



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Hon Wilson Tucker, MLC**  
(Member for Mining and Pastoral)

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Wednesday, 2 June 2021

*Reprinted from Hansard*

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## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

### *Motion*

Resumed from 1 June on the following motion moved by Hon Pierre Yang —

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley, 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.

**HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral)** [3.28 pm]: I begin by acknowledging the Whadjuk Noongar people and First Australians as the traditional owners of the lands we represent, and pay respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

President and members, good afternoon. I would like to take this opportunity to say congratulations to those who were re-elected and especially to those who have taken their seats for the first time. I look forward to working with you all closely over the next four years.

Entering Parliament without any fellow party members to lean on is a daunting experience. I was asked in an interview last week, and I quote, “How was your first day in the lion’s den? Have you been stabbed in the back yet by any of your colleagues?” The question almost surprised me considering the warm welcome I have received. I can honestly and happily say that I have been made to feel incredibly welcome from members on all sides of the political spectrum. I will not name names, because I think I would be mentioning the majority of this chamber, but many members have made an effort to offer congratulations, advice, encouragement and to let me know their door is always open. Thank you all for making me feel welcome in this place. I would also like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the friendly staff. I believe it was Hon Sue Ellery who mentioned in an induction session, and I am sure more eloquently, that the staff here are all wonderful, have been here for a long time, and we want to keep them. I could not agree more. I have also been told by the parliamentary staff that no question is too stupid; that statement may be tested as I navigate the first few weeks.

President, I feel very humbled and privileged to now call myself a member of this house and to be representing the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region. Over the next four years, I will work hard and do my best to honour the commitments and responsibility I have to all the people of my region in the great state of Western Australia.

As is tradition, I will now shed some light on my background, how I came to be here and what I stand for. My grandparents’ story begins in Australia in the 1960s after fleeing Kenya during the Mau Mau uprising as Kenya moved from under British colonial rule to self-government. My grandparents, Rose and Thomas Wilson, who grew up in poverty in Glasgow, led privileged lives in East Africa before being forced to leave behind their money and possessions, packing only a few household items into wooden crates and travelling by ship to start new lives in Western Australia with their children, my mother, Janet, my aunt, Fiona, and uncle, Andrew. After living in Australia for 10 years, it was discovered that, through an administrative error, the whole family was not registered as citizens and was declared stateless by the Australian

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government. My grandmother approached the local member of Parliament in Bunbury at the time, who went in to bat for the family so that they would not be deported. They were eventually naturalised six months later.

Growing up, my mum would be told by children in the playground at school that she was a Pom. She would argue, “No, I’m African” but was then asked, “If you’re African, how come you’re not black?” She would go home to ask my grandmother to clarify the situation.

I was born in Geraldton. My early life is typical of what you would expect from a policing family. My father was an officer who dedicated his early career to the Western Australia Police Force and my mother was a homemaker who dedicated her life to her family. She looked after me, my twin brother, Brett, and younger sister, Amanda. Like many policing families, we moved around a lot. I spent the first two years of my life in Geraldton. Later, we moved to Carnarvon, where we lived for another two years. After that, we moved to Bunbury, where I finished primary school and high school. I recall early school days playing with my brother in the schoolyard and confusing teachers when we would fall off the monkey bars, point at our injuries and, using a mix of Swahili words, proclaim that our elbows and knees were “kali sunna” and we would need some “dow-wa” to help fix them.

Although I spent the majority of my adult years living in the city, my childhood years were spent growing up in regional areas and I have an affinity and an appreciation for country people and places. I spent weekends on my father’s property in the Vasse region playing with my brother, riding motorbikes, catching marron in the dams and helping to look after the animals. Most days on the farm, we were not allowed in the house from the time the sun went up until the time the sun went down. Other weekends were spent on my aunt’s farm in Katanning, hiding and playing in the lupin and canola fields with my cousins, playing cricket at the local club and being taught the value of water conservation at an early age by having to cycle the bathwater with all the children and fighting to get in first before the water went cold. I learnt to appreciate the outdoors and feel fortunate to have experienced a rural upbringing. We learnt to drive cars, fish, herd sheep and generally be self-sufficient, which helped to shape me into the person I am today and will hopefully help me in being a voice for the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region.

After high school, like a lot of young Australians, I was not exactly sure what career I wanted to dedicate my life to. After some brief soul-searching, I started an apprenticeship as an electrician. After two years, I decided it was not for me and, given I am a pragmatic person—which my sister will sometimes describe as robotic—I decided to quit and pursue a career in computer science. When I was 18, I moved to Perth to study computer science at Edith Cowan University. I worked for several private companies in Perth during my 20s and early 30s as a software engineer and engineering manager, before I was presented with an opportunity to work for a US tech company in Seattle, Washington, to advance my career.

I spent four years working in the US, managing software teams in a fast-paced environment with a strong emphasis on accountability and ownership—an experience that will hopefully aid me in this place. Although I am thankful for the experience of working and living overseas, this period did help me appreciate how good we have it in Australia and, in particular, Western Australia. I firmly believe that this is the luckiest state in the luckiest country in the world.

