



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Terry Healy, MLA

(Member for Southern River)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 16 May 2017

Reprinted from Hansard

Legislative Assembly

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 11 May on the following motion moved by Ms J.J. Shaw —

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 T.J. HEALY (Southern River) [7.49 pm]: My name is Terry Healy and I am the very proud but humbled member for Southern River. I acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people, the traditional owners of this land on which we meet and acknowledge the resilience of their people and of their elders past, present and emerging. Before I do anything in this place, I dedicate my speech today and my work in this chamber to my incredible wife, Catherine Chakulunta-Healy, our daughter Heaven, and our future children. I owe everything to my wife. She is my rock, my soulmate, my partner in life and my comrade. My community should probably have elected Catherine instead, as she is not only a better representative than I, but also more caring and more of a community advocate. Our families endure so much and I acknowledge that the only way we managed the last 18 months was by the sacrifices my wife and child have already made. Heaven, our daughter, is amazing and has just transformed and enriched our lives. Although I commit myself to the people of Southern River, I also dedicate myself to being the best dad and husband that I can be, because I think I will be a better member of Parliament then. I am lucky to also have a very large and loving family. I also have several mums and dads: my mother Rosemary who, as a single mum, raised me since I was 18 months old—I owe so much for her sacrifices and her love; my dad Terry Snr, for his love and guidance; my mother Martha; my dad Pete; and my dad Papa Khoza. Cath and I have also lost two of our mothers, Mama Aida and Mama Veronica, well before their time. We know that they join us today in spirit and will always be there to guide us.

To the Chakuluntas back home in Zambia, we also send our love. “Ine ndine mwana wochedwa Chakulunta Healy”, which in Nyanja means, “I am a proud Chakulunta Healy.” Cath and I are also blessed with many siblings. In Australia they are Julie, Erin, Kris, Linus and Maddy, and in Zambia they are Don, Bridget, Tamika, Pharoah, Boki, Hope, Suzyo, Madaliso and Khoza. These form part of the Chakulunta Healy Tubbs McGregor Franz Tucker Dunn Spartalis Lombardo Parkers. I mention my grandparents, Margaret and Bob McGregor, who would be very proud today. They were long-time residents of Thornlie, where I spent much of my youth. My grandfather Uncle Bob was also a resident at Riverside Gardens Estate and Brightwater Huntingdale within my electorate, which is very special to me. Thank you to my best friends Mo, Steve and Matt. I also acknowledge my best friend Craig Kunze, whom we lost some years ago, and the Kunze family. I know Craig is

looking down on us all here today. I also thank our good friends Christelle and Laurent, as it was at their wedding that Cath and I reconnected and began our romantic relationship. I also thank our church community, the Old Apostolic Church of Australia.

As a teacher myself, I also acknowledge my many teachers, but in particular, the work of Mrs Lorna Joy, Mr Paul Colombini and Mrs Jane Kavanagh for their guidance and encouragement. I owe a very special thank you, of course, to the well-over 100 volunteers who were a part of “Team Terry” and their efforts in Southern River. The fact that I stand here today is only due to thousands of volunteer hours doorknocking and phoning, persuading, fighting and working for the people and families that I am now honoured to represent. Together we connected with our community and gained its support to build trains, fund schools and restore a focus on local jobs. To our volunteers here tonight and watching online, all of this is due to your hard work. I can say that I stand here, but I know they all stand with me.

I want to thank my campaign team. Thank you to Sue Ellery. I wish to acknowledge that last week Sue Ellery became the first female Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council in Western Australian history. I congratulate her on this. To the rest of our core team, Cara, Lucy, Julie, Em, Kim PB, Pierre and Andrei: thank you. There are also so many special people who have played a role, and those people know who they are. To those here tonight—I can hear my daughter—and many watching online, I give my thanks. I congratulate the Premier and Deputy Premier, and our team at party office, led by Patrick and Lenda, as well as the many seen and unseen people who played their role in bringing us to government. I also make mention of our awesome team in our Southern River electorate office, Di, Kelly and Chris. I have also worked with some incredible statesmen and stateswomen in Glenn Sterle, Chris Evans, Norm and Ros Marlborough, Kate Doust, and the member for Warnbro. Each have their flaws, but they all show me a lifetime of service to their community, something that I seek to emulate.

