



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Kyran O'Donnell, MLA

(Member for Kalgoorlie)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Wednesday, 17 May 2017

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 16 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 K.M. O'DONNELL (Kalgoorlie) [2.52 pm]: Before I start, Mr Speaker, I found it easier to enter a pub brawl as a police officer than to sit here waiting and sweating to give this speech!

The SPEAKER: Sometimes it is like a pub brawl in here.

INTRODUCTION

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Greetings, Mr Speaker and members. I am extremely proud and honoured to be here today and to have been elected to represent the people of the goldfields in the seat of Kalgoorlie. Let me first acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting and pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on being elected and wish you all the best in your new role. May I say that although we sit on opposite sides of the Parliament, we have something in common—we are both Collingwood supporters. Hopefully, this will not be held against us or my colleague, the member for Hillarys.

I also extend my congratulations to all the members on their election after what were, no doubt, hard-fought campaigns. I have met many new people from all sides of politics since coming to Parliament and I believe good friendships will grow from this. I commend parliamentary staff on their professionalism, especially in trying to help us new kids on the block. Their friendly and approachable manner has made it a lot easier to settle in.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the previous member for Kalgoorlie, Wendy Duncan, who retired after serving a four-year term. Ms Duncan worked very hard and earned the respect of everyone throughout our large electorate.

I am the sixteenth member for the seat of Kalgoorlie, which covers 555 448 square kilometres. I am only the second Liberal to win the seat, the first being Matt Birney in 2001. Prior to Matt Birney, the seat of Kalgoorlie had been held for the majority of 100 years by the Labor Party and has since been held by an Independent and a National Party member. Despite this and despite a strong statewide swing towards Labor in this election, I was fortunate enough to be the only Liberal in the state to gain a seat and the only Liberal to get a swing towards them, winning the primary vote and increasing my lead after allocation of preferences. My electorate stretches up to 1 000 kilometres in some directions, which means that I will have my work cut out for me. However, I look forward to the challenge.

I spent many months doorknocking the electorate, both in rain and 40 degree heat, to find out residents' concerns. That personal approach seemed to be very much appreciated by members of the community, many of whom said that no candidate or politician had ever knocked on their door before. Often those opposite like to portray members on my side of politics as coming from the big end of town. I am particularly proud to be elected as the member for Kalgoorlie as I am a living, breathing example of why this is not the case.

FAMILY AND CAREER

I was born in Victoria but grew up in New South Wales, living in Nowra and Randwick. My father, Kyran Sr, was a Lieutenant Commander in the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Australian Navy where he flew Skyhawks and later became a navigator on the aircraft carrier HMAS *Melbourne*. My father had always spoken about how he would like me to attend Aquinas College in WA, which was his alma mater. My mother, Mary, was an air stewardess and later worked in hospital administration. I have a brother, Damien, a sister, Meeghan, and a half-sister, Gail, who lives in Queensland. After my father retired from the Navy he moved the family to Western Australia, where I lived first in Perth, attending Aquinas College, and then Port Hedland when my father became the State Emergency Service coordinator for the north west. I worked at the Pier Hotel, Port Hedland.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: Oh my God!

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: That is what I said when I walked in.

I became the bar manager when I was 18. We used to turn over 100 kegs a week. Oddly enough, although I worked in hotels, I never touched a drop myself. Port Hedland is where I met my wife, Pam. At school I played rugby union and represented WA in the State Schoolboys. Whilst in Port Hedland I continued to play rugby and this sometimes involved travelling on "White Knuckle Airlines" to other towns in the Pilbara. Pam and I eventually moved to Perth, where I continued to work in hotels before joining WA Police in 1982. My first country posting was Kalgoorlie from 1984 to 1988. After spending a couple of years in Perth and Exmouth, we returned with our three children in 1991 and have called Kalgoorlie–Boulder home ever since. I have also relieved in several towns throughout the goldfields.

