



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr George Strickland, MLA
(Member for Scarborough)

Legislative Assembly
Address-in-Reply — Third Day
Tuesday, 4 April 1989

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Motion

MR STRICKLAND (Scarborough) [8.40 pm]: I wish to add my congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your appointment. In addition I take this opportunity to commend you on your work in promoting the awareness of Parliament. As a former teacher I support these educational objectives. I also congratulate all members, old and new, on their electoral success. May I thank the many members on both sides of the House who have made me welcome since my election. It is perhaps unusual but noteworthy to say that at this early stage, and because of my local government role, I have had more interaction with some Government members than with my colleagues in the Opposition.

It is indeed a proud moment for me to stand here as the member for Scarborough, as are presentative of the people from the suburbs of Innaloo, Doubleview, Scarborough, Trigg, Karrinyup and a small portion of North Beach. This all started about 18 months ago when I was asked by members of the Liberal Party to consider a political career. I received acceptance of membership to the Liberal Party just 12 months ago, leading to my endorsement for Scarborough last May. I am aware that I have been talked about in the Parliament, I have had my picture tabled in the Parliament, and perhaps it is only fitting that I should front in person.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

Mr STRICKLAND: As the district's representative it will be my responsibility to serve the people well. Before progressing to the main part of this speech I would like to record my thanks to the electors of Scarborough for their trust, to the Liberal Party members who endorsed me, to the many friends who assisted with the campaign, and to my family who sustained, encouraged and supported me throughout.

Turning to the election itself, from the Scarborough viewpoint and some priority problems needing to be addressed in Scarborough, in early January political reporters were saying that Scarborough was the seat to watch on election night. It was to be the battleground of the ex-mayors. At this point I would like to acknowledge the fine work done by my predecessor, Mr Graham Burkett.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr STRICKLAND: Graham was a hard working member, and over six years had developed a strong personal following and gained much respect, which was reflected by a 3 200 vote margin in 1986, more than 60 per cent of the two party preferred vote. Why, then, has the Scarborough electorate seen fit to change its member? The Scarborough district has a full range of socioeconomic groups, and has tended to reflect Statewide voting trends. It could be considered a litmus seat.

I wish to focus on three important factors: Firstly, boundary changes; secondly, electorate judgment on performance; and thirdly, the strength of the alternative. It is relatively easy to identify the impact of boundary changes. Only part of the northern boundary has changed, which resulted in the addition of Karrinyup and a small section of North Beach, both areas having a related polling place. The margin of Liberal votes from these two boxes was only 765 votes out of a total movement of some 3 815 votes, or about 20 per cent of the change. This means that 80 per cent of the change, or some 3 050 votes, occurred in the old Scarborough district. Boundary changes were an important but minor factor.

[The following material was incorporated by leave of the House.]

SCARBOROUGH DISTRICT ELECTORAL RESULTS — PRIMARY VOTES CAST

PARTIES	1986	1989	CHANGE SINCE 1986
LABOR	8 846 (55.9%)	7 915 (41.9%)	– 934 (– 14.0%)
LIBERAL	5 642 (35.7%)	8 436 (44.6%)	+ 2 794 (+8.9%)
MINOR	1 335 (8.4%)	2 556 (13.5%)	+ 1 221 (+ 5.1%)
TOTAL	15 823	18 907	

Mr STRICKLAND: From the table it can be seen that the fall away in the primary Labor vote was fairly large—some 14 per cent. There was a reasonably strong move to the Liberal vote of 8.9 per cent, and a move of 5.1 per cent towards minor parties, where, when compared to the 1986 election, there was one extra candidate, a Greypower candidate.

During my campaigning many electors indicated their respect for Graham Burkett as a member, but condemned the performance of the Labor Government. This was obviously reflected in the poll, and was the main factor in the election result. Graham has been gracious in defeat, and he readily acknowledges the strength of his opposition, which was the third factor. The Liberal campaign in Scarborough was at all times positive, and the policies promoted on law and order, senior citizens, small business and education had strong majority support.

