



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Ms Sabine Winton, MLA**

**(Member for Wanneroo)**

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 16 May 2017

*Reprinted from Hansard*



# Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 16 May 2017

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## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

### *Motion*

Resumed from 11 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.

**MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo)** [7.23 pm]: May I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your election to the position.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land and pay my respects to their elders. I thank the Clerk and the staff of the Parliament for their assistance since I was elected. They have been both professional and personable in assisting me as a new member of Parliament. I am very grateful for their patience.

The path that has led me to standing here tonight is a long one. It is a path on which many people have inspired me, encouraged me, supported me and, at times, carried me—this is going to be good! As my previous 27-year career as a teacher would suggest, I did not aspire to be standing here but, rather, I have been a conviction community activist. A conviction parliamentarian is what I aspire to be in this place. I have been labelled feisty, determined and a troublemaker. I will endeavour to be all those things and more in this place, but, Mr Speaker, I ask for your guidance and direction.

At the outset, I want to thank Hon John Quigley, MLA, who saw in me something that I did not. He always believed that I had the ability and passion to be a champion for the people of Wanneroo in this place. I thank him for his characteristic dogged determination over an extended period in persuading me to pursue this goal and his continued counsel as I strive to be the best that I can be in this place. To the people of Nowergup, Carabooda, Neerabup, Wanneroo, Tapping, Carramar, Ashby, Pearsall and Hocking: I thank the voters in my electorate for bestowing their trust and faith in me. I am humbled by their overwhelming vote of confidence in me. I believe that my strong and extended local connection to the district—having lived in the Wanneroo area for over 40 years—together with my experience as a local teacher were very important factors in my win. I acknowledge that my support came from voters who want their voices heard, their priorities valued and their aspirations for themselves and their families to be central in my thoughts in representing them. These are the people I will keep talking to and I will keep listening to for the next four years.

## WANNEROO ELECTORATE

Wanneroo has a proud and long history as a pioneering district. Wanneroo traditionally has been a major centre for market gardening. The area's agricultural sector is a significant contributor to the local economy and the state's agricultural exports. For example, in 2014–15, Wanneroo contributed an estimated \$147 million in gross value agricultural production, which is 38 per cent of the total produced in the Perth region. This local horticultural industry provides a valuable resource of fresh vegetables and fruit for the Perth market. This industry is facing a number of issues, including the pressure of increased urban expansion, and limitations and uncertainties on groundwater extraction. Very little progress has been made to provide certainty for growers and landowners in the last eight years. We have made a commitment to form a reference group of growers and stakeholders to develop an informed approach to the water issues facing the region to ensure that horticultural and agricultural industries can continue to develop and thrive in a changing landscape.

Our community continues to experience incredible growth. The population of the City of Wanneroo, in which my electorate falls entirely, grew from around 114 000 to 160 000 between 2006 and 2011 on the census data. The population was estimated to grow beyond 200 000 in 2016. As such, the city is well known as the fastest growing local government in Western Australia. This growth has been driven largely by young families moving into the electorate. We have a very multicultural community, with over 40 per cent of residents coming from overseas. Wanneroo plays host to the biggest single citizenship ceremony anywhere in Australia. This year's Australia Day citizenship ceremony welcomed 800 residents from 49 countries.

Unfortunately, Wanneroo also has challenges, none bigger than its continuing high unemployment rate. Wanneroo's unemployment rate has grown 81 per cent since March 2013. The unemployment rate in Wanneroo is significantly higher than the state average. Additionally, every day, over 60 per cent of our residents leave the local area to go to work. This government's priority is the creation of jobs. Our plan for jobs is specific strategies that focus on the northern suburbs. We are committed to seeing the Meridian Park Industry Estate in Neerabup, an area of nearly 400 hectares of industrial land, reach its true potential. Bringing Meridian Park under the proposed industrial lands authority will allow us to diversify our economy and encourage new jobs in smart industries in our local area. That is what the people of Wanneroo deserve.

I am also delighted with the swift action taken by this government to successfully negotiate the redirection of billions of dollars of federal funds from the cancelled Perth Freight Link. Importantly, we now have funding in my electorate for key infrastructure projects. The government will deliver overpasses at key intersections along Wanneroo Road, as well as dualling a dangerous stretch of Wanneroo Road from Flynn Drive. This is an investment of \$146 million into Wanneroo that will create 805 jobs. I am proud to be part of a government that is swiftly delivering on its commitments in Wanneroo.

