



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

## **INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Hon Alannah MacTiernan, MLC**  
(Member for North Metropolitan Region)

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 23 May 2017

*Reprinted from Hansard*



# Legislative Council

Tuesday, 23 May 2017

---

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

### *Motion*

Resumed from 19 May on the following motion moved by Hon Dr Sally Talbot —

That the following address be presented to Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the commonwealth of Australia —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**HON ALANNAH MACTIERNAN (North Metropolitan)** [5.08 pm]: Thank you very much, Madam President. I acknowledge that we are on Noongar Boodja land. I have to say that one of the true blessings of my public life has been getting to know Aboriginal communities from the Minang in the south to the Bardi in the north, and all across this great state.

Madam President, congratulations again on becoming the first woman to occupy the presidency of the house; how incredible that this is happening at the very same time that we can also boast of our first female Leader of the House.

This really is, I guess, a very big day for the suffragette women and the many other women who have fought over 150 years for the right to vote. I think Edith Cowan, our first female member of Parliament, would be very proud today to see women occupying these senior positions. I only hope, members, that these historic appointments will inspire members on the other side to seriously consider the benefit of representation that is more reflective of the community.

Congratulations to all the new, re-elected and recycled members on all sides. I genuinely look forward to working with you all. I have no doubt that there will be a bit of biff from time to time as oppositions do what they are required to do in our adversarial system, but I hope I have acquired sufficient wisdom that this can be managed without animosity. We should fight hard, but fight fair. I genuinely respect that all members of this Parliament have been elected by the people, and we should strive to use the insights and abilities of all members as constructively as possible. I hope to channel Kim Chance, our much loved and much missed former leader, for guidance here.

This speech, being my fourth inaugural, may be some kind of weird record. It was suggested to my staff when I started to think about writing it yesterday that I should do a “best of” album from the earlier recordings. So I read over my inaugural speeches and I could see that I actually put in some real effort there. I clearly was not distracted by ministerial duties on those occasions. So I recognise that this one may not go platinum!

In my first gig in the House of Representatives, I led on climate change and the immorality of those who wilfully ignore the science and condemn our children and grandchildren to a future of uncertainty and instability. This is a first-order issue and one that is affecting us now.

It was very interesting to note this morning a report from the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that was released today predicting sea level rises of up to 2.7 metres by the end of the century. This will provide plenty of grief between now and then for Perth, Peel and Bunbury. About eight years ago, I got a front-page story and a headline for saying that we might need a storm barrage on the lower reaches of the Swan by 2025. I was roundly chastised by the then government, which said, “Oh, no, the Swan River does not flood anymore.” But of course the river is not the issue. On the basis of the US report that came out today, in tandem with the work being done by Coastal Risk Australia, regrettably I may be proven right, because when we consider the rising sea levels, combined with high tides and storm surge, there are some very real risks. Perhaps we will unwittingly recreate Perth as truly the Venice of the south, with gondoliers plying a trade to the stadium, which *The West Australian* today says may be surrounded by water. So maybe we will not need to try to retrieve that bridge from Malaysia after all! I joke. But this is a serious moral challenge. I relish the opportunity to be part of the Labor Party and the Labor government, which gets this, and which gets also that this provides extraordinary opportunities to create new industries and new jobs as we restructure our economy.

I also in the House of Representatives riffed on education, outlining my belief that it is a national disgrace that despite so much investment in education, many, many children are leaving school without adequate literacy or numeracy and with their confidence in their capacity as learners badly damaged. I railed against those who simply blamed the parents or the social class, ignoring the science on pedagogy. I am so pleased that the Minister for Education and Training, Hon Sue Ellery, is establishing a Centre for Excellence on Explicit Learning that will get us back on track. I am stoked that as the Minister for Regional Development, I have a role in the Kimberley and Pilbara schools program. This stuff does work. I was in Telfer on the weekend at a meeting with the Martu schools. The Martu leadership is conscious that it has missed out on many opportunities of the boom and has formed an alliance to get better outcomes for its kids. I would like to give a special shout out to the teachers, assistants and parents of the Nullagine school, who are seizing the day and making great strides in building literacy and making aspiration and choices available to the children in this small remote community.

