



## PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### INAUGURAL SPEECH



## **Hon Klara Andric, MLC** **(Member for South Metropolitan)**

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Thursday, 27 May 2021

*Reprinted from Hansard*

# Legislative Council

Thursday, 27 May 2021

---

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

### *Motion*

Resumed from 26 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 KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan)** [12.31 pm]: Thank you, President. May I congratulate you on your election as President of the Legislative Council. During your inaugural speech to this house in 2013, you spoke of the values of honesty, integrity and fairness and how they guide you and define you. As someone who has looked up to you as a role model for many years, I have no doubt that your leadership of this house will be defined by those same values.

May I begin by saying *ngala kaaditj Noongar moort keyan kaadak nidja boodja*. Please excuse my pronunciation. I want to begin my address by acknowledging the first and continuing custodians of this land on which we meet, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation, and pay my respects to elders, past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge the first Aboriginal person to be elected to this house, member for Mining and Pastoral Region, Hon Rosie Sahanna. It is an historic occasion and it fills me with pride to be alongside you in this place.

I would like to congratulate Premier Mark McGowan on his re-election. His determination during the election and his excellent leadership led our party to a truly historic victory. I would also like to congratulate my colleagues in both houses—those re-elected and newly elected members of Parliament alike.

Firstly, let me begin by thanking the people of the South Metropolitan Region. I am incredibly honoured to have been elected to represent them in this place. I am proud to stand in this chamber today as the first Serbian-born person elected to the Parliament of Western Australia and the first Serbian-born woman to be elected to a Parliament in Australia. My journey to this place began in 1986 when two brave migrants took a leap of faith and began their voyage to Perth, Western Australia. With nothing more than two suitcases and a dream of a better life, they embarked on a journey to the other side of the world in search of opportunities and a brighter future for their children. My parents, Klara and István Marton, who are here today, could never have imagined that one day I would have the opportunity to be elected by the people of Western Australia as a member of the Legislative Council. I am incredibly honoured to be standing here as a proud representative of a party with a strong tradition of supporting the most vulnerable in our community and making dreams, like this one here today, a reality for working-class families just like mine.

I was born in Novi Sad, Serbia, in 1981, a city located in the autonomous region of Vojvodina in what was then known as Yugoslavia. When I am asked the question of my heritage, I often explain the place of my birth because the reality is there is no single existing nation-state that can explain the complexity of my origins.

*Reprinted from Hansard*

Born to Hungarian parents who themselves were born in Novi Sad, Serbia, a city located on the banks of the Danube River overlooking the Fruška Gora mountain, Novi Sad is renowned for the celebration and unification of its people's cultural and religious difference. Named the European Capital of Culture in 2021, the city epitomises the very essence of multiculturalism and inclusion. In the words of the late singer and writer Đorđe Balašević, Novi Sad is a city where you hear six different churches ring in unison, where you celebrate two Christmases, two Easters, Name Day, Saints Day; where you walk along Jevrejska, past the Novi Sad Synagogue and hear the acoustics of a classical concert being played by international artists; where you attend the three-day long celebrations of Romani neighbours; and where you live on streets named after poets, streets that are patrolled at night by grandmothers walking arm in arm, admiring the neighbourhood roses and gossiping in three different languages, understanding one another completely.

Novi Sad is named the city of love and tolerance and Novosadjani, as we often like to call ourselves, are resilient people. Despite heartbreak and loss from the devastating wars in the Balkans, our humour, sense of kindness and humanity never wavered. Indeed, Novi Sad was, and remains, a proudly multicultural city where differences are celebrated, hatred is shunned and standing up against injustice is second nature. I hope to carry those enduring traits with me during my time in this place.

Like many before us, my parents joined the wave of economic migrants from former Yugoslavia and made their way to Australia. I still vividly recall the night we embarked on our voyage. The tears and sadness on my grandmother's face remain etched in my memory to this day. Little did I know how far Australia was and the impact that distance and not seeing my family would have on me, but my parents made those sacrifices for my future and to them I am eternally grateful.