I started this political journey unintentionally when I led a grassroots campaign that saw us protect Lake Nowergup from the encroachment of mining. I intend to remain a local and active advocate for my community. I am delighted that, as the member for Wanneroo, I will be able to work towards letting the world know about this secret jewel in Wanneroo and to deliver on the government's commitment to provide better access for all of us to enjoy it. Wanneroo has had strong representation by women in this place previously. I take great inspiration from two strong previous Labor members for Wanneroo, Jacqui Watkins and Dianne Guise. They have set the bar incredibly high for me.

## COMING TO AUSTRALIA

Some of the people who knew me when I was younger will not be surprised to see me standing here tonight. I am a migrant to this great country of ours, having arrived with my parents, Hans and Sigrid Fenn, sister, Elke, and brother, Mike, on 11 May 1973 from the town of Dieburg in what was then known as West Germany. Forty-four years later, to the day, last Thursday, I had the honour of being sworn in as the member for Wanneroo. I was eight years old on my arrival, and English is my second language. My parents had little money, little language, no formal qualifications and no family support in a foreign country. My parents literally came with nothing but hope and a dream, and a dogged determination to create a better life, as do many migrants who come here. We first stayed in Fairy Meadow, near Wollongong. The rent was \$35 and included food. I have vivid memories of lining up in the cafeteria for our food each day, hoping the lady serving would be generous with the ice-cream scoops of mashed potatoes, which was so unusual to me. At the same time I remember dad getting thinner and thinner, and mum pining to cook her own meals for us, and I remember the scratchy grey blankets to cuddle up to at night in bed. Food and family are things so many of us take for granted and are a great comfort to us all, and I cannot imagine what it was like for mum and dad during that first year. I also remember dad coming home from the steelworks covered in black soot. He earned \$75 a week, and my parents quickly realised that they had to strike out if they were going to make any progress. Dad quickly found a job as a brickie's labourer, earning \$150 a week, with the opportunity for weekend work too, and finally we moved to a flat in North Ryde, where mum and dad could finally cook for us, and get second jobs in factories, driving delivery trucks and doing continuous weekend work to save up a deposit for a house, which they did in less than two years. In 1975, we were off with our new Falcon, trailer and the 25 per cent deposit required in those days for a house built off the plan, across the gravelled Nullarbor Plain to Yanchep, on the other side of Australia.

## BECOMING A TEACHER

I have always loved school, and learning English seemed to come easily to me. Going to school and doing the best we could was a priority for my parents. They had each left school early in life—dad, when he was a boy, to wander the world with the merchant marine, and mum as a 14-year-old to earn money as a shop assistant to help her family. She had desperately wanted to stay at school—she was very clever and loved it—but she just never got the opportunity. Educational opportunity and economic aspirations to own their own home drove my parents. So with roots firmly established by way of a mortgage and home ownership, my parents again quickly found work—dad as a school gardener at Yanchep District High School and mum as a school cleaner, positions they both kept until retirement. My parents have always had low-paid work and made huge sacrifices to make ends meet. Their incredible work ethic, dedication to family and absolute honesty has been instilled in me.

After graduating from Murdoch University with a primary teaching degree, I took the opportunity to work and live across the state, including in the goldfields town of Norseman, and Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley, and to the tropical isolation of Cocos Keeling Islands, where I met my husband, Paul, before relocating back to Perth to start our family. I look fondly back over my time in remote communities as a period of great personal and professional growth. Those formative years as a teacher have served me well, and my time working with the Aboriginal community in Fitzroy Crossing and the Malay community on Cocos helped to shape my world view. The students in both these communities speak English as a second language, and perhaps that shared bond with my students in those places most shaped my teaching.

## GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

My most recent appointment has seen me working in the field of gifted and talented education. For the past 12 years I have been a primary extension and challenge coordinator with the Department of Education. It was also a time when I achieved the status of level 3 classroom teacher. I have enjoyed my time advocating for the special needs of our brightest students. We should be striving to nurture giftedness in all domains, ensuring that we celebrate intellectual giftedness in the classroom in the same manner as we celebrate athletic giftedness on the sporting field and musical giftedness in the school band. I have long paraphrased from a quote when I talk to people who challenge me and say that gifted and talented education is elitist. In simple terms it goes like this: there are more poor people than rich people; it follows then that there are more gifted poor people than gifted rich people. When we do not invest in gifted education programs in our public education system, when we do not do all we can to provide these students with opportunities, the students who will suffer the most are those gifted students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The rich can afford to take their children to violin classes on the weekends. For our bright students, an education is an opportunity to reach their potential. For many bright students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, it is a way to a better future.

