



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Ms Jodie Louise Hanns, MLA
(Member for Collie–Preston)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 4 May 2021

Reprinted from Hansard

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 29 April on the following motion moved by Ms L. Dalton —

That the following Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's speech be agreed to —

To His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley, 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.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston) [8.48 pm]: I would like to start by extending my congratulations to Hon Michelle Roberts on her appointment to the role of Speaker, and yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, on your appointment.

In this centenary year of Edith Cowan's election in 1921, that I, too, should be elected alongside so many other strong women—Divina, member for the Kimberley, you are a credit to your community—is a privilege that is not lost on me. I would also like to congratulate the Member for Hillarys, Caitlin Collins, on becoming the 100th woman to be elected to this Parliament. Although this is an outstanding achievement for women in Western Australia, I have one hope: on behalf of young women like my daughter, Brydie, my hope is that it does not take another 100 years to elect the next 100 women to Parliament.

Thank you to Neville Collard and Richard Walley for last week's outstanding welcome to country and smoking ceremony on the opening day of Parliament. It was a day that I will treasure. I pay my respects to the Aboriginal elders of the land on which we meet today.

COLLIE–PRESTON ELECTORATE

I would like to start by thanking every single one of the electors in Collie–Preston who voted for me, and there are many. I am excited and humbled by your support and I promise I will work alongside you, your families and your communities over the coming years so our region will have the opportunity to thrive. Collie–Preston is a diverse regional electorate, from large population centres such as Australind and Eaton, to small communities like Kirup, Burekup and Peppermint Grove Beach. This diversity extends beyond simple population size. The electorate of Collie–Preston is home to many different towns with their own sense of place and sense of community. From the rural towns of Dardanup, Capel and Gelorup to the more suburban areas like Clifton Park and Millbridge, each location has developed its own distinct identity.

This diversity also exists in the local economies, from the mining and electricity generation sectors in Collie to the farming and agricultural areas of Donnybrook, and the burgeoning tourism industry in the Ferguson, Preston and Collie River valleys. This diversity presents some challenges, but it is also one of the strengths of our region and serves to highlight the importance of the role of Collie–Preston in the south-west economy. Despite the diversity of the electorate, over the course of the election campaign I learnt that what we all have in common in Collie–Preston is quite simple: we want to live and work locally in our regional communities, and we want our kids and grandkids to be able to do the same.

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PERSONAL BACKGROUND

My journey to Parliament as the newly elected member for Collie–Preston began 49 years ago. I was born and raised in Yarloop, and that is where my story begins. My grandparents ran the Yarloop local store. My nan, Jean Higgins, was the most selfless person I know. Nan used to get up at 4.00 each morning to make her pies and pasties in her wood stove, and they were renowned as the best in the south west. One of my first memories is of sitting in the back of my grandad's van. The van, purchased from the winnings of the renowned WA racehorse Aquanita, meant that my grandfather and I did the daily delivery of piping-hot pies to Yarloop's Bunnings mill, just in time for the mill workers' smoko. The whistle would blow, the saws would stop and the workers would line up for Mrs Higgins' homemade pies. My grandparents' store served the town of Yarloop. It was more than a local store; it was a hub for the community.

My parents married and became entrenched in service to their community. Regional towns rely on people who are passionate about their local schools, sporting groups, hospitals and local employment opportunities. From a young age, this commitment to service became integral to my values and helped shape the person I am today.

My parents are amazing people. My dad, who is no longer with us, is the driver for my Labor values. Dad was a tough bloke, a blokey bloke, the life of the party. He was a sawmillier. Later, he was a refinery worker, a union official and a professional debater who never let you win an argument! Dad worked alongside the member for Forrestfield, Stephen Price, MLA, as a union official at Alcoa in Wagerup. I am sure they shared many jokes alongside the serious business of making sure workers had a safe work environment and that they went home safely to their families at the end of every shift. He would have been proud to be here today, and would probably have made sure that the member for Forrestfield shouted him a glass of red wine at the bar!

My mum is the opposite of my dad: a quiet achiever. Her sense of fairness, social justice and her ability to stand up for what is right, even when you are told you are wrong, made its mark on me. Love you, mum, and thanks for your support over the years.

