



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Mr John Carey, MLA**

**(Member for Perth)**

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Wednesday, 17 May 2017

*Reprinted from Hansard*



# Legislative Assembly

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 J.N. CAREY (Perth — Parliamentary Secretary)** [4.54 pm]: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am deeply honoured and humbled to stand here today representing the community of Perth. I want to thank them for the unique opportunity to represent them. I acknowledge the Whadjuk people and their elders, past and present, on whose lands we meet today and every day this Parliament meets. I also want to acknowledge my predecessor, Eleni Evangel, who gave four years of public service to the local community. Although we are from opposite sides of the political fence, we worked together in the interests of the community and I genuinely wish her all the best.

I am an optimist. I am here because I believe in the capacity of community to come together to drive social change and improve people's lives. I have seen this in my own community of Perth—an incredibly connected and inclusive community where people consistently show genuine concern and care for others. So many different groups create real and positive change at a local level. The parents and citizens associations, environment groups, precinct teams and local advocacy organisations are all bound together with a common purpose to make people's lives better and create a stronger sense of community. I thank them for their efforts and for allowing me to be part of it. It is also why I am Labor—because of the real power of collective action. I am Labor because I value fairness, equality, justice and inclusion. I am Labor because I believe in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and in safe and secure conditions: where people have the right to collectively organise and protect their rights; where everyone has an equal opportunity to education and realise their full potential; and where we do not judge a society on how well the one per cent prosper but on how our most vulnerable are treated.

## THE CHANGING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

In this rapidly changing world, people are genuinely more worried about their futures and what it means for their children. This change is reshaping the way people think about their world and their place in it. The fragile nature of current relations between countries, the random reach of terrorist acts and the uncertainty of the current global economic environment have reframed our sense of security, both at home and afar. The rapid changes in technology are dramatically recasting our jobs environment. Technology is the disrupting agent of the twenty-first century. With this disruption to industry comes the creation of new roles and the

transformation of existing jobs requiring new skill sets, while also making other jobs redundant. This creates uncertainty. The incredible expansion of mobile phone technology and the use of social media and peer-to-peer platforms are also significantly reshaping how all generations interact with each other and how information is shared. They are reshaping traditional concepts of relationships and even community. Change is inevitable and is unstoppable. But we should never dismiss the genuine fears and concerns that accompany this disruption. We need the type of political leadership that listens and generates solutions with our local communities to respond to this changing landscape.

### **POLITICAL LEADERSHIP**

Ultimately, we all have a choice about the type of political leadership we pursue. The first is the cheap, populist option. Those leaders prey on and perpetuate our worst fears. They exploit division in our community to promote the fear of difference. We know this: fear breeds fear. These leaders offer sound bite grabs that do not address the causes of complex policy issues facing our community. In this regard, we should not be surprised by the rise of the likes of Donald Trump.

Another type of leadership offers something different. That leadership seeks to understand people's concerns and the causes of those fears; it has honest, open and up-front conversations about those issues and works to take people on a journey about the potential solutions. This type of leadership brings out the best in people and human nature to provide a positive vision for our future. I have always aspired to deliver this type of leadership as an elected member of local government, and now in this place. This type of leadership is more important if we are to address a critical issue that we now face—that is, a genuine feeling of people being disenfranchised and holding deep cynicism about politics, government and the Parliament, regardless of the side of politics we sit on.

We must confront this uneasy truth: many people have lost trust in our political process and in our role here in the house. Let us face it; people lose trust when they switch on the television and see the bickering in Parliament. They are despondent about negative politics. People lose trust when they see politicians using taxpayer funds to fly to polo or sporting matches, and wonder why one rule applies to ordinary workers, yet another standard applies for politicians. People lose trust when they see promises made and then thrown out of the door. This was no more apparent to my local community when the MAX light rail project, which was promised to be fully funded and fully costed, was simply discarded by the former government.

People lose trust when they feel elected officials have a sense of entitlement. Just because we are elected to a role does not mean we should feel that we have the automatic right to all the potential privileges that that role may bring. As a result, we have a big job ahead of us to rebuild people's trust. If we are to raise our community's hopes about what we can deliver, we must raise the standard in politics and we must raise the level of public debate away from the heavily crafted spin that simply turns people off. I am not so naive to think that this does not mean a robust democracy or debate in Parliament, but I genuinely believe we must shift away from petty politics. I would argue that to achieve this we must aim to go beyond community expectations about the kind of elected representatives who will serve their concerns and needs. In short, we need to aim high, or, as the 900-year-old philosopher Yoda once so wisely advised, "Do or do not; there is no try."