In some parts of the world, including the Balkans, where I come from, politics does not always serve its true and intended purpose. Indeed, sometimes it is politics that causes destruction and the devastation of its people. Seeing the impacts war has on civilians was made very clear to me at a very young age particularly, when I visited Serbia, then Yugoslavia, in 1993, 1996, 1998 and 1999, just prior to the devastating NATO bombings. In 1993, as a 12-year-old from Australia, the stark contrast of the two worlds I belong to was ever present. Former Yugoslavia was in disarray. The war was impacting everyone on all sides. Even though Novi Sad was relatively safe, we could feel the tension erupting around us. It was during this time Novi Sad became a safe haven for civilians desperately fleeing war zones from across the Balkans and searching for safety.

As a child, I watched the desperation on the faces of refugees who fled from the destruction from other regions of former Yugoslavia and witnessed people from my city, once a magical city, begging for food and basic needs. I stand here today and consider myself one of the lucky ones—lucky because I was fortunate enough to have the security and safety of Australia to go back to. This was not easy for my family, who watched the years of devastation in my home land unfold from the safety of our lounge room, not knowing whether our family would be safe. It was during this time that I realised more than ever the importance of good government—governments who work in the interest of their people to protect them and to properly fulfil their obligations. As a child, I was encouraged to speak out against injustices and inequality, to be part of a conversation, to think critically of the politics of the time and how it could be improved. My parents always talked about the effects of politics on everyday people and encouraged us to stand up for what we believe in.

The principles of social justice, equality, education, an accessible healthcare system and a fair go are the values that my parents taught me and the values that led me to join the Labor Party. In our household, politics was discussed at the kitchen table, in front of the TV, at family dinners and even when guests came over. That old saying “never discuss religion and politics” had never been uttered in our household. Mum encouraged my younger sister, Rebeka Marton, and I to have

our own voice and our own views on every issue imaginable, though perhaps in hindsight and now with two girls of my own, I suspect this was not appreciated as much when our voices and arguments were in fierce disagreement with hers.

SBS nightly news was our bible, second to Sundays watching SBS football with my father. Football was and still is my father's language. The soundtrack of my youth was none other than the dulcet tones of Mr Football himself, the late Les Murray and the late Johnny Warren.

Growing up, I was a little different from the other kids at school. English was my third language after Hungarian and Serbian. We spoke our languages in the home. We listened to music from the old country, cooked traditional foods in our kitchen—a place where nobody ever left hungry—and added an ethnic element to nearly every Australian tradition we were introduced to. For my family, this was our way of staying connected to our culture, our heritage and our identity. My family and I made Perth our new home. It was not difficult to fall in love with this beautiful state and its people. The climate, laid-back lifestyle, beautiful beaches, incredible nature and friendly people made settling here much easier than we anticipated. Perth is my home. It is where I have chosen to raise my family. I am fortunate that the city of my birthplace and the city I now call home share in common with each other the beauty that is multiculturalism. Both Perth and Novi Sad have taught me that multiculturalism works, that it should be protected, that the onus is on every one of us to call out injustice, to reflect on our own internalised prejudices and to welcome all those who come to our shores, either by boat or by plane, some by choice and some because they have no other. What is clear is that no migrant embarks on such an uncertain journey to reach our shores without making incredible sacrifices.

My story is not unique and it is certainly not a unique story in this house or in our community. I am proud that in this Parliament in particular this story is shared by so many members who have come from all walks of life and made this beautiful city of ours in this beautiful state our home. Now more than ever, Parliament reflects the diversity of our community, its richness in culture, lived experience and the collective aspiration to commit to something bigger than our individual selves, to leave a legacy that changes the lives of those around us. Indeed, although my story in this country began some time ago, it has not been one shared unanimously in our community. For those who came to Australia when migration first began, or more recently, this accommodation was not always felt. Some did not feel like they belonged. There are some, perhaps even in this chamber, who, no matter how long they have been here, how pure their Australian accent or their place of birth on their passport, faced racism, both overt and covert, hidden or rationalised, with an explanation that our society is too willing to accept. It is incumbent upon us to change this. Painfully, kindness is most absent towards our First Nations people, whose land we have the privilege to walk on, whose voices have been missing in our conversations about the future of this state for so long. We are still trying to play catch-up, despite being their guests in this beautiful country. We must not ignore the past trauma and dislocation that First Nations people experienced. We need to do better in recognising the ongoing effects of this trauma.

