



## PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### VALEDICTORY SPEECH



## **Hon Jacqui Boydell, MLC** **(Member for Mining and Pastoral Region)**

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Wednesday, 12 May 2021

*Reprinted from Hansard*

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## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

### *Motion*

Resumed from 5 May 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 JACQUI BOYDELL (Mining and Pastoral)** [5.01 pm]: It is with great pleasure that I stand to make my valedictory speech in the house today. It has been a massive journey, personally and professionally. It has been an amazing experience. The Nationals WA have been able to deliver for regional Western Australia, and I played a part in that. I will always be very grateful to regional people for their support. As I was preparing for this speech, I thought back and realised that we have been involved in many issues and had so many good times. Sometimes we deal with challenging things, and that is okay; we all expect to be challenged in this place. It is an amazing opportunity to be granted. I can only be thankful for it and I look forward to moving on to serve the people of Western Australia in other areas.

I met with Tony Crook prior to question time. We were having a bit of a laugh about some of the incidents that happened over time. I had forgotten this one. Members will remember that I was involved in Tony Crook's campaign to win the federal seat of O'Connor. We ran that campaign hard. We were all dedicated to it. We were ecstatic at the win that we had. In the weeks following that, obviously, forming government was something that everyone was interested in at that point. What were we going to do, because we really campaigned on sitting independently unless we could deliver for regional Western Australia and sit outside the National Party room, which in some areas of the National Party was not popular, as Hon Colin Holt alluded to in his valedictory speech? We campaigned hard, we believed in what we were doing and there was much interest in where we were going to sit. Journos were ringing left, right and centre. We had state executive meetings every day. It was an exciting time. We were in the meeting room of the state secretariat office when one of our media advisers came in and said, "I think I've made a really big error." We said, "Oh, my God, what is it?" He said that he thought he just hung up on Tony Abbott. He was ringing to try to understand where Tony Crook was going to sit. Our adviser said he really knew he made a mistake when Peta Credlin rang back and said, "I think you've made an error." We really knew we were in the big game then and we were in trouble. He had hung up on Tony Abbott, thinking he was a journo, saying said, "Yeah, righto, mate", and hung up. When Peta Credlin rang back, we knew we were in trouble. That was one of the many moments that we laugh about afterwards. We were saying that that could really be the first chapter of a book. We can reminisce about those things and enjoy talking about it afterwards but at the time it was pretty stressful.

First off, I would like to thank the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region. I have enjoyed their support in the majority and numerous during my time as a member of the Mining and Pastoral Region. I hope I have served my constituents well. I have certainly given it my all.

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To my electorate staff, Daiva Gillam and her husband, Mick, and her children, Willie and Matilda; to Kathryn Dart and her husband, Kieran, and their children, Georgia, Maddie and Callum—I simply could not have done my job without you. They have been amazing. They have been great friends to me. Their whole families have been involved in the ups and downs of my political career and the National Party. I wholeheartedly thank them so much. I hope they will not be lost to the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region, particularly the Pilbara, where my office is in Karratha. They are great community members, and the people of Karratha are lucky to have them.

I turn to the staff at Parliament House. There is no other work environment in which we receive the level of support that the staff give members of Parliament—from the committee staff to the staff in this chamber, and all across the building; there are too many of them to mention. Many of them are now friends of mine. I will miss them and that environment. They make every endeavour to ensure that members of Parliament can do their job. The people of Western Australia are forever indebted to those staff as well because they allow us as members to participate in the legislative process and in the committee system, which has really fantastic outcomes for the people of Western Australia.

I also want to thank the staff in the office of the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Mia Davies, who have worked with me for a long period. I also consider them to be great friends. I will miss the camaraderie and their support and friendship but I am sure I will continue to see them after we are all done here in the Legislative Council. They are really committed to the National Party and its members and it has not always been easy. They have really committed themselves personally and I thank them greatly for it.

To my friends and family at home and across the globe, who I know are watching today, they could not be here, but their undying support for me and their friendship and advice has just been amazing. I am one very lucky person as a result of that. My mum and dad are here. I said to them that I was not going to cry. They have taken that journey again from Carnarvon. It is nine hours from the front gate of the plantation. They have lived and breathed our journey. It has meant a great deal to me and our family. Also to my children, to whom I also promised I would not cry—sorry, Jackson—they have given me unbelievable support on every bit of our journey. None of us members can do it without our family being committed. To my partner, Andrew, I thank you so much for also committing to being with me through that time. I thought I was going to be okay with this, Madam President!

