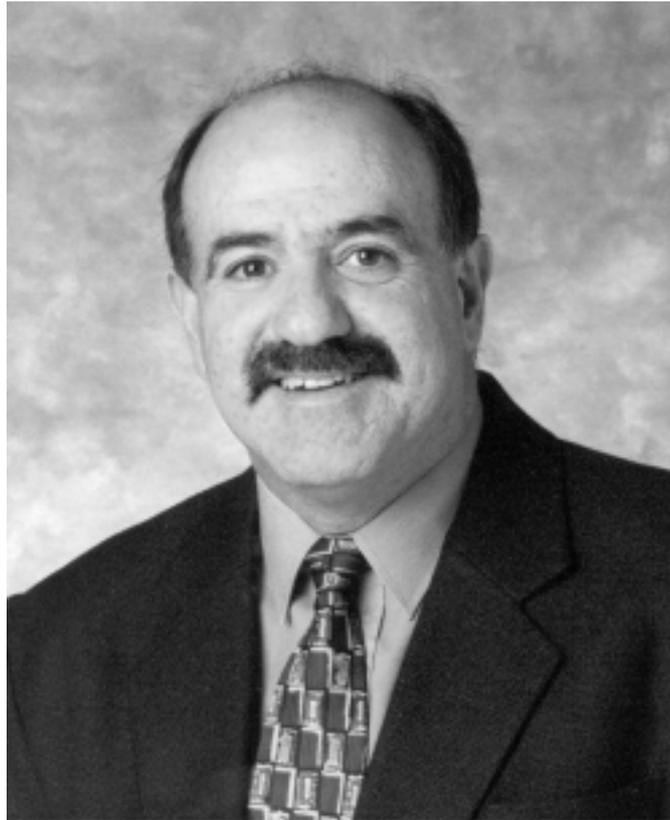




**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Mr John D'Orazio MLA**  
(Member for Ballajura)

**Address-in-Reply Debate**

**Legislative Assembly, Thursday 3 May 2001**

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## **Inaugural Speech**

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**(Member for Ballajura)**

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#### **ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

**MR D'ORAZIO** (Ballajura) [11.58 am]: It is indeed an honour to stand here today to deliver my maiden speech. I congratulate the Deputy Speaker, for being elected not only as the member for Wanneroo, but also as the Deputy Speaker, and for being a member of the class of 2001. A new term was mentioned today, "the whiz-kids", although I am not sure whether I fit into that category.

Mr Barnett: We thought "the weakest link" might be right.

#### **FAMILY BACKGROUND**

Mr D'ORAZIO: Thanks. It is a privilege for me to rise to make my maiden speech. I dedicate this speech to my mother and my father. My mother passed away a number of years ago and I hope that wherever she is, she is proud of me today. The road I have travelled to get here has been a slow one, and I will record some of that history. I am the product of Italian migrants. I am the first parliamentarian anywhere in Australia from Abruzzo. It is the only region of Italy that is of any consequence, in case anybody does not know! Interestingly, I think I am the example of what the ethnic fabric of this community is. My father arrived here in 1949, and for the next two years he pushed a pushbike 19 kilometres to work. That is how it was done in those days. He arrived here with a pair of trousers and an empty suitcase. Two years later my mother arrived, and I remember her describing her early days in this wonderful, fortunate country. She recalled how for six months she cried every day because she had been brought to this forsaken place. She could not speak a word of English, had no way of communicating, and even to get a loaf of bread or a bottle of milk, she had to ask her next-door neighbour, who could not understand her anyway. For me, it highlights some of the problems that some of our migrants suffer today. However, it also shows that this is a great State and a great country and the land of opportunity. Those peasants - my family - who came from a background of subsistence farmers in Italy, where they basically worked for their food, a house in which to live and nothing else, were able to come here and make good.

After buying land in Bayswater and developing a market garden and a small home in which mum and dad, my grandparents, my uncle on my mother's side, my uncle on my father's side and three boys lived, by supporting each other and working together we were able to make a difference. We worked extremely hard, and I think that is where my work ethic and my role model has come from.

