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, AC, Governor of the State of Western Australia.

May it please Your Excellency —

We, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

Mr Speaker, I wish to express my deep sense of privilege and honour in addressing the house in reply to the Governor's address. I congratulate you on your election to the position of Speaker, and also wish to congratulate the Premier and my new colleagues on both sides of the house on their election to office.

I would like to acknowledge the members of my family in the public gallery today—my mother, Tracy, my brother, Jordan, and my aunt Michelle and uncle Steve. I would also like to acknowledge my family members who were not able to attend today and thank them for their unwavering love, support and encouragement throughout my life and especially over the last 18 months.

I would like to thank my campaign director, Dave Kelly, for his guidance, as well as my campaign team—you have all become like family to me. I simply could not have done this without you. I thank particularly my inimitable campaign manager—your friendship is truly one of the best things to have come out of this. I would also like to express my gratitude for the overwhelming kindness, generosity and hard work of my volunteers, supporters and friends, who are too numerous to list but who, hopefully, know how much I appreciate their help. I also thank my colleagues—the “class of 2017”—for their camaraderie and friendship. We have shared quite a journey together, and it is an honour to now serve alongside all of you.

I would particularly like to thank three women for their mentorship and guidance—Senator Sue Lines, Alannah MacTiernan, and especially my long-time friend Lisa Baker, MLA. I would like to recognise the hard work and fantastic campaign conducted by the team in the party office, and thank EMILY's List and my mentor, Helen Creed. I also want to say what a privilege it was to work closely for the first time in my career with the union movement. I truly admire the hard work, fierce advocacy and preparedness to defend its members' interests, and I acknowledge its role in, and commitment to, delivering this historic change in government. I would also like to acknowledge the advice given to me by the first Labor member for Swan Hills, Gavan Troy, and celebrate the contribution and life of Jaye Radisich, who made such a lasting impact in the electorate and whose friendship I valued greatly; Jaye was taken from us far too young.

THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

Swan Hills is a particularly beautiful place to call home. I first moved into the electorate over a decade ago, and my extended family has lived there for almost 30 years. Over that time the hills community has educated our children, supported our small businesses, defended our properties against bushfire, and provided friendship and support through good times and bad. I will never forget how the Chidlow community, particularly the Cougars football club, rallied around to support my family upon the loss of my father; I am eternally grateful. I want to thank the people of Swan Hills for placing their trust in me to serve and represent them. I assure them that I will be a strong advocate for their interests, a willing ear for their grievances, a staunch ally in the pursuit of their causes and a great supporter of our community.

I have always felt the strong sense of community in Swan Hills. It has been a particularly wonderful part of this whole experience to witness firsthand the work of so many local organisations, such as the volunteer bush fire brigades that defend our homes and lives every summer; the progress, resident and ratepayer associations in Chidlow, Bullsbrook, Gidgegannup and Mt Helena that advocate tirelessly for local interests; the recreation and sporting groups that are so very often the social heart of our towns; the arts groups that bring vibrancy and creativity into our neighbourhoods; and the social groups for youth, seniors and migrant communities, the men's sheds and environmental groups—all of which provide opportunities for friendship and work so hard to make a difference to the lives of their members.

The spirit of community exists in Swan Hills and throughout our great state because of one incontrovertible truth: we need one another. Community shapes identities, provides purpose and satisfies our need to belong. It can improve our physical, mental and economic health, as well as our sense of fulfilment and happiness. It has the power to unite all in a common bond, allowing us to enjoy one another's company, take care of one another and work together to build our families and make our neighbourhoods great places to live.

The neoliberal narrative has long encouraged us to think of ourselves as atomised individualistic consumers, remote from, and in competition with, one another. Right-wing, bigoted, divisive political movements also urge people to focus on the points of difference, rather than on the things that bind us together. It cannot be a coincidence that with this as our dominant societal narrative, people feel increasingly lonely, disempowered, isolated and marginalised. It cannot be a coincidence that mental health is increasingly at risk for so many in our community, but it is not natural and it is not inevitable, because it is not who we are.

The concept of community should be the very heart of a government's agenda—supporting it and strengthening it, fostering greater understanding and promoting links between people, and encouraging tolerance and respect for difference, whilst building mutually reinforcing bonds, developing common spaces and encouraging collaborative effort to the benefit of all.

