



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Hon Dave Grills, MLC**  
**(Member for Mining and Pastoral Region)**

**Legislative Council**

**Address-in-Reply**

**Wednesday, 15 May 2013**



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## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

### *Motion*

**HON DAVE GRILLS (Mining and Pastoral)** [7.58 pm]: It was 14 March 1965 that saw my family—mum, dad, two brothers, two sisters and me—sail from Southampton, England, on the *SS Fairsky*; £10 tourists bound for a new life in Perth, Western Australia, the other side of the world, far from family and friends. As a five-year-old it was a great adventure and one which, unbeknown to me then, would take me on the rollercoaster ride of life to this place and this day.

I have to thank my mum and dad, who sadly are no longer with us but are here in my heart, for taking that bold step and having the courage to seek a better life for their family and emigrate to the Lucky Country. About three weeks later, we arrived in Fremantle. I remember my mum crying as we were disembarking and wondering why, until some years later she confessed to having a less than favourable first opinion of our new home. We were taken to an Army camp on Lantana Avenue in Graylands. This camp later became known as the Graylands immigration training and reception centre. Former Army barracks were converted into makeshift dormitories and five families were accommodated in each dormitory. The accommodation was very basic and proved to be a tough induction to our new Australian life. The dormitories were Nissen huts constructed of corrugated iron, the floors were bare timber, and there was no wall lining. They, like the beds, were very uncomfortable. There were also huts for laundry, meals and ablutions. However, despite facilities being rudimentary and limited, we were together as a family and, as mum and dad had survived the Second World War, it was a minor inconvenience. We were told that Graylands was temporary and only for a couple of days, which turned out to be 10 weeks—a far cry, you would think, from the standard of facility and assistance afforded to those seeking new lives in Australia today. However, aside from our passage being somewhat safer, it was not so very different, if not worse in some ways.

Life progressed and, as a family, we began to make the most of opportunity as it presented, and make our way. I cannot admit to being a big fan of school; it did not allow me to be me and there were too many rules. In a report card one of my primary school teachers stated, “David is a 10 horsepower engine in a five horsepower body.” Today I would possibly be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, whereas to me I was just an active kid. Primary school ended, we moved to the suburb of Lockridge and, as there was no high school close, I commenced secondary education at Hampton Senior High School in Morley. High school had the same rules and, due to my excitable nature, it was decided that at the age of 14, I would leave school and take an apprenticeship as a cabinet-maker in Bayswater, which was further from Lockridge and required me to ride a pushbike to and from work. For different reasons I was not destined to be a cabinet-maker and, following numerous other jobs, eventually gained an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic. I completed my apprenticeship and life continued to bring its challenges, achievements, highs and lows. But I began to realise that sometimes you could make your own luck or, conversely, make a bad decision that would have a downriver effect later in life.

As in most lives, there are significant events that make us proud, laugh or cry. People come and go and a million stories are born. I always seemed to be looking for something better to ensure that I could provide for those closest to me and that they would want for nothing. In December 1986 I joined the Army Reserve, with a view to joining the Regular Army. But as in times before, life took a left turn and, for whatever reason, this never eventuated. Then, at the age of 32 in 1991, after much consideration and a few expressions of concern from old mates, I entered the Western Australia Police Academy in Maylands as a recruit and began yet another new career. At about this time, I realised that here was a job that suited me. I thought: "Great; they are actually paying me to do the things I like—ride motorcycles, drive V8s and wear a uniform"—blue being my favourite colour! I progressed within the service and found that after five years the police decided that I was ready for country service. I was told that if I did not like this, I should perhaps consider a new career. The common term for that unfair, unpopular and inequitable management-initiated practice was known as being "shanghaied". The level of personal discontent caused cannot be understated, but in true military fashion, I soldiered on and moved, without my family, to Narrogin for my first country posting. I soon began to understand why the dreaded forced move to the country caused such angst within police families. Police housing was poor to say the least and many services taken for granted in the city were not available in the bush. I also found that policing there was different. Despite the differences, I found country folk to be proud, practical, hardworking and resilient individuals with an immense sense of community. Initially, not everyone appreciated the brand of policing I brought with me from the big smoke, and it took me a while to adjust. But of all the qualities that country folk possess, benevolence and patience are right up there. Lessons learnt and friendships made there would put me in good stead when I later ventured bush again. However, I am glad to say that service conditions are much better these days.

Returning to Perth, I was later posted to the major crash investigation section to investigate fatal and serious traffic crashes. I learnt the value of life and experienced the worst and best of human nature. Working alongside people dealing with the senseless loss of a loved one through tragic and often avoidable circumstances further kindled opinions and beliefs that I was beginning to form but that, as yet, I was unsure of the reason for. After nearly three years I was posted to the road safety section, a more proactive role where the intent was to help prevent death and injury on our roads and encourage safer road use through grassroots community engagement. Much to my dismay, this section was disbanded some two years later and many valuable programs, such as Bike Ed, were lost. I had no choice but to comply, but did not agree.

In my mind that decision was the catalyst for change, and I decided that to bring change, I must be that change, and I applied for a posting to the northern goldfields town of Leonora. In Leonora I began to practise and implement philosophies I had previously considered and, thanks to the support and help of the wonderful community of Leonora, in most cases was able to accomplish. I became a member of council and, a bit like salt and pepper, was in everything. During this period many people and events left lasting impressions on me. But also I watched powerlessly as our district hospital's capacity was reduced and our doctor left. I was outraged and thought, "How can this be?"