My father worked for something like 18 hours a day catching bags of superphosphate that weighed 80 kilograms each. I could not catch one even if it were handed to me on a plate. The work ethic of those days stands us all in good stead for the role we play today. It taught me that if I took nothing for granted, worked hard and was dedicated, I would succeed.

The privilege of being a member of Parliament was brought home to me by a dear friend, James Miorada, who said, "You can have no greater privilege than to be selected by members of your community to be their representative to make laws for them." After 20 years in public life, I had forgotten about some of those duties and responsibilities. Coming into this House three days ago for the first sitting suddenly brought all that back to me and made me understand that, as law-makers, we have responsibilities and must make sure that we look after those people in the community who are less fortunate than we.

### **PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

My passage into public life probably began as a 17-year-old when I said to my father, "I'm not sure whether this market gardening and this hard work is my caper." He commented to me, "I never had the opportunity. You have the opportunity. Make the most of it." Hopefully, today I make him proud.

My first foray into public life was as a chemist. After working hard for three years, I decided that I would go into my own small business and open a chemist shop. Therefore, I went to the local authority with a wonderful plan to develop a chemist shop. Then I came across that wonderful word "precedent". The block that I had was 13 metres wide. I went to the town planner, who said, "We have these wonderful rules that say you need an 8 metre setback from one side boundary and a 2 metre setback from the other boundary." I said to him, "Do you understand what you are telling me? You are telling me that from a 13 metre block I will end up with a 9 foot wide chemist shop." He said to me, "They are the rules." I said, "But you have discretion to vary those rules." He said to me, "No, it would create a precedent." Hence my love affair with precedents. I thought that after 20 years in local government I would have created enough precedents to exhaust the supply. After three days in this place, I realise that precedents are alive and well, and there are still many more to overcome.

I went to the meeting at which the council - the elected representatives of the community - was considering my application. Interestingly, my application was dealt with and not one elected representative made any comment about how absurd the regulations or what was happening were. There was I, as a young 23-year-old with hopefully a future in small business, being destroyed by the lack of representation of those people around that table. They probably wish they had approved my application, because they probably would not have had me in local government for 20 years. Interestingly, when we appealed to the minister, the setback was nil - but it did launch my 20 years in local government.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

At the age of 24 years I entered local government. At the age of 27 years I became mayor of the City of Bayswater, and served uninterrupted for 17 years until the election on 10 February when I resigned. I thank the chief executive officer, Mario Carosella, who is in the gallery, and also the new mayor Lou Magro and councillors of the City of Bayswater for the support they gave me during those 17 years.

Local government is a great instrument of the people. It allows people to have a say. It is important that we foster that vehicle called local government. When I was in that place called local government, my criticism of all the members who came from local government into this House was that they forgot from where they came. There seemed to be a wall through which they passed, which was called "forget me local government". I do not intend to go down that path. I give a

commitment to my colleagues that I will not. Local government is very important, and those of us here on the hill should give the people involved in local government due recognition for the work they do. They are the representatives closest to the people.

The achievements of the past 17 years are too numerous to mention, but I will highlight some of them: Making the City of Bayswater the first local authority in this State to be debt free; the introduction of the first integrated recycling system, including green waste; the provision of security patrols within our community to make it safer - not instead of police but as an adjunct to the Police Force; the first wave pool in this State; and, probably the most recent initiative, the launching of the Bayswater community bank, which was an initiative of the community, with the people reacting to what they saw as unfair treatment by the big banks. That launch was the most successful in Australia, and at this point that community bank is on track to be the most successful community bank in Australia.

Some of the interesting times that I had in local government concerned the current planning legislation. As a representative of local government, I will remember for a lifetime going into bat with Hon Richard Lewis, the then Minister for Planning. It became legendary that the first 15 minutes of our meetings were set aside for screaming, yelling and abusing each other, and subsequently hopefully getting a result. The evidence is that the result for local government and for the State was exceptional. It integrated the planning and environmental processes. It has been in place for six years and there have been no problems. It shows that if we have people who are interested in protecting the community's interest, reasonable negotiations are achievable. I honestly think that Hon Richard Lewis was only giving me practice for when I came into this House. I still remember some of the colourful language he used about the abilities of those of us in local government.