Labor understands the importance of community. Labor has always fought to sustain communities and ensure that we all share society's collective burdens and benefit from its wealth. Throughout the election campaign we strove to connect to local communities, to focus on the issues that truly matter to people, to listen to their concerns and to respond to their needs. In Swan Hills this meant committing to delivering the train to Ellenbrook and improving transport infrastructure, enhancing policing and community safety, ensuring WA jobs for WA workers, supporting and improving bushfire prevention and management, and keeping Western Power in public hands.

We also made a number of local commitments, recognising that only so much change can be delivered through the hard power of the ballot box—so much more can be delivered through the soft power of individual and community mobilisation. Acknowledging the tireless efforts of our local parents and citizens associations, we have provided grants for shade sails,

electronic signs, sporting and musical equipment, and playground equipment for schools across the electorate. We will provide the local volunteer bush fire brigades with the money they need for equipment. We will expand the Ellenbrook Men's Shed and upgrade a range of sporting and recreational facilities, including Brigadoon State Equestrian Centre, the skate park in Mt Helena, the Gidgegannup Recreation Club and, finally, the long-awaited Chidlow football oval lights.

Perhaps, however, the most important local commitment that we made was to establish a youth centre in Ellenbrook and extend mental health and youth suicide prevention services. Ellenbrook's disproportionately high rates of youth suicide and mental health issues are well documented, and there are growing domestic violence and broader community safety issues throughout the region. Kids there need somewhere to go, something to do, somewhere to socialise and, perhaps most importantly, somewhere safe to escape if things get a little too tough at home. By establishing the centre, Labor will support the great work already being done by a range of youth-focused community groups. I would particularly like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the team at the Ellenbrook youth service. My hope is that a youth centre will provide a safe and supportive place for young people and a base for service providers to reach at-risk kids, and that it will also promote links with other community groups.

We cannot fail on this commitment to our young people. We cannot develop massive new suburbs and then not follow through with the services and facilities our young people need. We cannot ignore the fact that a considerable proportion of crime in the area can be attributed to low-level offences committed by kids with nothing to do and we cannot accept that it is legitimate to just shunt those kids into the juvenile justice system, with its attendant impacts on life outcomes. We cannot sit by when our youth are crying out, sometimes in the most tragic way imaginable, for support. I give my absolute commitment to work alongside the community, both on the delivery of this commitment and on the continued elevation of youth issues in the electorate. Young people's voices are too often unheard and I will work hard to change that in Swan Hills.

THE ENABLING AND ENSURING STATE

I feel so passionately about this issue because I grew up in the outer western suburbs of Sydney and I know what it is like to live in a poor area with no services, nothing for kids to do, no way to get out and no support if things get bad at home. I have seen the trouble that is created. I have lost friends, through both mischief-making gone tragically wrong and suicide when all hope runs out. If we as a community cannot work to address these issues, we condemn generations to mental health issues, domestic violence, unemployment and poverty, and I do not want to see that happen in a community that I love. It takes a lot to break out of the cycle and people simply cannot do it alone. As much as the state needs to support communities, it also needs to support and enable individuals. In hard times it is important to have support. People can only fully participate in their communities, and indeed in the broader society and the economy, when they receive help during times of difficulty and are able to access the basic foundations of financial and personal security.

I know this because I have lived this. I am the proud daughter of a bricklayer and was the first person in my family to finish high school. My father was a hardworking man who, despite being exceptionally bright, with hopes of a career in marine biology, was regularly unable to attend school on account of the horrific beatings both he and my grandmother received at the hands of his stepfather. When they finally fled and were forced to live in a car, my dad did as any young man of fourteen would: he gave up his dream; he left school to support his mother. My mother also left school at fifteen, and when my parents married, they raised their young family in public housing.

We migrated to Australia in 1988 and my parents worked hard to establish a new life for us. Although they did their very best for my brother and I, we were far from flush. There were years when we could not afford school uniforms, let alone private schooling, so I attended Picton High School, the local public school. My fantastic teachers put so much of themselves into my education, often providing additional tuition before and after hours, and I am eternally indebted to Kevin Thomas and Mark Storch for all they did for me. My public school education enabled me to complete three undergraduate degrees at high-quality, affordable Australian universities, where my admission was based not on my postcode or my parents' bank account, but on my intellectual capabilities.