I do not like being idle, so when I had to take three months of long service leave many years ago, I started a family gardening and landscaping business, which grew quite a lot over the years, with all of my children working in the business at some stage. This has provided me with some insight into the issues faced by many small businesses. It was sad leaving the police department and I do miss the camaraderie I had with my police colleagues, and I will always be grateful for my many years spent as a police officer as it has, among many other things, given me many lifelong friends.

Our three children are now grown up, with two living in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. Kyran Jr, his wife, Emma, and their three children are making a life for themselves in the goldfields. Kyran manages a mining ground support company and also recently started a mining personnel business as a joint venture. Our other son, Taylor, also lives in Kalgoorlie and is currently undergoing an apprenticeship. Our daughter, Courtney, is a solicitor in Sydney.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

I believe that getting involved in the community enriches our life, and Pam and I did just that as soon as we arrived in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. We joined sporting and other local organisations and over the years we were rewarded with several life memberships between us, with mine including the Hannans Junior Sports Club—now Hannans Celtic Soccer Club—Kalgoorlie City Football Club, North Kalgoorlie Tee Ball Club and

Goldfields Tee-ball Association. We started our own junior sporting club, Hannans Junior Sports Club, with four young soccer teams which has now grown to include teams right through from preprimary to seniors, and also includes junior netball. Being awarded life memberships is humbling but being involved and helping the community is something we both strongly believe in and we are the better for it. It has made us part of the community and has certainly contributed to my success in the election. Children I coached and mentored way back when are now grown up with families of their own—and it is a bonus that they are now of voting age!

I served three and a half years of a four-year term as a councillor for the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, having had to resign due to my election to Parliament. My wife, Pam, is also a serving councillor. Whilst on council, I served on several committees, including the Australian Airports Association, the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Sister City program, the Walk of Fame Committee and others. I believe the experience I gained as a councillor will hold me in good stead as a member of Parliament, although I am sure I will find the roles vastly different.

PROJECTS FOR THE KALGOORLIE ELECTORATE

Kalgoorlie–Boulder and the goldfields is a great place to live and it will be my privilege over the next four years to ensure that it continues to grow and prosper. For this to happen, we need to have access to quality health care and education for our families. The Liberal–National government invested many millions of dollars in the goldfields over the past eight years but there is still more work to be done. The new government has committed to building a step up, step down subacute mental health facility in Kalgoorlie–Boulder and I urge it to do this as soon as possible. Mental health issues are of great concern in my electorate.

Other important projects that require funding in my electorate are the Norseman Visitor Centre, which was promised funding by the government during the election, and the redevelopment of the historic Coolgardie post office. Menzies, although small, still needs our attention and in order to grow and remain sustainable, it needs its own water source. Menzies currently has to truck in its water from Kalgoorlie but there is another water source just nine kilometres from town. If we could build a 600-kilometre water pipeline over 100 years ago, I would like to think we could build a nine-kilometre one today.

Although the goldfields has always relied on mining and will continue to do so, in order to ensure longevity and growth we need to diversify and support the establishment of other industries. The completion of the Outback Way will help grow tourism and open up not just the goldfields, but the whole of Western Australia to new opportunities from other states. Increased tourism means increased jobs and economic benefits for everyone.

In order to assist our pastoral industry, we must see the completion of wild dog fences around our pastoral leases. If we can get control of the wild dog situation, we will see growth in our sheep industry, which will be an economic boon for our region and provide jobs. Sheep stations in the area that used to run over 15 000 sheep are now down to just a couple of hundred, some even less, and they are having to rely on other forms of income to keep their stations going. One pastoralist advised me that he has so few sheep left that he knows each of them by name! Stock theft is also a huge issue and I believe we may need to see a return to the old-style police stock squad. Station owners are losing hundreds of thousands of dollars when targeted by professional cattle rustlers and stock thieves.