I thank the councillors and the community of the City of Bayswater for some of the honours they have awarded me, including Freeman of the city. It is only the second time in the history of the City of Bayswater that that honour has been awarded. The only other recipient of that award is a previous Speaker of this House, Merv Toms. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to be following in the footsteps of Merv Toms as a member of this Parliament.

In my time in local government I also had many meetings on planning. I spent eight years as a planning commissioner. I was also Deputy Chairman and Chairman of the Western Australian Planning Commission, hence my interest in and love of planning. It is important that planning be a tool that is used to be proactive and creative rather than restrictive. It is easy to say no - we all know that bureaucrats find that easy - but it is much harder to say yes. It is our role to make sure that the planning process helps the community develop.

### **ELECTION TO STATE PARLIAMENT**

My elevation to membership of this Parliament has been a slow process. I have been campaigning for five years, and I thank my predecessor Ms Rhonda Parker for the work she did in the electorate. As it was the most marginal seat in the land there seemed to be an endless supply of money from the Government. I make no apology for that. It was wonderful to receive the money, and I hope it continues now that the Labor Party is in government. For five years I was Ms Parker's shadow, and it is great to step out of that shadow into the light, as part of a Geoff Gallop Labor Government.

The electorate of Ballajura extends from the Morley Galleria shopping centre through to Gngangara Road, and is bounded by Alexander and Beechboro Roads. It includes the suburbs of Ballajura, Noranda, three-quarters of Morley, a small part of Beechboro and Dianella, and Cullacabardee, as well as the Malaga industrial area. Ballajura is an area not dissimilar to the northern suburbs, with a mix of residential types.

## ISSUES FACING THE ELECTORATE OF BALLAJURA

### *Transport*

One of the major problems facing our community is transport. The member for Southern River yesterday talked about a transport report that he prepared for his electorate. We did a similar report for our area, and the results were an absolute disgrace - even worse than Southern River. If you live in south Ballajura, and want to get out of the area on the weekend, forget about it. If you want a bus to the Galleria shopping centre on the weekend, forget about it, but you can get a bus to Perth. It is ridiculous. Constituents who worked in Perth telephoned me to say that the shops in Perth were open on the Thursday before Easter, instead of Friday, but they could not get home from work, because there was no public transport back to Ballajura. People have called me to say that they cannot work overtime at night because the taxi fare would cost them more than they earned. These issues need to be addressed, and I am sure the Labor Party will address them in government. I have had discussions already with the Department of Transport and we are looking at ways to improve the public access to bus transport. My electorate has the highest average number of children per family in the Perth metropolitan area. Those children need access to public transport. Having young people tied up in a community over the weekend with no access to decent public transport creates social problems, which need to be rectified.

### *Bus Shelters*

The previous Government decided to scrap the subsidies for bus shelters. This might seem a minor point, but in Ballajura it is a major point. Senior citizens aged in their seventies and eighties must wait for buses in the hot sun or the pouring rain, and often the buses do not even arrive. I am glad the Government is committed to spending \$2 million to improve bus shelters, and I hope that my electorate is the first to receive the benefits from this measure. It is unacceptable that the community, especially senior citizens, must put up with this situation.

### *Lightning Swamp Natural Bushland*

Lightning Swamp, within my electorate, is a wonderful, 75-hectare area of natural bushland. It is Perth's best-kept secret, but it is important that the community take ownership of this area and protect it. The City of Bayswater has taken the step of asking that the area be vested in the council, so that some protection can be afforded. What is really important is that the State take ownership and make sure the area is protected for future generations. We also need to develop a regional active recreation reserve adjacent to the Reid and Tonkin Highways, to remove the pressure on the active recreational spaces in Noranda and Morley, which are subject to huge demand. That demand needs to be met.