### **BUILDING COMMUNITY TRUST**

I know this can work because this is what we achieved during my tenure at the City of Vincent. I was proud to be part of a team that shifted the culture of the council to openness and accountability to our community. The City of Vincent was ranked third last among Perth councils in 2010 based on an independent survey of ratepayers. As the new mayor with

a great team of young councillors, we worked hard to set higher standards of transparency, accountability and integrity in decision-making to rebuild our community's trust. The City of Vincent was the first council to have an online gift register, a staff travel register and a councillor interest register, and today it is still the only council to have a developer contact register for councillors. Yes, we even had a ban on councillor and mayoral travel. In the strong interests of bipartisanship and pursuing the common good, I regularly publicly backed the previous local government minister's first efforts on transparency reform. I am incredibly proud that we turned Vincent around and that in 2016 it was rated the number one council out of 26 in the same survey, and best governing organisation. For that reason, I welcome the Speaker's commitment to raising standards in Parliament. I strongly welcome the Premier's agenda to get the budget back in order, particularly the freeze on the salaries of members of the Legislative Assembly so that we can lead by example as we seek to repair the Liberal–National government's debt. This is the right start, but we must all pitch in.

### **POLICY CHALLENGES**

Of course, that is not the only challenge we face. I understand that every Western Australian has a right to receive quality health care when they need it. It is a primary obligation that a state government must deliver to ensure trust and confidence in our hospitals. I know that from firsthand experience. In seven years I lost my mother, father and sister, with my mum and sister in and out of hospitals due to cancer. I have the utmost respect and admiration for all who work in our hospital system on a day-to-day basis. But we must never allow again another fiasco such as the failed oversight of Perth Children's Hospital, as it weakens the trust in our healthcare system.

We also know that educating our children for the new economy is a must. It is unacceptable that poor planning has left our high schools overcrowded, and that education cuts have affected the quality of teaching our children receive. The government will fix this by restoring education assistants in our classrooms and re-establishing an inner-city local-intake high school, so that we can once again cater to the needs of the growing number of inner-city families, where we know the real demand and growth in the student population is.

Clearly, the most evident and pressing issue for our state has been the end of the mining boom and the failure to plan for jobs into the future. We were hit hard, and nowhere has that been more apparent than in my own electorate. We have only to look at the city, where there are precincts of endless vacant shops. In fact, it is so bad that recent vacancy rates reached 16 per cent—double the rate at the time of the global financial crisis. Nothing is more important to a person's worth, confidence and self-esteem than a decent job. That is why we have a critical responsibility to drive jobs growth.

### **DIVERSIFYING OUR ECONOMY**

I will be very clear: our economy needs a broader horizon, rather than just relying on the resource sector for jobs and investment. For my electorate of Perth, that means unlocking the full potential of our city and inner-city areas. Our city has real potential to grow as an education hub for international students to study and live in. International students and their visiting families bring more than \$1.3 billion a year to our city, but Study Perth reports that Western Australia is struggling to retain its share of international students against the eastern states. That is why it is critical that we deliver on our promise to invest more in marketing our education institutions, backed by smarter strategies, and improving the experience of students who come here to learn.

Similarly, this state has lost its way on how to market our capital city and our world-class Western Australian tourism attractions. We genuinely need to reinvigorate and invest in a clear and articulate brand for our state that imaginatively and smartly captures the essence of

why tourists should experience Western Australia's uniqueness. There is huge potential and we must harness it. I strongly back Labor's \$425 million investment in tourism, including critical new funds for the Perth Convention Bureau to attract new business confidence to our city. We need to do that if we are serious about diversifying our economy and creating new jobs.

### **SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESS**

Finally, we need to throw ourselves behind a key engine room of the WA economy—small business. Small business has been doing it incredibly tough, yet it is critical to the health of our economy. Nearly half of all jobs created in Western Australia are in the small business sector, yet the statistics are surprising and startling. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has demonstrated that 60 per cent of new small businesses will collapse in the first three years. But small business is more than just an economic provider of local jobs; it is what creates life in our city. Small business operators are a defining feature of a main street or town centre that give it a unique sense of place for residents and tourists alike. I will continue to champion small business—as I did in my previous roles as the founder of the Beaufort Street Network and the Mayor of Vincent.

It is also less known that I actually co-owned and ran a small business myself called Bailey and Carey, an event, party and wedding coordination business, for two years. I had to move on upon the realization that, first, I was a perfectionist in organising events and was spending my own money to achieve the ultimate party; second, I could no longer deal with bridezillas and groomzillas; and, third, no-one really appreciated a *Star Wars* wedding theme! But I have to say my credentials were pretty good, and in fact at least one member of Parliament can vouch for my skills, given I organised her wedding. Thank you, Sue Ellery. I do say this seriously, though—we must seize every opportunity to cut red tape.