I go now to my second inaugural. On re-reading my 1996 address to the Legislative Assembly, I was astounded at how completely on message I was with the campaign that Mark McGowan was to run 21 years later. It was all about jobs and the debilitating impact of unemployment—the loss of self-worth, the loss of the ability to chart one’s own destiny, and the loss of choices. I am sure everyone in this house is aware of the plight particularly of millennials and the Y-generation, who struggle to get full-time work. Permanent jobs are totally out of reach for many. I talked in that speech about the impact of automation and how economic growth was no longer synonymous with job growth. It is even more of a challenge today, and it is a particularly big challenge for the regions. Technological change in the great regional employers—mining and agriculture—is advancing very quickly. As we speak, today there is a mining conference in Perth talking about digital innovation and automation in mining. We embrace innovation, and we need innovation, and new jobs will be created as old jobs disappear. But we need to remain clear-eyed and vigilant about the impact on overall net opportunities for employment, and in particular the disproportionate impact this may have on the regions. The new jobs that will be created will be based on access to high-quality digital infrastructure, and those jobs will tend to gravitate to the big city centres. We all know the Haulpak drivers who once lived in Karratha and Hedland and now do their jobs on the Terrace or out at Perth Airport. We need to make the regions more resilient. We need to create, in particular, regional cities that have twenty-first century broadband, not a third-rate copper product.

We need to expand our agricultural production and the promotion of our very special produce. There are great opportunities to de-commoditise in agriculture and horticulture, creating a much greater value chain than selling undifferentiated products. So Mark McGowan's focus on jobs and fairness has been absolutely on the money. Labor's preparedness to say that we will require resources projects to use local content is right, as is Labor's focus on making local content in government procurement a reality, not simply a paragraph in a policy document. In my view, this focus on jobs and creating job opportunities is absolutely central to the Australian story—a story about a nation that gives its people the chance to escape the entrenched hierarchies, the constraints of social mobility, and the overwhelming weight of economic and political inequality that so often diminished life in the old world. It gave us the opportunity to show, and indeed be, a social laboratory in equity and the structures that can deliver equity. Societies that have a higher level of social and economic equality are happier across the board. At the end of the day, being happy and fulfilled is what it is all about. Money and prestige are mere surrogates.

This segues neatly into my very first maiden speech, with a little bit of the hippy stuff. In various campaigns, my friends from the party on the other side tend to get very excited about finding out that many years ago I called for drug law reform and a focus on harm minimisation in dealing with the drug problem. I have never been embarrassed by this. I still fundamentally believe that we make more of a threat to society by criminalising many drugs and that there are better approaches. I say very clearly that methamphetamine is not one of those drugs. The destructive force of this drug comes from its chemistry. It is a menace to the individuals who are captured by its siren call and it is a menace for all those who attempt to deal with this. I support the beefing up of penalties for dealing but I note that Mark McGowan has often said that we cannot arrest our way out of this problem and that early access to disciplined rigorous rehabilitation is a must. I support our commitment to catch addicts early on in the cycle and to develop rehabilitation prisons to ensure that people have treatment before they are re-released into the community. I want to congratulate the ABC for its recent fantastic *You Can't Ask That* program on ice users. It featured a series of conversations with former and current ice users about the highs and very, very deep lows of their experience. It is really important that we understand the power and the pain of this thing if we are going to give our community the resilience to beat it.

At one stage in one of those earlier speeches—I think it was when I was being admitted to the Legislative Assembly—I said that I had moved, quoting Sir Humphrey Appleby, from the company of vegetables to animals. Let me assure members that I am very happy to be back here and that I think very highly of things horticultural. I want to say how genuinely excited I was to be given the opportunity by Mark McGowan to take on the portfolios of Agriculture and Food, and Regional Development. I had not realised the food part of the portfolio required so much eating, and I am having a great deal of difficulty maintaining my Ramadan diet in the face of all these beautiful long table lunches, but I will work my way through it.