Let me now highlight some priority needs of the district. Two out of three houses in Innaloo have had special security doors fitted—a feature which is obvious when doorknocking. People throughout the district have voiced their opinion that crime prevention has deteriorated. The scaling down of the number of police officers working from the local police stations and the mobile squads' consequent lack of local knowledge of problem areas and repeat offenders has contributed to this. My investigations with the local police and the Police Union highlight some basic reasons for this problem. Nearly two years ago the drive by police officers for a 38-hour week was approaching success. A lack of foresight has resulted in a police manpower crisis. Two hours less work a week for an officer must necessitate a five per cent increase in manpower just to hold the level of manpower available on the ground. This did not eventuate, let alone address the need to increase in line with the needs of an expanding population. The people of Innaloo cannot understand why their local police station was closed and later reopened, not with five officers as previously but with only one officer. Currently they have an eight hour station which closes at four o'clock. The officer there works for only 40 hours a week, has no radio or car, and is surrounded by empty desks.

I must relate the story of a crime which occurred over the road from the police station at the Morris Place Shopping Centre. After money was grabbed from a till the shopkeeper raced across the road to seek police assistance. The officer concerned had to telephone Scarborough to request assistance—a somewhat farcical situation. The people of Innaloo and adjacent Doubleview are entitled to—and rightly expect—a proper level of police service. To this end and on their behalf I request the re-upgrading of the Innaloo police station.

Problems have also been experienced at the Scarborough Police Station, although the problem intensity has fluctuated somewhat, depending on the transfers taking place at various times. As I understand it, the current operational needs of Scarborough are 14 officers—nine for the mobile patrol and five for the station staff. As a result of annual leave alone—which is eight weeks—for every seven officers posted an additional officer is required to maintain operational strength.

There has been a shortage of police manpower at times because of this, and as the patrol has a priority the situation developed whereby only three or fewer officers were available for inquiry work, serving warrants and so on. This has meant that inquiries have fallen behind and the station's hours had to be decreased. It is imperative that the Government keep faith with its commitments to increase police manpower in order that these problems may be properly resolved.

The next issue I wish to raise concerns the Newborough Primary School. Since the election I have been brought up to date by the principal and the P & C association of the school on a plethora of correspondence relating to the upgrading requirements of the school. For members' background information, six transportable classrooms were located at the school and along with the use of some other available classrooms they form the accommodation necessary for the Scarborough and Joondalup District Education Offices. The Newborough Primary School is adjacent to the North Scarborough Primary School, and the grounds merge. For some time now there has been an amalgamation proposal to create one school. The combined parent bodies unanimously accepted the amalgamation proposal subject to certain conditions. Basically new buildings containing the necessary classrooms, toilet blocks and specialist features were to be ready for the 1991 school year and to be located in the North Scarborough Primary School grounds. This would make the six transportables available for other uses; the district offices could be completely relocated within the old Newborough Primary School, and the students would belong to one school in a physical sense without disparity of classroom conditions, archaic toilets and intolerably hot and cold classrooms. In fact if the health surveyors of the City of Stirling had the ability to inspect the toilets, they would probably condemn them. This proposal is seen by parents as a constructive use of Government funds.

By letter dated 9 September 1988 Mr Burkett committed himself to the project; further he stated that he had the absolute assurance of the Minister for Education, Dr Carmen Lawrence, that she would totally support the project. I am pleased and encouraged by this letter because I fully support the agreements reached; they are a commonsense solution. However concern has been expressed by the P & C association that there could be a shift in priorities leading to a renegeing on the commitment. The principal can get no definitive answer to the queries because everything hinges on the budgetary process. By separate letter I will make further representations to the Minister in support of this project.

The population of Scarborough is aging to the extent that 29 per cent of people in the area are older than 50 years compared with the State figure of 22 per cent. There are three large centres for senior citizens—Moline House, Crystal Holiday Homes and the Geneff Village Lodge. Many blocks of retirement units are being built in Scarborough itself and there are many aged who have simply retired "at home". The common message from pensioners concerns

the need for the Government to lift priorities in the area of health to reduce the long queues for elective surgery, particularly for cataract removal and joint replacement. Pensioners and superannuants are having a difficult time financially both in respect of the amount of money received and the tax payable. Since the rules on taxing assets, trusts and superannuation continue to change, there is a build up of resentment and uncertainty. People are being frustrated in their efforts to plan ahead for retirement. Since the election I have received queries as to when the Government will meet its promises to seniors.