During my time in the US, I experienced the fallout of the recent events that sparked the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, with racial tension and rioting a daily occurrence in Seattle and cities around the US. I applaud the McGowan government and the Western Australian people for their handling of the COVID crisis. I witnessed the appalling mishandling of COVID-19 firsthand in the United States. Seattle was one of the first places outside China to be affected and to experience just how devastating the virus can be on lives, families and the community. I feel proud of the Western Australian people’s no-nonsense and pragmatic approach in protecting the most vulnerable members of our community. I am perhaps one of the only members of Parliament

in Australia to have experienced the pandemic firsthand. I have lived through a year of restrictions and I have previously tested positive to COVID-19. I have also been vaccinated and experienced the two-week hotel quarantine after recently re-entering the country.

Given these experiences, I understand what this virus is capable of and I encourage all Western Australians to get vaccinated. Today, as I speak, COVID continues to affect the lives of millions of people around the world. Western Australians, in our home state today, are in a privileged position, free from the effects of the virus, but there are still over 36 000 Australians who are stranded overseas. I was fortunate to have recently been able to travel back home, but there are many who are not so lucky. I urge the McGowan government to help find a safe way home for stranded residents. Western Australia is great not only because we are wealthy, but also because we are a compassionate state.

I must admit that, as I watched the recent state election results coming in, admittedly very slowly for the Mining and Pastoral Region, with the realisation that my life would be changing from the trajectory it was currently on, I initially felt apprehensive about returning. I always planned to return to Western Australia and consider this state my home, but I had built a life and relationships overseas and did not realistically expect to return so soon. After a few sleepless nights and conversations with my mum to the effect of, “Wilson, what the hell are you doing?”, the full weight of the opportunity became evident and it was a no-brainer to book a plane ticket home.

I am a firm believer that choosing the more unknown and less comfortable path in life often provides the greatest outcome. It was with that thought that I resigned from my previous job, condensed my life into three suitcases, navigated a two-week quarantine and now find myself back on Perth’s sunny shores.

Since returning and being welcomed back by friends and family—many of whom are in the President’s gallery right now—and enjoying the stability of Perth, it has really helped to affirm my decision and also remind me how beautiful the state is and how lucky we all are. I feel equally committed and passionate to pursue this opportunity over the next four years as I did to the one that originally took me overseas, away from my friends and family. I did not grow up with political aspirations and am, admittedly, not a student of politics. I am not here because of a strong political upbringing or activist background. I am here because I felt strongly about an issue and questioned the decisions of the previous generation. I am here because I believe the new generation should feel empowered to question inherited policies and decisions, and challenge the status quo.

It is with that statement that we now come to everyone’s favourite topic and my own—daylight saving. Listening to the historic maiden speech of Hon Rosie Sahanna, I am reminded and acknowledge that daylight saving is not the most important issue facing the region or the people of Western Australia, but I believe it is one that could have positive benefits for this state and for the majority of the residents. I acknowledge that daylight saving affects people differently; however, this is a shift that would have positive benefits for the majority of Western Australia, including those living in coastal towns and cities around the state like Broome, Coral Bay and Exmouth. WA is blessed with one of the best climates in the world. Why not implement a change that would promote that benefit? Colin Barnett declared back in 2009 that the issue was dead for a generation. It has been 12 years and since that time, Perth has undergone a cultural and demographic shift. WA has experienced an influx of people into the metropolitan and coastal regions and attracted a high number of workers from over east and overseas who have lived in places that enjoy daylight saving and who understand the positive lifestyle and social and wellness benefits.

Daylight saving also has significant health benefits. Research conducted in WA, based on reports by the Western Australian government, found that men and women between the ages of 16 and 64 reported a positive increase in physical activity, of between 30 and 81 minutes, during the 2006 to 2009 daylight saving trial. The research also shows that spending just 30 minutes a day doing

physical activity can reduce the incidence of high blood pressure and depression. This issue is about not only changing the clocks, but also promoting and improving the quality of life and wellbeing of Western Australians.

We are moving to a more connected and dispersed world, with the ability to work remotely becoming a reality, driven by technology advances and a global pandemic as a forcing function for more flexible working conditions. Being able to align our time zone with the east coast, the US and Europe, even by an hour, will help connect WA and make WA's time zone more applicable to the summer months in other areas within our own country and with countries around the world. I realise that it is going to be a challenge, given the numbers and make-up of the houses. However, I believe that the majority of WA people acknowledge the benefits of daylight saving time and it will eventually be introduced; it is just a matter of when. In the meantime, I plan on building support for the issue, talking to people about the benefits and dispelling the myths.

I understand that I am a bit of a wildcard in this chamber, and outside of my desire to legislate for daylight saving in this state, my views are not well known. I would like to take this opportunity to speak to a few issues that I am passionate about.