This week marks National Reconciliation Week. This year's theme, "More than a word. Reconciliation takes action" urges the movement towards braver and more impactful change. We all have a responsibility, individually and collectively, to ensure our path to reconciliation is more than just hollow words. Many from my community settled in the South Metropolitan Region long before my family's arrival, in areas such as Spearwood. Spearwood is the kind of place I have always felt right at home—seeing tomatoes growing on nature strips, lion statues on balustrade balconies, the never-ending procession of arches, columns and marble on brick veneer homes, the kind of homes that it is safe to say Jim's Mowing has never stepped foot on! More precisely, these are homes that encompass concrete as far as the eye can see. After all, Australia would not have the love affair with concrete it has now were it not for us migrants. What is clear is that here in Australia, migrants and migrant communities have had a lasting impact and helped shape our community into the diverse place it is today.

More than one-third of Western Australia's population was born overseas. For many migrants in the South Metropolitan Region, their first glimpse of Australia was from the shores just off the Fremantle Passenger Terminal, where hundreds of thousands of migrants disembarked and began their new life in the 1960s and 70s following the post-World War II migration. This is a story that is shared by many living in the south west corridor. Almost 20 years ago, I decided to build my first home and raise my family in the southern suburb of Atwell. This was a time when traffic lights were still positioned on the Kwinana Freeway, new estates were yet to be developed before the major infrastructure projects at Cockburn Gateway Shopping City, before the delivery from the previous Labor government of the Perth–Mandurah rail line—thank you, Minister MacTiernan—and certainly long before the arrival of the very contentious Cockburn station “tower of faces”.

As some members are aware, the 2021 state election was not my first rodeo in running for Parliament. In 2013, I gave it my first go and ran for the seat of Jandakot, when we campaigned heavily for the needs of the people in our community. Crucial to those needs was infrastructure, which had been neglected by the then Liberal–National government. The new establishment in the east of the south metropolitan electorate appealed to young working families who were moving into the area because it offered more affordable housing for first home buyers. However, the Barnett government made it clear that it had no plans to support this expanding population and no plans to make sure that councils in these areas could deal with the increase in volume and pressure points of physically having more people move into the south metropolitan corridor, whether it is roads, infrastructure, building new schools, ensuring planning laws are sustainable for the future or that local emergency services are funded to deliver services that are needed. That is what good governments do—they prepare the state for the future.

Since 2017, our pocket of the world has changed dramatically with the election of the McGowan government, which is delivering on its commitment to ensure infrastructure and community services continue to keep pace by delivering on commitments such as widening the freeway, building the Armadale Road to North Lake Road bridge, developing the Armadale Road dual carriageway and creating the first east west metropolitan link from Cockburn Central to Thornlie. These projects, like Metronet, make the lives of Western Australians easier each day whilst creating more jobs for our community. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the tireless campaigning of local members of Parliament advocating for their community. I want to personally give my thanks to the former member for Cockburn, Mr Fran Logan; the member for Jandakot, Yaz Mubarakai; the member for Southern River, Terry Healy; and the member for South Metropolitan Region, Hon Sue Ellery, who have tirelessly advocated for our region. I also want to thank Minister Rita Saffioti, who had the grit and determination to fix and deliver what her predecessors could not fathom.

Local issues have always been important to me, and that is why, in 2012, I became involved in the campaign to protect Beeliar wetlands. This area of Western Australia has been used by traditional owners for thousands of years and holds great social, biological and cultural value to the area and its people. Bibra Lake is one of the most important recreational sites in the South Metropolitan Region, with some of the most biodiverse areas in our state. I am pleased to see the McGowan Labor government reintroduce important legislation to rezone the wetlands as parks and recreation reserves. This important legislation will permanently safeguard the area from future development and preserve the wetlands for generations to come.