I attended school at Yarloop Primary School and Harvey Senior High School, with the member for Dawesville, and then travelled as a Rotary exchange student—just like the member for Dawesville!—although my trip was to South Africa, in 1990. It was a year that changed my life and the lives of millions of others. It was the year that Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years. I watched as the country planned for its transition to democracy and saw firsthand what the move from apartheid to integration looked like—in schools, at the beach, on the buses, in the shops and in society as a whole. I was hosted by Lulu and Pieter Myburgh, who lived in Brakpan, near Johannesburg. Lulu and Pieter were teachers, and were committed to educating the children of the local domestic workers. They taught these children mathematics, English and Afrikaans. They explained to me that with these skills, black children could gain higher-paying jobs such as bank clerks, postal workers, teachers and nurses, thus breaking the cycle of poverty that was rife for millions of black South Africans. It was an experience that changed the course of the rest of my life. It taught me the difference that the opportunity of an education can make, regardless of your race, your gender or how wealthy your family is.

On my return to Australia, and for the next 30 years, I would go on to study and practice teaching. I wanted to work in state schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students, to try to make a difference to kids in places such as Tom Price, Kwinana and Collie. I moved to Collie with my husband and toddler in 2006. I worked as the school's vocational education training coordinator, helping students to find relevant training pathways and getting them ready for employment in the local community. For the last three years of my career I was a deputy principal at the school.

Over the last 16 years that I have lived in Collie, I have immersed myself in the life of my community. I served for eight years as a Shire of Collie councillor and for 10 years on the

Coal Miners' Welfare Board of Western Australia. I served as chairperson of the Collie Early Education Centre, as a board member at St Brigid's School, and as CEO of the Collie Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Along the way I also crossed paths with a bloke named Mick Murray; more on that later!

THE TEAM

In a way, each of these experiences led to me being preselected as the Labor candidate for Collie–Preston. It could be likened to lining up the holes in a piece of Swiss cheese! In July 2020, I took leave from the Department of Education to campaign full time. I landed the dream team for my campaign: campaign director Hon Dr Sally Talbot and campaign manager Kelly Paul. Given that these were not even their day jobs, it was a huge commitment. The dream team pushed me to my limits, but also pulled together the most incredible team to support me. We all had the same unwavering vision: to retain the seat of Collie–Preston for Labor after the retirement of Hon Mick Murray.

To Sally Talbot, you are the real-life version of *The Karate Kid*'s Mr Miyagi—mentoring me with quietness, patience and a generosity beyond words. To Kelly Paul, thank you for your unwavering dedication, enthusiasm and doggedness to get me elected. Although a simple thankyou will never be enough, I thank you and your boys Haimona, Alex and Tane.

Thank you to Sally, Kelly and Hon Don Punch, who brought me one of the greatest gifts of my campaign, Karen Steele. Just like her name, she is built of tough stuff. Like me, she is a passionate Aries, she is left-handed and—be prepared—is a sympathetic crier! I thank you for everything, my friend.

Thank you to the Collie and Australind branch members and our branch presidents, Louise Knox and Gary Benton, for your support and friendship. Thanks to Cameron Membrey, Bill Hamlett, Maree Quinn, Renee Chappell and Tyril Houghton, my regular volunteers during the campaign. Thanks to Ian Does, Peter Knox, and Jon Ford who, as the campaign ramped up, so did you!

To those who helped cover hours and hours of pre-poll and polling day booths, thank you. To Christine and Allan Jauncey: you are the best. Thank you to the unions who supported me: Steve McCartney and Alex Cassie from the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union; Wayne Wood and Jill Hugo from the Australian Services Union; and Greg Busson from the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union. Thank you to the union delegates, members and supporters for helping spread the message in your workplaces and in your communities. To Tim Picton, WA Labor state secretary, thank you for your support and for always taking my calls, even when they were accidental pocket dials about pretzels! An extra special thank you to Ellie Whiteaker, WA Labor assistant state secretary. You are a powerhouse, an incredible advocate for women and a friend.

Thank you to Ashley Buck, Sofie Hannabus, Louise Pratt and Juliana Plummer for your support.

Thanks also to my band of willing doorknockers, who over the months included members of Young Labor, WA Labor, the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union and the Australian Services Union. You came along with bubbling enthusiasm, renewing the momentum of what had become the hard slog of doorknocking house after house, street after street.

Thank you to my supportive friends who made sure that my kids got to school and sport while I was missing in action for nine months. Thanks to my new electorate office staff—Karen Steele, Taegan Irving and Gemma Stewart. I look forward to doing great things with you.

And finally, thank you to my family—Jason, Brydie and Toby—who could not be here tonight. You are the three best people I know. My kids are teenagers, so thanks for letting me embarrass you with the car stickers and roadside signage. Yes, Toby, it is all pretty weird, hey? I hope I have made you all proud.