I thank our local papers for providing fair and impartial coverage of the election campaign. It is an outstanding service to the people of Southern River. I thank the Gosnells council, their incredible CEO and staff, and Gosnells residents for the honour and privilege of being one of their Gosnells councillors. As a councillor I learnt not only the privilege of representing and advocating for my community, but also the importance of transparency and accountability in all levels of government. I commend the work of the state member for Perth in this field. It was very important to me in my time on Gosnells council that I was able to have passed Gosnells first online gift and travel registers, which provide greater levels of transparency and accountability for my community. I mention the incredible Gosnells councillor, our Mayor, Olwen Searle; Councillor Bill Wiffen; and Pat Morris.

Work has already begun on delivering our commitments. We will build Metronet, in particular the circle line, with two Canning Vale train stations. We will build two new primary schools in my community, after no new primary schools were built in Southern River in eight and a half years. No more families will be told that they are not families, Western Power is safe, jobs will stay here in WA, TAFE fees have frozen, and my students will once again get apprenticeships in WA. My community has once again elected representatives who will work for them. I stand in the shadow of an incredible member for Southern River in Paul Andrews. Even today when I doorknock—yes, I have already been out doorknocking since the election—people mention to me the incredible work that Paul did in our community. If I were to be even half the member of Parliament that Paul Andrews was, I think I would be doing well. I also thank Gim Andrews for her incredible support. I also acknowledge the service that Peter and Jenny Abetz made in our area.

I stand here as a former teacher of Southern River College and of Canning Vale, but I seek to be a champion of all schools: all students, educators and families. Although I am honoured to be the representative for Southern River, I already greatly miss being a teacher in Southern River. I miss my students. I do not know whether they miss me; they are likely happy to have a break from grumpy old man Mr Healy. I was proud to teach in Gosnells, but I was not proud of what the Barnett government was doing to my kids. Make no mistake; an attack on them was an attack on me. When I started at Southern River College, we were lucky to have the hard-working Chris Tallentire as our local MP. His guidance has been an incredible influence on me. During the 2013 election, I was a representative on our school board at Southern River College, as was Peter Abetz. Mr Abetz and Mr Barnett promised that all pre-1980s schools would be redeveloped, including Southern River. An important promise was made that was then broken. Following the Liberal win in 2013, we as a school were then told that not only would our school not be redeveloped but also our funds would be cut. The Sunday Times listed Southern River College as the fourth worst cut of all schools in WA. Then TAFE fees started rising, and would rise well over 500 per cent. My students in Gosnells and Southern River were being attacked, and the Liberal government supported and proposed these moves. A conversation with Sue Ellery about what I could do to help my students led me to take a break from teaching and stand as the Labor representative for my community.

My election fulfils a family commitment made 113 years ago when my great grandfather, Councillor James Healy, stood as the very first Labor candidate for Canning, which then covered what is now Southern River. Although he did not win when he ran in 1904, I stand here proudly in his memory. James Healy was a Fremantle councillor and I am very proud that he was this community's very first Labor candidate. One local newspaper stated that Mr Healy had a fluent tongue, and should he be elected, he would be very useful to his party when they wanted to insult the Speaker. On that theme, I also congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election. I look forward to working with you as your Acting Speaker.

The year 1904 was when Labor first formed government in WA under the first Labor Premier, Henry Daglish. Although James Healy was not an MP in that government, as I have said, he was certainly proud to help us get there. The minority Daglish Labor government of 1904 laid the foundation for what was, until 2017, WA Labor's biggest election victory, when we won 68 per cent of the assembly seats in 1911. This fortieth Parliament has 69.5 per cent of seats held by Labor members, the highest number in Western Australian history to date.

I mention another Healy who took a stand locally on freedom of speech. My great-uncle Kevin Healy was a member of the Communist Party of Australia and in 1949 was charged with sedition for his political membership. He was later acquitted. He argued in court that he had a right of freedom of speech and that whilst a communist, he was a passionate Australian first and that free and open debate was not sedition but actually a core right within our democracy. A very Healy thing, he represented himself at his trial, and I quote his final statement —

The issue in this case is the right to hold and express political opinions ... and a decision of acquittal is essential to safeguard free speech and political freedom.

We in this place must protect all political freedoms and freedom of speech in our community even when we do not agree with the other point of view.