It was during this time living in the south west corridor that I became active in the labour movement. After completing my Bachelor of Arts in history and politics at Edith Cowan University and working six years in retail at Myer Morley and Myer Garden City, I went in search of an opportunity to get actively involved. As a proud member of the Labor Party, but with not much to go on, I decided to cold call a number on a fridge magnet, calling the office of none other than Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. To my surprise, I was advised that there was in fact an internship

called the Labour Movement Work Experience Program run by Senator Chris Evans and that I should apply. To my disappointment, I was then advised that registrations had closed only days before my call. I thanked Ljil's office for their help and then thought, "You know what; I'm going to try to apply anyway" and so I did. I picked up the phone and called the office of Senator Chris Evans. I do not recall exactly what I said, but I do know that my pleading worked. A young man, Hayden Falconer, told me over the phone to bring in my resume. Well, thanks to him, I made it through. I can honestly say that the work experience program was life-changing.

To people like Chris Evans, Hayden, the late Tony Cooke, who interviewed me, and everyone who has supported and continues to support the internship within the movement, I say thank you! You make it possible for us ordinary working people to have a chance to be a part of this movement and one day sit in this house.

As a result of the Labour Movement Work Experience Program, I went on to work for various state and federal members of Parliament, beginning with my first political job in 2008 with then Premier Alan Carpenter. The year 2008 may feel like a lifetime ago, but those years were some of the most important for me personally. It was during those early years when I was raising my firstborn and struggling to keep up with the demands of a toddler, household and life in general that I began working for a member of this house. That member taught me that sometimes it is okay not to be okay, that it is normal not to have it all together and not to be too harsh on yourself. Thankfully, that person is still here in this chamber. I am honoured to be a member in the upper house and sit alongside someone I consider to be one of my mentors, Hon Sue Ellery. Thank you, Sue.

The 2013 election is not one I often look back on. Those of us who worked on the campaign still bear the scars. However, those campaigns are what made us tough! Lessons were learnt during those years, including lessons on how to get up, dust ourselves off, keep going and never give up!

Another movement that never gives up, and that I had the privilege to work for, is the union movement. I want to thank the United Workers Union and UnionsWA for the incredible opportunity to be part of the trade union movement. I am proud to call myself a trade unionist and I am privileged to have worked alongside people who have spent their whole lives advocating for workers, ever evolving, even as the definition of workplaces continues to change, as does the face of trade unionism. To my comrades in the union movement who have been some of my greatest mentors, Carolyn Smith, Dom Rose, Steve McCartney and Pearl Lim, thank you for your support. Keep fighting the good fight.

More recently, I had the opportunity to be part of a close-knit, high-functioning team at WA Labor that ensured that the party did something that the Liberals have forgotten to do in the last couple of years—that is, talk to people. I am proud to be part of a Labor team that speaks to everyone in the community, no matter their position or background. Our commitment—Mark McGowan's commitment—to listen to the whole community has made this government an inclusive, thoughtful and, if you will forgive the immodesty, popular government, one that I now feel a deep sense of honour to be a part of.

The South Metropolitan Region is a vibrant and distinctive part of our state showcasing the best the west has to offer and even includes our very own WA icon Tony Galati. Whether you are spending the day on Rottnest Island, enjoying a long mac on the cafe strip in Fremantle, strolling along the Swan River in South Perth, having a swim at South Beach or Coogee Beach, watching the planes fly over Jandakot Airport, enjoying a play at Bibra Lake Regional Playground, picnicking along the wetlands, testing your fear limits at Adventure World or simply enjoying local fish and chips on the foreshore of Rockingham, the South Metropolitan Region truly is the best place to live. I feel this is my time to give back to this great state that has afforded me so many opportunities. During my time in public office, I will endeavour to work hard to

make the interests of the people in this region my priority and be a strong voice for them in the Western Australian Parliament. I promise to stand up for our community and continue the great work led by the McGowan Labor government.