Another issue we need to look at is fly in, fly out in regional communities. Although there are some benefits to FIFO, I believe a residential workforce cannot be underestimated as it encourages families to settle in our towns, which then creates higher school enrolments, increased spending and improves community stability and morale. Being residential in the

town close to where people work enables families to spend more time together. FIFO can also contribute to domestic and mental health issues among employees and their families. I would encourage the government to consider implementing restrictions on companies using the FIFO model where the work location is within a specific distance to a town, making FIFO the exception, rather than the rule. Having said this, I would like to commend many of our local mining companies who have a policy of employing a residential workforce.

Royalties for regions has served country WA very well and must remain as a major funder of necessary services and facilities, not just for the goldfields but for all regional Western Australia. My son Kyran, who works in recruitment, says there are plenty of jobs in the goldfields but that we must be able to attract and keep workers and their families in the region so that we can remain sustainable or it will be bad news, not just for us, but for all of WA. I understand that the government wants to make changes, but they must not be to the detriment of regional WA. People in the country deserve to be treated to the same services and facilities as people in the metropolitan area.

Having been a policeman for 34 years, it would be remiss of me not to talk about law and order. Although it is different now, I remember when I used to do lone patrols in a van out to Coonana and other Aboriginal communities, hundreds of kilometres from Kalgoorlie. Being a policeman in the country, you never knew what you were going to face from day to day. I was honoured during some of these visits to be invited to watch corroborees and other tribal ceremonies, something not many white people get to see. I would like to say that I think it is unfortunate that police officers are made to resign if they wish to run for state politics.

Although it is important for the government to increase police numbers, in the meantime I would like to see police auxiliary officers based in the goldfields to help free up more fully trained police officers for frontline duty. I also think it is imperative that we recruit more Indigenous police officers. We have only one Aboriginal police officer in the whole of the goldfields. Engaging with students at high schools is one way to try to encourage more Indigenous students into police and other emergency service careers. I would also like to see community relations officers employed to assist police engage with people on the street. Having police on the streets and on the frontline is one of the most important tools to combat antisocial behaviour and crime. I do not believe it is feasible to man some police stations 24 hours a day if it means taking police off the streets. I am a firm believer in foot patrols and community engagement in deterring criminal activity. It gives people a sense of safety so they can go about their business.

With the completion of our new prison in Boulder, I am keen to see prisoners trained in real life and work skills so that when they leave prison, they have good employment prospects and less chance of re-offending. I especially believe that, when appropriate, Aboriginal prisoners should be trained and accredited in plant and equipment operation, such as graders, bobcats, compactors et cetera so that when they return to their communities, they can secure employment helping to build roads and infrastructure, not just for their community but for surrounding areas as well—for instance, the Outback Highway—creating jobs where currently there may be none. This will also provide ongoing jobs as the roads and infrastructure will need to be maintained.

Having recently attended the opening of the new student accommodation at the Western Australian School of Mines, I would like to emphasise the importance of this very esteemed educational facility in my electorate. The WA School of Mines was established in 1902 and specialises in mining-related subjects. The school has a vision to make the Kalgoorlie campus an International Centre of Excellence.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: The project, involving WA School of Mines alumni, the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder, Central Regional TAFE and Curtin University, will ensure future prosperity, jobs investment and socially sustainable communities in the goldfields and greater Western Australia, with plans to expand into the Pilbara. I would like to commend Bill Beament, Raleigh Finlayson, Sam Spearing and others on their foresight and efforts in attempting to get this project off the ground. I hope that the government will look favourably upon funding requests as this will be a great asset to the goldfields and our state.

I would like to commend Robert Hicks and his team from the Goldfields Individual and Family Support Association—GIFSA—for the work they are doing in remote Aboriginal communities with carers and those with disabilities. With the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and with that being managed from Geelong, I hope that they can continue to work collaboratively with GIFSA to maintain the high standard of service currently being provided.

Much has been said of late about our state's unfair share of GST revenue so I will not go too much into it, except to say that we must all keep pushing hard to make sure that WA gets a return of more than the current 34 cents in the dollar. We should not be penalised for not having poker machines or because some other states refuse to have mining. One suggestion would be for all states to retain, for example, 75 per cent of their GST revenue and for the balance of 25 per cent to go into a special fund to help those states that need more.