My public school education paved the way to the University of Cambridge, where I completed my master's degree in law, unlocking a whole world of learning and opportunity. It enabled me to pursue an exciting and fulfilling career, first in international relations and then in the corporate sector. My brother, cousins and I all received a public education. We all went on to either tertiary study or to pursue TAFE qualifications and trades. Our success is due to the fact that the state invested in us all those years ago. The Labor movement has always fought for high-quality public education and training. I cannot emphasise enough how much I believe in its importance and how fiercely I will defend it.

My family has also endured extended unemployment and extreme financial hardship. During the 1990s recession, unemployment benefits were there, available to keep our heads above water as my dad drove from empty building site to empty building site desperately trying to find work. My mother has had cancer three times and my father had a debilitating neurological condition, and, again, an accessible universal health care system and sickness benefits were there to take care of us.

These are the institutions that the Labor movement has always fought for. They protected us and helped us get through the very worst of times. As a society we must acknowledge both the enabling role of the state in helping people to "become" and also the role it can play in protecting people from the very worst of luck. We must defend the core importance of the public sphere to a decent society, one in which citizens can pursue their aspirations and feel safe, protected and secure. Having benefited so much from the institutions that the Labor movement has fought so hard for, I feel proud and honour-bound to now protect them, in the hope that other bricklayers' daughters might have the same opportunities I have enjoyed.

SHARED RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES: THE ACTIVE STATE AND DYNAMIC MARKET

The concept of community and the legitimacy of state action to both enable and ensure has important implications for the relationship between the state and the market. Community is the most profound, pervasive and permanent concept affecting our everyday lives. We live, work, buy and sell in communities. A community's social values are the principal regulators of economic life and manifest themselves in workplace arrangements, employment conditions, laws, institutions of government, and even our purchasing decisions.

Although markets are undoubtedly the engines of innovation and change in the economy, they also generate waste and inefficiency wherever they result in growing inequality, exploitation and skewed concentrations of wealth. Markets fail their communities when they condemn vast sections of our population to poor health, low education, restricted access to housing and reduced life expectancy. The strong, active state is able to redress this, providing social infrastructure that is ultimately good for business. Government investment in education, training, health, and social support for the unskilled, excluded or unemployed, are all beneficial for companies, ensuring a skilled, healthy workforce and providing the conditions for a secure and stable business environment.

A strong, active state can also stimulate economic activity by investing in value-generating projects, such as Metronet, Labor's flagship infrastructure project, that will deliver construction and manufacturing jobs. The state can assist to diversify our economy and create new commercial opportunities. It can encourage stable, long-term investment in modern, productive economic capacity. Strong dynamic markets are also very necessary to the progressive cause. They encourage innovation and experimentation and give rise to new markets, industries, employment opportunities, and goods and services. Innovation and experimentation both generate and perpetuate the momentum for technological and economic development.

Corporations should take risks and be legitimately rewarded for it, but they also have a duty to support their community. They should contribute a fair share of taxation, pay royalties for the sale of the Western Australian people's natural resources, pay workers a fair wage, provide safe workplaces and reasonable conditions of employment and ensure that their activities do not harm the natural environment in which they operate.

The state and the market are necessarily entwined, occupy the same space and often exercise similar functions. They exist and depend on one another in a symbiotic relationship sharing both rights and responsibilities. If we are to have any hope at all of tackling the economic challenges facing Western Australia and, I shall argue, the growing threat of climate change, we must recognise that concepts such as mutual support, shared objectives and collective responsibility are highly relevant to the functioning of the state and the market, and that the only way we will be able to achieve anything for Western Australia is through the joint efforts of government and industry.

[Member's time extended.]

SHARED LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms J.J. SHAW: Over my decade-long career in the corporate sector, developing, delivering and managing a range of energy infrastructure assets, both here in Western Australia and across Australia, I have often seen corporations demonstrate true leadership and own their part in contributing to the public good. People in the WA energy sector in particular genuinely work to create a better future—marrying the profit motive with environmental responsibility and innovating towards a dynamic, sustainable energy economy. These people have an eye to the bottom line and to broader societal benefit and the state has a responsibility to support and encourage them—to exercise true political leadership.

A range of innovators in the WA energy sector are developing large and small-scale renewable energy projects. Companies are exploring local cooperatives and block-chain platforms for energy trading. Entire subdivisions aim towards more sustainable energy solutions, combining solar and battery technologies with traditional grid-sourced power. Commercial buildings, apartments and homes are being developed with energy-efficient design principles, delivering benefits to owners and, perhaps most importantly, to tenants, who disproportionately bear the brunt of energy-inefficient dwellings and rising utility costs.