I want all women in our community to look at this chamber and see themselves represented. Our almost equal caucus of female members is a step in the right direction, and I am proud to see these changes led by a government that genuinely believes in its importance and understands that equal representation can transform society and politics itself. After all, this is not a women's issue. Including women in politics and addressing gender inequality makes for better societies and better governments. Our community, our economy and our democracy benefit from us working together to close the gender pay gap.

President, we have achieved so much over the last 100 years since WA's very own Edith Cowan took her first steps in Parliament, but our work here is not yet done. Although women make up 50 per cent of our population, they are still under-represented in many areas of leadership, including politics, board roles and senior executive positions. The truth is they are often under-represented in places, such as where I stand today, because we have not adapted our workplaces to encourage women to take that leap. I hope to see continued policies that improve this issue of women's participation in our workforce. I am proud of the McGowan government's track record in this space, with initiatives and programs such as OnBoardWA and the Aboriginal ranger program, which employs over 300 people, 53 per cent of whom are women, and policies that support training and apprenticeships for women in male-dominated industries, such as shipbuilding at Austal's Henderson facility in the south metro electorate and the McGowan government's commitment to a statewide STEM strategy, encouraging STEM education for women and girls.

The historic 2021 election result is something I am certain will remain in the hearts and minds of all party faithful. It could not have been achieved without the dedicated and hardworking team at WA Labor. I want to acknowledge state secretary, Tim Picton, and assistant state secretary, Ellie Whiteaker, for their captainship of the 2021 state election and support of me during not only the campaign, but also my time at WA Labor. I would also like to acknowledge the previous state secretaries I worked with during my time at the Labor Business Roundtable: both Matt Dixon, and the person who had faith in me and my abilities when he offered me the position back in 2017, the federal member for Perth, Patrick Gorman.

Now to the engine of WA Labor, my colleagues at party office, who deserve so much credit for their endless commitment to our party, I am honoured to have worked alongside you all; it has been a ride! I would like to make special mention of a few colleagues I have worked very closely with over the last four years and more recently: Julie Bogle, David Cann, Jessee Desmond and Danijela Pusaric. There are so many people I have had the privilege to work with during my 13 years in the labour movement. I would like to acknowledge those I often reach out to for advice, guidance, direction and support. They have been instrumental to me on my journey. I refer to people like Mark Reed, who is always there to tell me like it is and remind me not to be too harsh on myself and to keep striving. Thank you for your continuing wisdom after all these years. I also refer to the member for Jandakot, Yaz Mubarakai; the member for Scarborough, Stuart Aubrey; long-time friend Olivia Crowley; and former WA Labor assistant state secretary Lenda Oshalem.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Premier, Hon Mark McGowan. I met the Premier at the very start of my journey, and it is an absolute honour that I stand here today as a member of the McGowan Labor government team. I want to thank him for always supporting me and for his friendship over the years.

Thank you to the Serbian communities of Western Australia for supporting me and my nomination to run for Parliament.

To the women in my personal life who are here today, some of whom I have known for over 30 years—they are truly amazing women!—thank you for your friendship and support. I would like to acknowledge my extended family here in Perth. Some of them are here today, though my family members in Melbourne and many who are far away in Serbia will always be in my heart. Vukašin Andrić, thank you for being a great dad to our beautiful girls. My parents, Klara and István Marton, your support means the world to me; thank you for everything. I could not have done this without you!

My little sister, Rebeka Marton, is here today. Having a younger sister is like having a best friend you cannot get rid of, especially when they follow you into politics! But having a little sister means that whatever you do, they will still be there. No matter the problem, you will never have to solve it alone. Rebeka, thank you for always supporting me. I hope one day you follow me again but this time into one of these chambers.

To my beautiful and strong daughters, Andjela and Aleksandra, you are both the light of my life, my strength and my world. I am so lucky to be your mother. Thank you for cheering me on, for understanding me and for supporting me. I hope you know that I do this for the both of you and I hope I make you both proud.

As I mentioned, English is not my first language, so I would like to say a few words in the order of the languages I was taught.

*Nagyon szépen köszönöm, kezdődjön a munka*

*Hvala puno svima, neka posao započne*

Thank you very much; let the work begin!

[Applause.]