When I decided not to recontest the federal seat of Perth in 2016, many of the on-the-ball journos trying to suss something out thought they had worked out what my plan was—that I was thinking that for some reason there might be a vacancy for the position of Lord Mayor of Perth and I would want that position. I made it very clear that the idea of a job that required me to remain in the city most of the time was not an attractive proposition. A job that gives me the opportunity to get out and about across the many splendid regions of this state is absolutely perfect. There are extraordinary challenges but the great strengths that we find in our regional community—that sense of community that we see in our small towns and regional cities—is truly gratifying. It is a fantastic thing to be able to work with people who so want to be constructive, to build their communities and to create opportunities within their place. Again, I am really looking forward to embracing those challenges.

I say very genuinely that I want to work with all country members on both sides of the house to really make some great progress in this area.

I also want to take the opportunity to reflect on the victory of Labor and its truly extraordinary extent. It was a landslide and we should reflect on the reason this happened. I vehemently contest the cliché that oppositions do not win elections; governments lose them. After some 40 active years in politics, I know the story is much more complex. I will not use this opportunity that is graciously given to me during this inaugural address to reflect on the own goals of the last government. I am sure that members opposite will provide plenty of opportunities during future question times to reflect on these. I want to acknowledge the extraordinary effort of the Labor team in opposition over the last four years. The team worked hard to provide a forensic and coherent critique of the government and its performance. It researched, networked and analysed with intellectual rigour and great stamina. It also did more. It developed a vision for the state. Mark McGowan and his team did not want an “anybody but Colin” victory but a mandate for government—a mandate to rebuild the confidence that we can have a diversified community in which we are technology makers, not just technology takers, in which we can make stuff, embrace progressive and inclusive social values, have the courage to face up to the reality and challenges of climate change and gain a mandate to take the painful steps that will be necessary to rebuild the financial stability of the state. I like to think, even though I was not in with the main team, that I was there in my own little way contributing my two bob’s worth from federal Parliament, exposing the insanity of the Perth Freight Link, and the increasing absurdity and injustice of the GST distribution, which, as I like to remind people, now bizarrely has Melbourne as the capital of Tasmania so every place in Tasmania can be made more remote, and that has Adelaide as the capital of the Northern Territory, so every place there can be made more remote. Equally bizarrely, the delivery of services—health and education—gets more expensive until for some reason we reach 1 257 kilometres from a capital city and thereafter it does not actually change. It just so happens that that is almost exactly the distance between the remotest part of New South Wales and Sydney but, as we know, in this state we have many thousands of students and many thousands of people who require health services and police stations that lie well outside that magical 1 257 kilometres, after which somehow or other prices miraculously just stabilise. If we want to go to places like Punmu or Kunawarrtji, we have to fly for two hours to Telfer and then drive another seven hours to Kunawarrtji. That is replicated across the state.

I spent quite a bit of time talking about that sort of stuff in federal Parliament. I spent a lot of time talking about the lack of engagement by the WA government in so many areas that has seen WA short-changed in the allocation of dollars for defence, renewable energy and the national broadband network, just to name a few. Indeed, the fact that I thought that we should be out there fighting a lot harder for a fair share not just of GST but of all these other areas made the offer made to me by Mark McGowan of coming back into the team very, very attractive. I knew when I was asked to come back in at the eleventh hour that an enormous amount of work had been put in by the parliamentary team, but what really took my breath away was the work being done by candidates and their teams. I have some pretty notorious standards—some of my staff are in the public gallery—when it comes to work ethic and I have engaged in some ferocious hand-to-hand combat in the suburbs in election campaigns. But I was genuinely stunned by how driven our candidates, their campaign teams and their great volunteers were. In the past in campaigns I have seen individual campaigners who have pushed themselves to the limit, but I have never seen such an extraordinary mass effort to be out there making contact and converting people one vote at a time. By the end of the campaign, we were running into people who were saying, “All right, already, we’re going to vote for you, but if you call again we might change our mind.” We could see momentum building over the months. The voters saw this

commitment. The candidates were out there every day and voters saw this genuine engagement. This effort, as much as any policy, built the momentum for change.