## TEACHERS

We all have memories of special teachers who have had an influence on our lives. As a student, I had extraordinary teachers, such as Glenn Capelli and Jenny Silburn, who left lasting impressions during my time at Wanneroo Senior High School, now known as Wanneroo Secondary College. As a teacher in the various contexts in which I have worked, I have been inspired to be a better teacher, and a better person, by many of my teacher colleagues, in particular the late Kay Brooks, Kim Winton, Sue Daly and Kirsteen McCrory. These women in particular have mentored me, supported me, challenged me and influenced me throughout my career. I count them as dear personal friends.

Educational research confirms what teachers and most parents have always known—that the teacher is the single most important driver of student achievement, after family background. As John Hattie explains, successful education comes back to —

... the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act—the person ... who is alone with students during their 15 000 hours of schooling.’

I want also to read a quote by Haim G. Ginott from *Between Teacher and Child* —

I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.

We all instinctively know this to be true. Our daily mood makes the weather. How we treat teachers will have an impact on how teachers treat our children. Western Australia pays its teachers well compared with the rest of Australia, but how we treat our teachers and educational support staff is the key. I believe that morale amongst staff in schools is at the lowest point of my working life. Teachers are leaving the profession in large numbers. We need to do better to retain our graduate teachers. The number of workers’ compensation claims and the extent of stress leave accessed in the sector are indicators that teachers are

under pressure. There is an increasing casualising of the workforce, and increased barriers for movement for staff between schools, and increasing workloads around administrative tasks and audit processes are taking their toll.

Perhaps we need to start humanising the education sector. The reforms of the previous government have resulted in an increasingly detached workforce in which teachers spend more time applying for their positions, engaged in audits and performance management reviews and less time discussing their students or planning lessons. Teacher Registration Board requirements are extremely onerous and time consuming and take teachers away from teaching. More teachers are feeling abandoned and unsupported as they grapple with increased behaviour issues and violence in schools. Many teachers describe a workplace culture in which some teachers feel unsupported and blamed for being unable to manage difficult students. Workplace bullying is on the increase. Monitoring teacher performance has become an industry in itself, with new initiatives such as videoing the teacher and surveying students being increasingly introduced, all in the name of improving teacher skills, but is viewed by many teachers as an extra burden with no measurable positive results for improved student outcomes. School leaders are challenged by the significant shift in administrative burden that they are not always prepared or equipped to manage. In the same way as teachers are increasingly taken away from planning, our leaders are taken away from educational leadership. The lack of mobility within schools is creating a two-tiered public education system in which there are not enough incentives to make a contribution in regional schools that need our best and most passionate teachers. Schools are increasingly competing against each other for staff and students on the one hand and are expected to build collaborative relationships on the other.

Without incentives or pathways, we will further disadvantage our country and regional schools, which need good teachers, and metropolitan schools, which need those teachers with those life experiences, having lived and taught in the bush. The provision of equitable education services to all Western Australians is essential. Teachers make a difference, so we must have a system that attracts and retains enthusiastic graduates, as I was, and experienced teachers to go and work in very challenging and remote and regional areas of our state. Although financial incentives are one important driver, the other driver is allowing teachers to be able to transfer back into the metropolitan region.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** In August 2016, the Education and Health Standing Committee released a report on the independent public schools initiative. It found that this initiative has exacerbated existing inequalities in the public school system, reinforcing a two-tiered system. Finding 12 of the report is telling. It states –

The Independent Public School initiative has not had any discernible effect on the outcomes of students at Independent Public Schools, nor non-Independent Public Schools, for both students with additional needs, and those without.

Not surprisingly, finding 4 states –

The professional capacity of school staff has a greater effect on student outcomes than autonomy.

I agree with recommendation 1, which concludes –

The Department of Education should focus on improving teacher quality and teaching practices as the most influential methods of improving student outcomes.

That brings me back to the beginning. Improving teacher quality and teaching practices will happen when we let teachers get on with the job of teaching rather than talking about

teaching. It is the teacher's mood that makes the difference. We need to reboot our schools to think about teaching and education as a human endeavour. Teaching is a noble and most rewarding profession. The majority of teachers are self-reflective, continuous and flexible learners who are deeply motivated to be their best and do the best for their students. We need to shape a bureaucracy in which we trust teachers more. We need to encourage a bureaucracy that collaborates with teachers, who do actually know best. We need to create schools that allow our teachers to be the best they can be. There are many schools out there like that. We need every school to be like that. I am heartened by new teachers like Amy Blitvich, who is doing great work. There is great enthusiasm by young teachers, and we have a great future.