SHADOW MINISTER ROLE

I am looking forward to working with Mike Nahan, MLA, Leader of the Opposition. Like me, the Leader of the Opposition is not a career politician and has come into politics later in life after a significant pre-parliamentary career. I am honoured that Dr Nahan has assigned me the shadow portfolio of Aboriginal Affairs, especially as it is my first term.

During my time in the goldfields I believe I have earned the respect of the local Aboriginal population, working closely with them over the years. In 2000 I was awarded “Goldfields Top Cop” for my efforts in engaging with the Aboriginal people and attempting to learn to speak their local language. Because I was very young when I first came to Kalgoorlie, the Aboriginal people bestowed on me the nickname “Baby Face”. To this day, this is still how I am referred to, not only by the Aboriginals I met when I first arrived, but also now by their children and grandchildren—although the name “Baby Face” may not be quite as apt today as it was back then. I want to work in consultation with Aboriginal groups, agencies and the government to provide better outcomes. I believe that if we can work together instead of banging heads, we will get more done. Funding provided for programs for Aboriginal people needs to make its way down to the grassroots where it is needed most, and we need to try to get more cooperation between different family groups. I have already had a meeting with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Ben Wyatt, MLA, and I am hoping that by working together we can set an example and make positive inroads into providing a better life for our Indigenous citizens.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As already mentioned, the seat of Kalgoorlie is a very large electorate. I tried to get to all the outlying towns at least a couple of times during the campaign. I will now take the opportunity to thank everyone who helped or contributed in some way to my success. I am sorry I cannot name everyone, but in Kalgoorlie–Boulder I thank Brian Christie, Jason Wells, Jodie Richardson, Matty Hawkes, Doug Daws, and Diana and Lindsay Stockdale, and the many others who assisted in getting me across the line; Andrew Cox, Linda Crook and all the staff from Liberal headquarters were always available to assist with advice and logistics. I also thank Glenn Baker, who organised my polling booths for Menzies, Leonora and

Leinster; Peter Hill, who ran Laverton; and also Paul Axford, who came down from Leonora to assist. I thank my best friends Jeff and Anne Andrijasevich, both of whom are in the gallery today and who travelled from Perth to help out, and my other best friends Cherie and Richard Hood, who were always there to provide moral support. I also extend my deepest appreciation to our party members and my supporters who did a terrific job manning all the polling booths across our enormous electorate and helping out where they could.

My sincere thanks also go to Rick Wilson, MP, the federal member for O'Connor, and the two Liberal members for Mining and Pastoral Region, Mark Lewis, MLC, and Ken Baston, MLC, for their advice and expertise. I was fortunate that several ministers, including the former Premier, Colin Barnett, MLA, and members of Parliament visited the electorate over the past several months, and I am grateful for their support and guidance. Thank you. In particular, Liza Harvey and Peter Collier were very supportive.

I would also like to commend my two new electorate staff, Dianne Hedges and Helen Beesley, for getting my office in Kalgoorlie–Boulder up and running from scratch. Both ladies have a strong background in working in the government sector and have hit the ground running, showing great professionalism in helping get things off the ground.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family: my wife, Pam, who is in the gallery today. Throughout the long campaign, she worked extremely hard—you did well. I thank my children, Kyran Jr, Courtney—who came from Sydney—and Taylor, and daughter-in-law Emma, for their moral support and the many different ways each of them assisted throughout the campaign. Even my grandchildren, Isla, Kyran—yes, another Kyran; the fourth one—and Emmy, aged from two to seven, helped out at various stalls and markets. You all make me very proud.

I join this Parliament with a background in policing, local government and small business, and I reiterate my commitment to the people of the goldfields to work hard on their behalf with honesty and integrity, to represent them to the best of my ability, and to try to make the goldfields an even better place to live and raise a family.

[Applause.]