Madam Acting Speaker (Ms J.M. Freeman), I seek to inform this Legislative Assembly more about who I am, and I declare an interest. I am a member of many community organisations, and I declare that as a member of Parliament I will help advocate for the causes that they represent. I have been a member of Scouts WA for almost 30 years. I cannot emphasise enough the incredible role that my Scout leaders played in raising me—Kevin and Colleen,

and later Rhonda and Barry Green and an army of other leaders—as I became a cub, scout, venturer, club leader and rover, and now fellowship member. I am proudly a Queen’s Scout and Baden Powell Scout. I will always stand up for Scouts, as I cannot guarantee that I would have even made it through my youth without my scouting family.

I am proudly a member of Gosnells Lions. I am also the local Santa Claus, and every December in Gosnells and Southern River I am on the back of a Lions Christmas sleigh as we traverse the streets. Can I say that as a candidate and now member of Parliament, it has been interesting to doorknock my local homes and have my horrified students answer the door. However, nothing beats being dressed as Santa and knowing the names of all the local teenagers as Santa goes past on his sleigh, leaving them very confused.

Balloons are a big part of my life and have been for almost 15 years ever since my best friend Mo gave me an incredible book by Dr Patch Adams. Patch wrote about his drive to make things better than what they were, and for him medicine and clowning were a vehicle to achieve this. Mo and I began working with balloons and running motivational workshops. We learnt to make balloon animals, and we started visiting hospitals and aged-care homes with balloons. I am not sure whether the Minister for Health would still allow me to visit our hospital emergency waiting rooms with balloons, but it may be that Mo and I will visit the minister one night and take him with us. I was also lucky to be part of a group that brought Patch Adams to Perth to speak to Western Australian medical professionals and the Fremantle community. Our local medical teams responded very well. I would love to bring Patch back to Western Australia again.

I am very proudly an advocate for blood donation and made my first bleed when I was 17. As a universal donor—O-negative—I started by donating every fortnight. Last year, making that regular diary appointment made me the youngest person in Australia to have made 300 blood donations. This is a title that I am keen to relinquish. I am very pleased that two of my local 17-year-olds—Tenuun Sanjaadorj and Luke Thomas, one of whom is here tonight—have begun donating blood already with the plan to beat my record, and nothing will make me happier. There are, of course, some things about Red Cross that need to change and move with the times. We need the Therapeutic Goods Administration to amend the discriminatory practices of its blood donation regulations for gay and bisexual men. The regulations are based not on a rational risk assessment but rather an unfounded 1980s fear that there was some kind of inherent link between being gay and having AIDS. We should screen donors. However, instead of screening donors for the gender of their sexual partner, we should screen them for the safety of their sexual activity. It does not matter whether a person is gay or straight. If a person engages in activity that puts them at high risk, they should not be allowed to donate. If a person is at low risk, they should be able to donate. I became aware of this when I brought groups of my friends to the Red Cross to donate and some who were gay were turned away, to their and my embarrassment. Some 15 years ago, I sought the advice of a great Australian, Rodney Croome, and I decided not to protest this issue by ceasing to give blood but rather to donate every fortnight and raise this issue in every one of my interviews at every donation. I will continue to lobby the TGA and support the work of many who also fight for this cause.

I will continue to seek more blood donations. I issue the challenge to all parliamentarians to make one blood donation this year if they are able to do so. National Blood Donor Week is next month, in June. I have organised for a bus to be available during that week to collect the first group of MLAs and MLCs from all parties, and I will send members the details. I will also be seeking to encourage my local high schools to develop further their youth blood donor programs.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr T.J. HEALY: My university studies began at Curtin University. I owe so much to the life skills and relationships that came from my time at Curtin University and as Curtin University Student Guild president. I certainly mention Mo Meredith, Jane den Hollander, Lance Twomey, Val Raubenheimer and my fellow student representatives as incredible Curtin influences on me during this time. My Curtin journey is also why and how I joined the Labor Party. The Gallop Labor government made a promise as part of its 2001 election campaign to restore student guild membership. I will admit that I was sceptical. As a guild, we were approached by Graham Giffard, education parliamentary secretary to Alan Carpenter, and Kate Doust, who worked with every Western Australian student guild and every Western Australian university to develop, negotiate and design what would become the amenities and services fee legislation and would improve the lives of thousands of students across Western Australia. It was this consultation and commitment by these members of Parliament that inspired me to join Labor and to start volunteering my time at every election since. I saw that when we as a party of progressives stood together, we could achieve more, and that consultation and mediation with community and government, coupled with a majority of members in Parliament, meant that we could together enact worthwhile and lasting change. My Curtin studies also gave me the opportunity some seven years ago to interview Mark McGowan as a then shadow minister as part of my Masters of Public Policy, in which I did a paper on political and ministerial influence on the public policy cycle. I still remember our now Premier when he stated that evidence-based policies were far superior in policy strength and better for the community than projects based on egos or whims. One example of that is that we need a Canning Vale train line, not only because the community tells us so but because research and evidence shows that it will address congestion, stimulate business and promote jobs, and not because a leader needs a monument to themselves.