When talking about Scarborough, mention must be made of the beaches. Scarborough and Trigg Island beaches are well known and attract a large number of visitors. Each is serviced by a surf lifesaving club, and both the City of Stirling and the Government can be proud of assistance rendered by them to these clubs. In 1986 the Scarborough Surf Lifesaving Club received a State Government grant of \$250 000 plus a further offer of up to \$125 000 on a dollar for dollar basis towards the redevelopment of suitable club premises. Three years later the City of Stirling more than matched this grant and Scarborough rightly has modern and necessary support facilities to accommodate its needs.

In 1987–88 the Scarborough Lifesaving Club effected 29 per cent, or 191, of the State's rescues. However, what of the Trigg Island Surf Lifesaving Club? In 1987–88 it effected 51 per cent, or 341, of the State's rescues. The club has approached both the council and the State Government with regard to its urgent needs. It seeks to receive similar financial assistance, in real terms, from both the Government and the council in order to sustain the necessary and acceptable standards of beach surveillance dependent on membership and facilities. I will pursue this matter with both the State Centre of Lifesaving and the City of Stirling to establish the priority properly and I will make representation to the Government on this matter during the budgetary process.

The last point I wish to make relates to the concern of a large number of my electors about public debt. In my capacity as a councillor of the City of Stirling I have been active in trying to achieve the resolution of this problem at local government level. What is of importance is the process involved. Initially a thorough investigation over many months allowed the basic factors and their relationships to be identified. This was done by both graphical and computer analysis. Having identified the problem—a debt of more than 100 per cent of year's rates, annual commitments of more than 20 per cent of rates and a permanent negative cash flow—policy objectives were to be set in the first instance to bring these things under control. In communications to ratepayers it was demonstrated that there had been no clear benefit from the city's loan borrowing programs; in fact there had been a cost. Hindsight showed that with minor adjustments to wait schedules over the previous 23 years more work could have been accomplished or fewer rates levied if there had been no loan borrowing at all. The total borrowed from 1962 to 1985 was \$67 million. Loan repayments in the same period were \$70 million.

Further monitoring and analysis allowed the debt free city concept within a decade to evolve, and policies to effect this have been adopted and brought into action. It has reached the stage whereby the necessity to borrow annually to supplement works programs will cease after this next financial year and the city can be debt free by 1993. An indication of the benefit of this program is that the ratepayers of Stirling could be 12.5 per cent better off—approximately \$3 million per year—for each and every year beyond 1993.

I recently read a book entitled *The Power of Being Debt Free*, by Robert H. Schuller and Paul David Dunn, which highlighted how the elimination of national debt could radically improve the standard of living in the USA. The first chapter was entitled "Stealing from our Children". The point was made that as individuals we necessarily plan to eliminate our private debt before retirement because of the dire alternative consequences if we do not. Governments do not retire, and members come and go, and public debts mount. Who then is ultimately held responsible and who will repay these debts? Our children will, or theirs, but not the creators of the debts. Nothing looms more threatening to limit their economic freedom than a growing public debt.

As Thomas Jefferson said some 200 years ago —

I place economy among the first and most important virtues and public debt as the greatest dangers to be feared...to preserve our independence, we must not let our rulers load us with public debt...we must make our choice between economy and liberty or confusion and servitude...

If we run into such debts, we must be taxed in our meat and drink, in our necessities and comforts, in our labor and in our amusements...if we can prevent the Government from wasting the labor of the people, under the pretence of caring for them, they will be happy.

How happy are our people and how well are we really caring for them?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I gave notice to my electorate about my intention to maximise the opportunity for their voice to be heard in this Parliament. This "keeping in touch" has its practical difficulties but will be effected by the establishment of the Scarborough electorate advisory council over the next year or two. The advisory council will allow a wide range of groups and organisations to have input in a coordinated way to help plan Scarborough's future.

I look forward to this term in Parliament and the opportunity it affords me to serve my district.

[Applause.]