New energy technologies are increasingly cost competitive with traditional energy sources; can operate to increase the efficiency of existing network infrastructure; and represent new opportunities for economic diversification, jobs and the export of intellectual property, services and products to the world. Most importantly, however, they can reduce the carbon intensity of the WA energy sector and assist us to tackle climate change in a meaningful and effective way.

It has been one of the great travesties of the last eight years that, whilst some of the best and brightest minds in Western Australia have turned towards a more sustainable energy future,

there has been an abject lack of political leadership in this sector from government, and in some instances an outright denial of the need to even act to address the threat of climate change. This is a result of a narrow, ideologically-driven view of the energy market—what the market is, how it should be regulated, which voices within that market should be listened to, and which entrenched interests should be protected. There has been a fixation on protecting an old industry model; that is, thumping great fossil fuel-fuelled thermal generators connected to networks, funded by inefficient tariff structures, supplying distant loads, and all based on commercial instruments involving a massive, inappropriate transfer of risk and financial burden onto the people of Western Australia.

John Kay states that there is —

a subtle but important distinction between policies that support markets and policies that support the interests of established large firms in these markets ...

It is a point that is well made about the energy industry and particularly the state's continued ownership of Western Power. The sale of Western Power would lock in the old industry structure and protect entrenched interests. Retaining Western Power in the hands of Western Australians means that we have an opportunity to pursue policies that recognise the importance of traditional energy sources, but also support new markets, new industries, new companies and new jobs. We can now consider and implement policies that encourage market outcomes for the public good—more efficient capital investment in the network; a reconceptualisation of value in the network assets; a mix of generation technologies and fuel sources to optimise supply and manage risk; producing natural restraints on costs for consumers, and allowing us to mitigate carbon intensity.

I believe that Western Australians also care deeply about, and are excited by, the prospects of the new energy economy. People like the idea that they can control their production and consumption of electricity and they want action on climate change. Labor took the right policy to the state election and secured a resounding mandate for retaining ownership of Western Power. At this point in the economic cycle, we should not sell Western Power; we should use it to assist us to address the economic and climate change challenges we now face.

COMMUNITY, STATE AND MARKET – WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

We are presented with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to invest in the new economy and promote advanced manufacturing here in Western Australia. We can leverage our core strengths—our world-class education system; our skilled but increasingly underemployed workforce; and our abundant natural, renewable resources. The community wants action on climate change and WA industry stands ready to contribute in new and exciting ways. If we think in terms of the holy trinity of community, market and the state working together to advance shared objectives and common goals, it is time that a government stepped up.

Labor accepts the science, the reality, the fact of climate change and its anthropogenic causes. We know it is changing our landscapes, affecting agricultural production, decimating species, destroying communities and damaging human health. We have an economic imperative and a moral duty towards future generations to act.

The left humanised capitalism last century. Labor championed decent public housing, universal health care, access to public education, a minimum wage and working conditions, and universal suffrage. It is important that we continue in this Parliament to defend those things but, as Giddens has argued, a progressive government's duty now is to green the twenty-first century, address climate change and develop policies that better align market outcomes with the public good.

We should have faith in the ability of Western Australian industry to innovate and address climate change. We should work with industry, provide certainty, send clear market signals by properly pricing carbon, and allow businesses to harness their inventiveness to devise the most effective and efficient responses. We should not dampen an entire sector's entrepreneurial spirit through lack of policy certainty, political will or leadership. We should not deter investment by taking reactive and regressive policy steps that entrench an outdated industry model. We should look forward, support progress and work for a sustainable and responsible energy future.

Labor has an innovative and progressive agenda. We have a team with open minds—minds that are turned to the industries of the future, not mired in the past. We have an economic agenda that is founded in compassion, with equality, community and solidarity at its very heart. We believe in rewarding drive and innovation, but also in respecting the core dignity and value of each and every one of our citizens and enabling them to pursue their aspirations and realise their potential regardless of gender, race, religion, birthplace or wealth. We all have a shared responsibility to achieve greater social justice and exercise common responsibility for the common good.

We must work together. For my part, I will support my local community in Swan Hills, and continue to work with industry. I now look forward to being part of a McGowan Labor government that will deliver true leadership and progressive governance for all Western Australians now and into the future.

[Applause.]