I am proudly a progressive. I believe the best days of our community are before us, not behind us. I believe that no matter what a person's postcode is, every person in Western Australia deserves access to quality education and health, and a safe community. I believe in a more equal and equitable Australia. Mine is a family of migrants. Just because one group of Australians arrived here slightly before another group of Australians gives no-one the right to hate or discriminate. Certain political parties make the decision to incite fear and hatred of migrants, Indigenous people and other groups for political gain. I will fight the racism and homophobia of any politician or party, always.

I was also honoured to be in Canberra for the 2007 apology to the stolen generation and the commonwealth Parliament's first ever Indigenous Welcome to Country. Our Indigenous community deserves respect, and I seek to help restore that. I also seek to follow this up in action, not just words. I was honoured to have Robert Isaacs and Reynold Indich perform a traditional smoking and Welcome to Country ceremony at my electorate office when we moved in last month. I congratulate the Speaker for inviting Mr Isaacs to be a part of this Parliament's opening last week. I would also favour, in consultation with our local elders, an acknowledgement of country into our Parliament's daily procedures. These are important practices that are part of moving forward together as a community.

I have also been part of two great education unions, the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia and United Voice. These two unions represent some incredible educators in our teachers, education assistants, school cleaners and gardeners—core parts of our school communities. For me, being a union member is about consensus, bringing workers and employers together for the greater good, and having safe working conditions and equitable rates of pay while also running a functioning business. It was my experience working as the union representative at my school that we would reach consensus and that we each had to give and take and negotiate, and the school, the students and the community were the better for it.

Although I am new to this place, I have many friends here already, many in our own caucus, but also some on the conservative side. The member for Vasse is a uni friend of mine from Curtin. The member for Churchlands, Sean L'Estrange, is one of my old high school teachers. I recall that he and Mr Colombini once played Roman guards at our school Easter assembly, where I was Jesus, and they made me carry the crucifix to the front of the assembly and they crucified me. Mr L'Estrange, you have crucified me in the past; there may be one day in the future when I get to return the favour!

An incredible life moment for me was performing the very first same-sex marriage in Australia for my two good friends Dennis Liddelow and Stephen Dawson. I had been a civil marriage celebrant for many years, and when the ACT government declared it would move ahead with marriage equality in December 2013, Dennis, Stephen and I discussed travelling to Canberra where I would perform their wedding and be a part of the celebrations. With a core group of friends, we descended on Canberra the night of the law change and raced to the front steps of the Australian Parliament on the stroke of midnight and, before a crowd of friends and TV cameras, I performed the very first same-sex marriage ceremony in the nation. The ACT government had arranged for Telstra Tower, which overlooks the Australian Parliament, to change its light sequence and as we finished the ceremony the sky actually shone like a rainbow.

This Parliament does not need another marriage equality advocate; it has enough already. Marriage equality should not still be an issue in 2017. In years to come, our children will wonder why this was even an issue. I believe marriage equality is already supported by an overwhelming majority of Australians; we are all just waiting for the federal Parliament to have a free vote on it. Marriage laws will change and Australia will have marriage equality soon and, on that day, I hope to conduct a marriage ceremony again, but this time at midnight on the steps of the WA Parliament, and of course all members are invited.

As a teacher, I was also part of one of the many WA Safe Schools programs. I seek to place on record the good work that this program does in supporting all students. During the election campaign, mention was made about a very hateful and anti-gay message that was trying to hijack this program for its own purposes. Safe Schools provides schools and teachers with anti-bullying resources to assist staff to support all students. It is not a "gay lifestyle" program, nor are my lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex, queer students "abnormal", as the former member for Southern River said to me at a school boardroom meeting. WA Labor's commitment is to fund this program so that those public high schools in WA that make a decision and choose to access the resources can. Tomorrow, 17 May, is International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. I am proud to stand as the member for Southern River in this chamber to contribute to stamping out homophobia and hate.