I hope I pulled my weight. I admit there was some great fun. I got to impose my rather unusual musical tastes, ranging from Chicano rock to early bogan, on hundreds of punters as guest disc jockey at the Hip-E Club, raising moolah for my long-term partner in crime, John Carey. I did some guerrilla shopping centre campaigning with the Ab Fab Sabine Winton, when we persuaded the security guard tasked with chucking us out on the Sunday before Christmas, to instead take our picture sitting on Santa's knee. I went trekking with our Pilbara hero Kevin Michel—yes *Thelma & Louise* style, as reported in "Inside Cover", but with a glorious rather than grisly end, and with Hon Kyle McGinn attempting a Brad Pitt cameo. I showed off the brilliant and gorgeous Jessica Shaw to the business world, and she wowed them. In Albany we had garden parties with the legend that is "Watto". We got him out selling collaborative work spaces and wave energy. The dude was bordering on hipster by the end of the day. I was out there proselytising on the national broadband network with David Michael, Amber-Jade Sanderson and Darren Forster. Let me tell members that the punters agree that "fraudband" is not the answer. With Emily Hamilton, Mark Folkard, Jessica Stojkovski and Simon Millman, we got to know every shopping centre in the northern suburbs, and, we reckon, probably just about every shopper. We went south for fundraisers, launches and more shopping centres with Stephen Price, Lisa O'Malley and the biggest swinger of all, Don Punch. We spruiked Western Power with Cassie Rowe, while Barry, the peri-urban guy, gave us much-needed lessons in firefighting. Rather exceptionally, David Templeman and Robyn Clarke arranged a very thoughtful lunch with a bunch of One Nation supporters. I also say it was a joy to work with and see elected Hon Pierre Yang and Yaz Mubarakai, both absolutely delightful first-class human beings who are helping to make our party and this Parliament truly reflective of our community. I want to give a special shout-out to two of our people who did not make it—Lara Dalton in Geraldton, with us, pouring beers at the Bootenal Family Tavern, and Darren Forster in Kalgoorlie. Both these candidates gave it a first-class crack, and were almost successful. I hope that in the future we will see them have another go.

I thank Premier Mark McGowan for the faith he has shown in me, and all of my caucus colleagues for welcoming me back into the fold. I want to acknowledge the great team in the party office, led by Patrick Gorman, and I want to again acknowledge the work of Lenda Oshalem in developing the Community Action Network, which really has revolutionised the whole process and effort of campaigning. I also want to do a special call-out to Jo Gaines, who was slaving away earnestly on all of our regional policies and even wrote our agricultural policy.

I want to say thank you to my friends and supporters in the gallery today. Thank you to Dave Whittome for your generous support—I hope you voted for me, I wanted to get at least one vote in Peppie Grove; to Jahanna and Giles on the campaign staff; to the Rosemount and Hillarys Tavern crew and all the Labor family in the northern suburbs who gave and gave in time, money and inspiration throughout the long campaign; to all my ministerial and electorate staff, some old, some new, some coming back for the second round, you have always supported me and the cause we so believe in—love your work; to Umi and Atlas, my little jewels, thank you for always being so ready to be political rent-a-kids; and to all my great friends and family members, thank you. A very special thank you to Jennifer Harrison, who has given me unfailing encouragement and support in all my political endeavours over the last 40 years. I owe you big time. You are a true and much loved friend. Finally, thank you to the electors of North Metropolitan Region and my beloved Western Australians for putting your trust in me. I will endeavour to honour that by doing all I can to deliver inspired and inclusive government to Western Australia.

[Applause.]