Then came more change, and again I did not agree, but this time I had no appetite for the struggle and with a heavy heart resigned from the police service. I knew I needed to further grow and hone the skills set I possessed to achieve goals sought, and as a result began a two-year career in the mining industry in occupational health and safety. About this time, there was another significant event. I was asked whether I would like to come to council chambers and meet with the then member for Mining and Pastoral Region, Wendy Duncan. Immediately I was engaged and listening intently, as with the help of a basic map Wendy explained the bold initiative that today we know as royalties for regions.

Later I was invited to attend a meeting with Brendon Grylls at a pub in Kalgoorlie. I understood his vision and shared his and Wendy's passion for regional WA and how it would be achieved through royalties for regions, and became a member of the WA Nationals. I felt the pieces had fallen into place and here was a vehicle I could use to channel and focus my wish for a better regional WA.

I now knew that there was reason and purpose for the opinions on police I had begun to form those years ago and focused on returning to the police service and picking up the thread I had left behind. In February 2008 I re-engaged with the Kalgoorlie Police Station as a crime prevention and diversity officer. I worked hard to achieve change within the areas of youth justice and applied learned community engagement practices.

My story is unremarkable in many ways. However, there was a time when I sat precariously on the edge and my life may very well have taken a different direction. It was a robust life to say the least, growing up in Lockridge, with temptation ever present. Many of my mates had good, loving, hardworking parents who cared deeply for their sons but for some reason were unable to prevent them becoming engaged in harmful pursuits that later turned to crime. I had all the same contributing factors in my life but, while no saint, was more fortunate.

Despite our best efforts, many young people sit at that same edge. It is fair to say the majority will progress through their young years making mistakes but, like me, living to tell the tale. Most will usually change their ways at 18 when the Young Offenders Act no longer affords them an out and adult laws apply, but there are others who are not so lucky.

I acknowledge and praise the continued work and effort of many within the justice system who strive to achieve better outcomes for juvenile offenders and the families who love them. However, there remains an upper echelon of young prolific priority offenders who do not engage in diversion programs and believe for them there is no bright future. They are destined to fall through the cracks and sadly in some cases will never know or live the life they may otherwise have.

Insanity defined means doing the same old things and expecting a different result. If we always do what we have always done, we will always get what we have always got. But I believe there is more that can be done. I believe change is constant and development optional. I believe we can deliver meaningful change and secure better outcomes with a concerted effort designed to close the gaps. These are the beliefs and opinions that I formed years ago, came to understand and harnessed, and that have compelled me to become a member of Parliament.

This said, I feel there is a desire for change and a growing groundswell of support, as recent media, political and judicial comment attests. I have been fortunate in being able to take my place in Parliament earlier than fellow members-elect, and I have used this time to travel to, and speak with people in, some of the communities within my Mining and Pastoral Region electorate. During those travels I have seen firsthand and heard many stories of how royalties for regions delivers opportunity for change; unfortunately, not always with everything or in the manner we would all like, but, as I said, country folk are proud, practical, hardworking and resilient individuals who are fierce defenders of community. I have been told by many who share the city-based view that the bush now has enough town recreation centres, and that too much royalties for regions funding has been spent on projects less important than regional infrastructure such as roads—that is a nonsense. The greater need for regional development is not lost on communities, and many continually strive with neighbouring towns to find better ways to develop, keep existing families together and encourage new families to make their homes in the bush. Therefore, I would be mindful of passing judgement without knowledge or making decisions remotely from the city. The very core elements that underpin regional towns and feed the spirit are found alive and well in dedicated community infrastructure. For many

they provide a place to come together, share in good or bad times and be enjoyed in a thousand different ways because living in regional Western Australia should not mean putting up with second best or doing without.

We must continue to support rural business in whatever form it takes, from agriculture to mining and everything in between. We must provide opportunity for diversity and continued growth through self-determination. There is no panacea or quick fix, but to further reduce avenues for regional communities to access funding will achieve nothing more than to increase the existing hardship of many rural families.

I am proud to be a member of the Western Australian National Party and share in a better regional WA. Royalties for Regions will continue to deliver, not through pointless political pointscoring, but from hard work, vision and continued good stewardship. I appreciate that every week, all around this great state, mums and dads sit down to balance the most important budget of all—the family budget. I have listened to a lot of empty political rhetoric and false promise, and I have listened to those who seem to think that to shout that empty promise the loudest makes the better point, but often with no considered meaningful solution offered. I am not perfect, do not carry a magic wand, ride a white horse or shoot silver bullets, but I do share the desire and passion to do better for regional families.

I have not achieved this on my own; there has literally been a cast of thousands who in one way or another have contributed to my life, touched my soul and, in their own way, played a significant part in my journey; to them I say thank you. To Lisa, Charles, Margie, Dorothy and Frances—thank you. To my WA Nationals family—thank you. To the people who took the time to cast their vote for me—a most humbling and lasting experience—thank you. To all my wonderful and supportive family—thank you. To my beautiful and loving partner, and daughter—thank you.

I would also like to thank the President for his warm welcome and support, the Legislative Council staff, and staff of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet for their kind assistance in getting the show on the road. To those members retiring, thank you for your contribution to Parliament, and although I am not yet an old hand, welcome to my fellow new members. To those members who have welcomed me into the Council—thank you.

I look forward with great anticipation to this next stage of my life, the journey I will travel, the experiences I will share and the time I will spend working to faithfully serve the community of Western Australia. Thank you.

[Applause.]

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