I believe that Indigenous Australians should have the same opportunities as non-Indigenous Australians. One in 10 residents in the Mining and Pastoral Region is Indigenous and the region faces a number of challenges to improve their lives and wellbeing, with Australia and WA falling behind Closing the Gap targets in several key areas to meet the committed 2031 date to improve the wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable and the most culturally important members of our community. WA has the unenviable statistic of having the highest rate of suicide per capita in the country among the Indigenous population. We also have one of the lowest employment rates and the highest incarceration rate within Indigenous communities of any state in Australia. Given the wealth of WA and its position as the economic powerhouse of Australia, there is more that we can do and we are in a position to do it. As a regional MP, I will be looking for opportunities to improve the lives of Indigenous residents over the next four years.

I believe every Western Australian should have the opportunity to own their own home. We live in a lucky state, but it is not so lucky for those who are struggling to buy their own home. I will be joining many West Aussies in the trenches to live out the dream of home ownership. I fully acknowledge, surrounded by all this red leather, that I am in a more privileged position than a lot who are struggling to save a deposit to buy their first home. Housing affordability continues to disproportionately affect young people in the country. Young Australians have the second-lowest rate of home ownership in the world, with the ownership rate of 18 to 36-year-olds as low as 28 per cent. House prices continue to rise at a rate faster than wages, pushing home ownership out of reach for more and more young Australians every year.

This is only made worse by the fact that rental prices are also rising. Over just the last year, the rent in Perth has increased by an average of 13 per cent, while rental prices in northern WA have increased by 18 per cent. The pain is being felt by young people, with more than half of young people under the age of 24 experiencing housing stress, even after receiving commonwealth rent assistance. This housing crisis has the tragic result of driving Western Australians, particularly young West Aussies, into homelessness. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, young people make up 24 per cent of the homeless population. As a millennial, I will be looking at ways to improve housing affordability and the lives of and outcomes for our generation.

I believe a system that allows for ordinary Australians to have a voice for issues they are passionate about is in line with the values and fair-go nature of this country and of the Western Australian people. Our electoral system promotes diversity and real choice in representation and I stand here as evidence of that. Although I accept that the government has a mandate to implement policies that it took to the last election, I am sceptical of attempts to change our electoral laws, especially when the government did not take that particular issue to the last election. Although

no democracy is perfect, members cannot ignore the fact that our current electoral system has seen a diversity of ideas and values represented in Parliament. That diversity has ensured that minority or marginalised groups still have a voice here in the people's Parliament.

Much has been said in the media of the supposed over-representation of WA's country regions. I believe this is not an anomaly, but a feature of representative democracy. It protects people against the centralisation of political power in capital cities, and it ensures fair representation of geographical regions that, although low in population, do most of the economic heavy lifting for the state.

Although I am new to this place, I understand that the Legislative Council's function is to act as a house of review and to hold the government to account. My fear is that we may see electoral reform that favours the established parties in an attempt to have the Legislative Council reflect the make-up of the other place. Such an outcome would diminish the Legislative Council's role and relegate it to simply acting as a rubber stamp for the government's agenda. This would be contrary to the values of transparency, accountability and democracy.

Changing to the one vote, one value model would result in less representation in rural areas by concentrating focus on the cities, which could have serious consequences in the bush. It would result in under-representation in a region already struggling with achieving equality with the cities in many areas, including health and education services.

The Mining and Pastoral Region is over two million square kilometres and is one of the least populated and most remote places on the planet. It is responsible for the majority of the wealth of WA through our resource and agricultural industries. The region is also one of the most culturally important in the state and boasts beautiful world-class scenery.

I have been fortunate enough to have swum with whale sharks in Exmouth on the stunning Ningaloo Reef and have spent days climbing in the Kalbarri gorges and nights sleeping under the stars in the national park. The region is bigger than a lot of countries, and although I admit that I certainly have not seen it all, I am looking forward to travelling around the electorate and talking to residents to understand the opportunities and the challenges faced.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the members of the Daylight Saving Party committee, all the candidates who ran in the recent election and all the members who signed up with the party, who gave us the ability to contest the election and provide us with a platform to voice the issue and to represent ordinary Australians.

A special shout-out goes to Amanda Klaj, Larissa Ashton, Madeline Davey, Melina Mellino, Vince Radford, Andy Close, Joel Duffy and Brett Tucker.

Giving this speech today is a far cry from 2016 when we were waving sign-up forms at patrons in Fremantle bars after football games, dressed in a giant sun costume. We were not taking ourselves too seriously then, and as a party moving forward, I hope we can keep ourselves grounded with the same sense of positivity and have-a-go attitude over the next four years.

I would also like to say thank you to my brother, Brett, who was crucial in registering the party. Although we were born minutes apart, I consider you to be the older and wiser of the two. Thank you to my sister, Amanda, who has helped me navigate several broken hearts over the years. Despite your small size, you are one of the most fierce people I know.

In closing, I recognise that I was elected on a small number of votes—98 to be exact—in a very large region. You may not have voted for me, but I can assure you that I plan on taking this position seriously and I plan to do my best to be a voice for the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region.

Thank you.

[Applause.]