ISSUES FACING COLLIE–PRESTON

The reality is that the namesake of my electorate, Collie, as in Collie–Preston, is a town in transition. Importantly, this transition affects not only the workforce in Collie itself, but also the local economies that depend on Collie thriving as a centre for industry and energy generation in the south west. Many people who live in the neighbouring areas of Bunbury and Harvey and the Peel region rely on direct or indirect employment based in Collie–Preston.

I live and breathe the real-life challenges this transition brings every day. My husband, Jason, works at Muja power station as a power station controller. I always tell him, think Homer Simpson, but minus the doughnuts! Although he is highly skilled, changing careers at 50 years of age would be really daunting. Making the right call for the workers of Collie–Preston means planning carefully for workers just like my husband and for the jobs of the future. If we get this right, there will be jobs for our miners, boilermakers, plant operators, nurses, teachers, aged-care workers, tourist operators and young people alike.

The future of Collie–Preston—indeed, the south west—relies on me being a strong voice in government to make the right calls about Collie’s future. It needs to be a future in which new industries are established to create new opportunities for workers. It needs to be a future in which our skilled workforce can transition into new jobs, using their existing skills and expanding those skills with further training and innovation opportunities. It needs to be a future in which our youth can live, with access to quality education and training facilities and the ability to find work in the local area. The McGowan government has this vision well underway with its commitment to the Just Transition process and the Collie Futures industry development fund. These key initiatives pave the way for Collie–Preston and the south west to continue to prosper. It has already brought to reality projects such as the WesTrac autonomous technology training facility, the only one of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. The new Koolinup DFES training facility and its neighbour across the road, Frontline Fire and Rescue, are creating new jobs and bringing manufacturing opportunities to the region.

The establishment of the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety regional licensing centre moved some key government functions to the region and, in doing so, created local jobs.

Tourism initiatives such as the Premier’s favourite pre-election dad joke—the biggest dam mural in Australia, at Wellington Dam—have thrown a national and international spotlight on the region. Thankfully, the mural evolved to its current form, instead of the Premier’s initial concept, that of Hon Mick Murray reclining across the dam wall! That is a true story. The expansion of Wellington National Park, the opening of Lake Kepwari and the mountain biking trails initiatives have helped to further diversify the region.

In terms of education and training, many schools and TAFE campuses in Collie–Preston have received, and will continue to receive, significantly increased funding to improve employment outcomes for students.

More broadly, across the electorate there have been investments in major road projects such as the Bussell Highway duplication and the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, aiming to make country roads safer for all road users.

We have seen major investment in community assets such as the rebuild of the Eaton Bowling Club, the revitalisation of the Donnybrook goods shed and the \$6 million Donnybrook Community, Sporting, Recreation and Events Precinct, funded by government from the COVID recovery package. Capel got its police station, with upgrades being planned for both Collie Police Station and Donnybrook Police Station.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms J.L. HANNS: Investment in these projects has seen a remarkable change in Collie–Preston over the last four years. My job, as the representative for the people of Collie–Preston, will be

to work hard in government to bring new projects to fruition—projects that retain traditional jobs in traditional industries—to grow new jobs in emerging industries and to listen to the needs of my community. I will advocate for projects that make Collie–Preston a remarkable place to live.

The position I find myself in as the newest member for Collie–Preston is a testament to the commitment of our Premier, Mark McGowan, and his team and to the person who will forever be known as “Marvellous Mick”, Hon Mick Murray. Mick has been the local member for the last 20 years. From winning elections by 34 votes to romping in by thousands of votes, Mick has shown me how to fight for our community. He has never stopped fighting to create secure local jobs, to improve our local health and education services and, importantly, to make sure that everyone in Collie–Preston gets their fair share. Thank you, Mick, for your service to our community. Enjoy your retirement with Anna and your extended family.

As we look to the future of Collie–Preston, it is a future that no doubt will be different from its past. But it is a future that is being carefully considered and brings a sense of security and confidence for what lies ahead.

When I was chosen to replace Mick, I kept being told that I had big shoes to fill. Dean Alston’s cartoon in *The West Australian* the day after my preselection made that very obvious. I am looking forward to growing into those big shoes of Mick’s. I hope those shoes are just like Mick’s were—long lasting, hard wearing and tough as nails. They are going to need to be, so I can make sure that the people who call Collie–Preston home get the future that they deserve.

[Applause.]