As I contemplated my contribution today, I reflected on the two questions I have been asked the most over my time as a member: how did you ever get involved in politics and why the hell are you still there even though it can be really difficult? I really thought about that in great detail and I have questioned that myself over my journey as well. I have come to the conclusion that the answer to those two questions is actually the same. It was the opportunity to be a champion of change. I wanted to be a champion of change for the Carnarvon community where I live. I wanted to be a champion of change for industry and business, and a champion of change for Western Australia. To take up the opportunity in this place, at the coalface of decision-making, was an incredible experience, but you have to use it while you have it, because you are merely the custodian of it while you are here. To be a success at introducing change and to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves requires a plan, and it requires a vehicle to deliver on that change. For me, that change was the Nationals WA and royalties for regions. I am exceptionally proud of the work we have achieved as a team in the National Party. We started with a small, focused team and we fought every day to deliver on the dream that we saw come to fruition in the policy of royalties for regions. When working 24/7 with people, as I did—with 6.00 am phone calls, speaking to each other at midnight and driving that change because we really believed we were giving regional people an opportunity to be heard in government—you develop really great friendships.

Many times within the National Party we were referred to as the purple circle. I think some people started using that term in a derogatory sense, but I was always proud of it. I was proud to be a member of that purple circle, because it recognised that we were hard at work and we were involved. We were not beige and sitting on the sideline; we were bold and brave. We were unapologetic in our fight to represent regional people and deliver royalties for regions. I am still unapologetic about that. Am I always going to agree with you? No, and I think members of this chamber who worked with me, particularly on committees, will know that. I will listen to your argument. Am I going to be subservient because you think you did me a favour? No. But I will participate in robust discussion and decision-making. I get paid to do that and so does every member in this house. The people of Western Australia deserve that from me, they deserve it from every member of Parliament and they deserve it from the people who are in our political organisations that seek to be in this place. The people of Western Australia also deserve to know that I never took a back step on any issue I deemed was important on their behalf.

One of my final challenges in this place was to call out the toxic bullying culture that exists in political organisations. I made the decision to publicly call that out in November last year. I had been calling it out privately and internally for some time. Australian citizens across our nation are asking us, who are involved in political organisations, to be champions of change in this space. We have to fix the toxic environment and the perception of it. Somehow there has been the idea that this has become the norm in politics. In fact, when I spoke to the media after that speech in November last year, Geoff Hutchison said to me, “Surely this is just the rough and tumble of politics.”

No, it is not, and it should never be. Due to a 24/7 media cycle and social media, I think political organisations defend, defend and defend at every opportunity without stopping to take a look in the mirror about what it is we are actually doing, because we do not want to get caught out doing something wrong. That has led to political organisations being so far from where modern Australia is on this issue that there is a growing gap. Every time an issue is raised, particularly by women, about bullying and harassment in politics, modern corporate Australia and our citizens are aghast. How can that happen in the halls of our Parliament? I think members have insight about how that can happen. Political organisations are made up of volunteers. They are ageing structures that cannot survive on political donations and deliver the executive organisation style of corporate modern Australia that the people of Australia think that we are. We are not. Political organisations are the bases of Parliament, because members cannot get here without them; therefore, political organisations need an opportunity to not be reliant on donations, when they can only afford to employ someone working for them out of the goodness of their heart.

We need executive-style change in this space and to me the only way to do that is through electoral reform and public funding. I know that there has been discussion about electoral reform in this space, but the terms of reference of the ministerial expert panel probably do not go to the scope of that. When members have that debate, when they are meeting with the minister and his department, they must raise the issue of public funding. It may not be popular to the public, but in the first instance they do not understand that we all exist on political donations. There can never be any change that is required—we all recognise it—unless there is public funding that allows political organisations to lead in this space. Australians want us to lead in this space. Political organisations need to see this as an opportunity to show leadership, not to defend what it is that they have done or what is going on. Be brave, be bold and create some leadership. The response that I received from people after that speech I gave in November was overwhelmingly positive. People want to see that change.

In the past 12 months we have heard from Australian of the Year Grace Tame, a survivor of child abuse; Brittany Higgins, a former federal government staffer; Emma Husar, a former member of the House of Representatives; Julia Banks, a former member of the House of Representatives;

Rachelle Miller, a former chief of staff; and Catherine Marriott, former Western Australian Rural Woman of the Year. These are all powerful, capable women who are calling on us to make change, and we need to respond.

We have come together over this period—for me, since November last year—and have spoken with each other and many other people about the treatment of women involved in politics, and the answer in those conversations is always the same. Women will walk away, we will have less diversity and we will have less capacity for the Parliament to respond, because the Parliament is driven by the political organisations that put people here. Parliaments have often responded to calls for social change. We have done it ourselves in this house. We have seen the passing of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019, rights for same sex marriage, rights for women to vote and rights for Aboriginal people to vote.

This is also a social wave that is coming your way, and you need to get in front of it. I ask you to be champions of change in this space for the betterment of the people of Western Australia. I know that, as members of this house, you will take that responsibility seriously, and you will all fulfil your roles and do your bit to be champions of change in this space. That is not easy—change is often resisted—but it is our job to do it, and I look forward to seeing all members take up that challenge and use the vehicle they have, which is this Parliament, to be that champion of change.

Thank you, members, and I wish you all exceptionally well in your futures. To the new members coming in, I wish them the very best, and I hope that they use this house as champions of change. Thank you.

[Applause.]