I also seek to call out gender inequality. I believe that men and women should be treated and represented equally. We will be a better Legislative Assembly if we actually represent the 50–50 gender balance of our community. In this chamber, only 18 women sit in the 59 seats. Today, there are more women in this place than ever in this Parliament's history, but it is still not good enough. Including the Legislative Council, only 30.53 per cent of members of the Western Australian Parliament are female. Out of 41 Labor MLAs, 15 are female, or 36.5 per cent; the Nationals have one female; and the Liberals have two, or 15 per cent.

I quote one of my local predecessor's first speeches. Sheila McHale stated —

Women represent 50 per cent of the population, yet only 21 per cent of this House ... are women. That is not good enough for our community and it is not good enough for us.

That 21 per cent is now 30.5 per cent, but I reiterate Sheila McHale's words —

That is not good enough for our community and it is not good enough for us.

The Labor Party needs to actively recruit and support female candidates to meet and then exceed its affirmative action targets. We can always do better. I now turn to the Liberal and National Parties and ask that they adopt affirmative action targets, as I cannot do this without them.

I called upon some female leaders, Amy Hart and Allyson Murray from Southern River College, to put this to members in their own words. According to my notes, they said —

We believe that in order for our parliament to be a reflection of our society, gender equity has to be achieved, with women making up 50% of parliamentary representatives. To us, as women who are about to graduate and enter society as active and engaged citizens, having representatives that reflect the population, will ensure that everyone benefits. In order to make laws for the benefit of all, the parliament must represent the entire constituency.

The Gosnells and Southern River communities rely on jobs, training and employment to support their families and aspire to further pathways and opportunities in life. Training and skills development are the pathways out of certain cycles for my students and community members. The unfair increases in TAFE fees hurt all Western Australians, but my local residents felt them the most. We have already let down several years of young people who could not afford the debt that TAFE then represented. It was not a matter of getting a loan, as many from my community could not even afford to repay the debt, so seats at TAFE went empty. This will disadvantage my community for years to come.

Many out-of-work local residents, often former fly in, fly out workers, informed me during the election campaign that they wanted to retrain but even they could not afford the increase in training fees. The TAFE fees freeze is commendable, but the well over 500 per cent increase was irresponsible to begin with. The freeze on fees for four years at least allows my community to plan their potential studies without fear of further increases. TAFE should never be about whether a person can afford the fees. TAFE is an incredible public institution that should be about access and equity.

Residents in my electorate have just voted to support Labor to continue to build rail lines in our community. Labor will build the Thornlie rail extension to Cockburn and two very overdue Canning Vale train stations as part of Metronet. Only Labor has a track record in building rail in WA. Labor built the Mandurah and Thornlie rail lines and Labor will build the circle line. It will finish what the previous Labor government began.

I speak of the train lines we will build, the schools we will better maintain, the opportunities for aspiration that we will strengthen, but it is not only this that makes a community. We also need more community halls, youth facilities, sports fields and recreation facilities to provide for the thousands more families in my electorate.

I believe that one of the biggest issues in Gosnells and Southern River is reported and unreported domestic violence. It has been my experience that domestic violence in Gosnells and Southern River drives poverty, unemployment and homelessness. It is also a block to education and literacy and it leads to disadvantage, drug use and the cycles of crime that imprison my community and lock in cycles of disadvantage. It was my goal as a councillor to do more than we did. It will be my goal as the local member to do more than we do now.

I commend this government on appointing the state's first Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. Matt Keogh said it well when he stated —

We must also ensure that we have adequate, available and fully supported domestic violence services and adequately funded legal assistance and community education.

I will work with the federal member for Burt to achieve this.

I mentioned earlier that I was brought to this place because a group of people threatened my school and my students. Now I have 15 schools that I stand as guardian over, and I will protect them from those who would do them harm. I quote a great teacher, Professor Charles Xavier —

I feel a great swell of pity for the poor soul that comes to my school looking for trouble.

I will work hard every day to continue to earn the trust placed in me. We now have so much work to do. Let us get to work. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]