### **REVITALISING OUR CITY**

But even with all of this, we cannot expect small business to grow in our city if no-one is there and there is no real activity on our streets. Across Perth in certain precincts, including East Perth and West Perth, and even parts of the CBD, there is little life on the streets—what planners call vibrancy, and ultimately liveability. Imagine the experience of a resident walking out of their apartment on Adelaide Terrace or a tourist leaving the Hyatt or Richardson hotels. What sort of immediate city experience awaits them? We need to do better.

That is why I am calling and organising a Perth City Summit, to drive new ideas, new energy and new momentum, where small businesses, property owners and residents can come together to make this happen. I find it a significant missed opportunity that our city does not have distinct tourism precincts like other world cities that have their own identity, with a clear brand and marketing opportunities. I will champion the renewal of our city to deliver a better life for our residents and, more critically, economic activity and new jobs.

[Member's time extended.]

### **PLANNING FOR A MODERN PERTH**

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** As the member for Perth—an electorate with the city at its heart—I cannot make my first speech in this place without addressing the issue of urban planning and how it shapes our community and economic future. It is critical to the future health of Perth. We must stop the urban sprawl. We cannot afford the economic, social and environmental costs of unlimited expansion. I strongly support higher density targets, with more high-rise residential apartments in the heart of the city. It is critical for housing diversity and affordability. The research also shows clearly that it will drive more economic activity. But we have a long way to go. When there is opposition to density, it is often for a legitimate reason—what people are seeing built is sometimes disgraceful, with poor design, poor light and

little natural ventilation, and, worse still, with minimal green or liveable outdoor space. If we are to stop the urban sprawl, we must address the density question once and for all and demand quality outcomes. This means we must do density well—creating stronger benchmarks that developers need to meet to ensure genuinely liveable, innovative and sustainable buildings and apartments that create real communities in which people want to live.

### **THANK YOU**

I know this is not the Academy Awards, but I do have a lot of thankyou. I stand here today because of the incredible team of people behind me, who endured as much as I did during a tough and deeply personal campaign. I am proud that we ran only a totally positive campaign in the seat of Perth, backed by genuine people power. Thank you to my campaign director, Catrina Campbell Fraser; campaign organiser, the amazing Emma, and my campaign manager; a great team of workers, Patrick Ashforth, Sam McLeod and Amy Stokes; my advisers, Megan Anwyl, Anne Burns and Kaye Hopkins; fundraising guru and self-declared Liberal, Lesley Thomas; and my support team, Jimmy Murphy, Marcelle Anderson and Nigel Wilson. I also thank former member for Perth Diana Warnock for her insightful advice and also, of course, Mima Comrie for her extraordinary volunteering love and support.

I also want to thank Beth Kirby, my supportive housemate—I know it is unusual, but I do have a housemate—who had to flee from the house more than a few times during the campaign when dishes stacked up, my campaign clothes piled up and developed a life of their own, and campaign meetings took over the dining room. I also want to sincerely thank United Voice and the Prison Officers' Union for their support, and all the people in the ALP office, including Patrick and Linda. To all my supporters, friends and campaign volunteers who attended my fundraisers, doorknocked and letterboxed in the heat of summer and made calls on behalf of myself, many of whom are here in the gallery tonight, and too many to mention, my sincere and absolute thanks.

It is not just the months of campaigning that brings me to this point. Politics feels like a long journey. I want to thank my good friend since university days, Ros Harley, for her lasting and loving support. To my often bold mentor, regularly keeping my sanity and ego in check, and great friend, Sue Ellery, thank you. I also recognise the person who gave me my first job in politics, now retired MP Ken Travers, and the MPs along the way who have absolutely supported me, Alannah MacTiernan and Rita Saffioti. I want to also thank my friend Daniel Pastorelli.

I once served Mark McGowan as his staff member, and also in his duties for our state's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary, where I remember we made some very cheap coins that I suspect are now rusting in people's drawers—it was a tight budget! However, I am deeply honoured now, 13 years later, to be his parliamentary secretary in the fortieth Parliament. Thank you, Mark.

### **APPROACH TO PUBLIC SERVICE**

I come now to the end of my speech but back to the theme that I started with at the beginning—raising the standard in politics. They say the biggest influences in our lives are our parents. This is very true for me. I am deeply grateful for all the opportunities my parents gave me, which they were never to experience. They are no longer with me, but I honour their memory every day. My father always said to me about politics, “One day you're a rooster; the next day you're a feather duster”. At the heart of this is a very simple idea. Never take people for granted. Never feel entitled about what you do or the role you serve. Never develop a sense of arrogance. Always show kindness and empathy to all those you meet. Every person has a story. Do not interrupt. Listen. People want to be heard. I will hold these words true every day that I am honoured to be the member for Perth.

I know there are many people in the electorate of Perth who have never voted Labor in their lives but who put their trust in me based on these values, as have so many Labor voters and supporters. This is my single promise—I will work every day to honour that trust. Thank you.

[Applause.]

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