Without a doubt, my status as a local schoolteacher connected me in real ways to people I met during the campaign. In an age when there is significant and deep-rooted negativity and hostility towards politicians, I found this confronting. The trust placed in us as teachers to care for and nurture our children is very powerful indeed. The trust our community places in us to represent teachers in Parliament is significant and powerful too. We need to hold ourselves up to the highest standards of integrity because, like teachers, we as elected representatives have an enormous opportunity to make both instant and long-lasting differences to the lives of individuals, families and communities by the decisions we make in this place. I do not take that responsibility lightly.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Hon Sue Ellery, the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council. I congratulate her for being the first woman to become Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council. She has been an inspiration to me.

I would like to pay a special thank you to Carolyn Smith for her faith in me. Carolyn is a fierce warrior and leader, fighting to protect and improve the working conditions and pay of our lowest paid workers in a variety of key workplaces and industries, including hospitality, aged care and education assistants. I extend my gratitude to all the United Voice family who supported me so generously. That Burgundy Wave was a tsunami in Wanneroo, and there are too many of them to thank individually now. Our connection is based on the shared belief that workers deserve a fair go and that we must have voices in this place that defend and protect the working rights of our most vulnerable workers. I pledge to you all to be one of those voices.

I want to also thank my team and many volunteers for their unyielding belief in me and each other to bring back the seat of Wanneroo to the Labor Party. We were constantly reminded that Wanneroo was a bellwether seat, having always been held by the government of the day since the electorate's inception in 1989. I thank Dr Anne Aly, the member for Cowan, for her support and advice. She is another Labor woman leading the way.

A very special thank you goes to my campaign manager and field organiser, Paul Winter and Carlie Germs, and my entire campaign committee. I also want to make a special mention of two volunteers in particular: Robert "Bob" Russell-Brown's and David Leith's commitment to our great Labor Party and their belief in me to champion those values as the member for Wanneroo means a great deal to me. I thank them for letting me vent relentlessly, frequently and often outrageously at all times of the day and night, including during 92 wobbles on the side of the road. To all my wonderful volunteers, I cannot repay you. I hope I can be worthy of your trust in me. Our achievement in getting such a big swing is in no small part due to every single one of you who dared to share my dream and mad ways.

I want to also recognise the support of the Community and Public Sector Union-PSU Group, the Western Australian Prison Officers' Union and the Electrical Trades Union of Western Australia for their work and support. Unions have been and always will be an

important part of our community. I have been a proud member of the State School Teachers' Union of WA all my working life. The things we take for granted and the things we all as a community benefit from—union members or non-union members—have come from collective action by our unions. Universal health care, superannuation, the eight-hour working day and the minimum wage exist because of unions.

To Patrick Gorman and Lenda Oshalem, my sincerest thanks and congratulations for a most brilliant victory. It has been a privilege to be part of this state campaign that delivered this historic win to the WA Labor Party. It was nice to drink from that elixir too. Even the Leader of the Opposition in his opening remarks during the opening of the fortieth Parliament congratulated us on an emphatic victory, and emphatic it was. It was a victory forged from the hard work and commitment by the Labor Party when in opposition. You cannot get around hard work. It was a victory forged from WA Labor developing positive policy positions in a range of important areas. Most importantly, it was a victory forged from reaching out into our community to talk to and listen to the people of Western Australia.

### **INSPIRING WOMEN**

I have been inspired by many women in my political career, many already mentioned tonight. To Nat Sangalli, a fellow grassroots advocate, I owe a great thanks. I would also like to acknowledge Hon Alannah MacTiernan. She sets a very high standard for public office indeed and she continues to be an enormous influence on me. I would also like to acknowledge all my women Labor colleagues who are part of this Mark McGowan government. I am so proud to be part of this Parliament with you. We are setting a wonderful example to women.

Winning has been a real joy for so many of us across this state. It will all be for nothing if we do not affect real change for the good people of Western Australia who elected us. I look forward to working with all members on both sides of this Parliament in the best interests of those we serve.

Finally, because I know I will cry, I would like to thank the three most inspiring women in my life—my three daughters, Meg, Emma and Kate. You make me want to make the world a better place. To my husband, Paul, I thank you for letting me be me.

[Applause.]

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