### *Railway Planning Option*

I will now float a proposition that I would like to pursue in government. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, in response to my question yesterday, spoke about my passion for railways. During my term here, I want to float the planning option of linking Wanneroo and Armadale with a railway, via the Reid and Tonkin Highway reservations. This proposal has been considered before, but I want to pursue it during this term of government, to make sure that we get the planning right. Such a railway would link the northern suburbs line to the Midland line and the southern line via a cross-regional link. It would pick up Perth Airport, and allow the current planning, already in the Metropolitan Region Scheme, to extend the Midland line, up the middle of the Tonkin Highway, to Ellenbrook. It would provide access to the industrial areas of Kewdale, Malaga and Balcatta. It would also provide residential access to the suburbs of Embleton, Morley, Noranda, Ballajura, Westminster and Balga. If this planning is done properly, a whole loop could be created from Perth, via those suburbs and back to Perth via the Midland line. It would also provide access for the people of Wanneroo and Armadale to the whole north eastern corridor, without having to

go through Perth. Armadale and Wanneroo could become the Parramattas of Sydney in Perth in 20 years' time. We need to put the planning in place now to make sure that that comes to fruition. I undertake to work hard with the councils involved, which have already done some preliminary work on this proposal, to make sure that it is in the planning documents for the future.

#### *Mortgage Assistance Scheme*

An issue that has cropped up since I have been elected has been the problem of men over the age of 45 who find themselves unemployed. I did not realise this was a major issue during the election campaign, but on becoming the member for Ballajura, one of my first tasks was to talk to a gentleman who had worked for 27 years for a glass manufacturer, and had lost his job at the age of 50. He came to see me because he wanted a job. What made it even worse was his fear that if he did not get a job he would lose his house, because he had a mortgage, and he could not make the payments. It is unacceptable, in this age, for people to be put under that kind of pressure. The gentleman was crying. I could not help him with a job, but I tell this story to make two points. Firstly, we as a community, and industry within our community, must understand that once a person reaches the age of 50, it does not mean that his working life is at an end. We need to make special allowance to assist these people to find employment. Since that time, I have had 41 men come and see me asking for work. That number may have been high because I was previously the local mayor, and council is a big employer, but whatever the reason, they were all over the age of 45 and had lost their jobs, and they had no access to special assistance. The second point is that, if a person is unemployed, he can get bond and rent assistance, but if that person has a mortgage, no mortgage assistance is available. Why is it not possible for the Government to consider a scheme under which the equivalent of rent or bond assistance is paid as mortgage assistance to people who are in that position? Homeswest tells me that it is cheaper to assist a person in his own home than to offer rent assistance. I am meeting with Homeswest to try to find a way to address this problem. It is important not just to keep those people in their own homes, but also for their self-esteem. Society needs to make sure that those who need the help most are looked after.

#### *The Effect of GST on Small Business*

I will now touch on the effect of the goods and services tax. I am a small business operator, and at the election four years ago a number of small business people asked why I, as a successful businessman, was running as a candidate for the Labor Party. Four years on, not one of those people is still asking the same question. The reason is the goods and services tax. It is absolutely killing us in small business. My fellow retailers in the Galleria shopping centre are crying out about the effects of the goods and services tax, and are seeking help. I know this is a federal issue, but Parliament needs to understand that small businesses are experiencing extreme difficulty. Not only must they provide the software and the hardware to cope with the implementation of this new tax, but also they have the compliance costs, and the requirement for extra staff to make sure that the paperwork is in order and is put into the system. They face extra accountancy costs, smaller margins and, even worse, a reduction in turnover. What an absolute disaster for retail and for small business!

I will indicate some of the additional costs I must face as a chemist. The computer hardware and software cost me \$38 000. One full-time staff member is required to input the data on the computer. I require an accountant to assist for four hours a week to input data so that my business activity statement balances at the end of the accounting period. In addition, I pay \$15 000 a year in extra accountancy costs. Pharmaceuticals are exempt from the GST. Cosmetics and other products attract the GST. This results in the situation that the amount I pay to the Australian Tax Office in GST collected is equivalent to the refund from the ATO for the GST on the pharmaceuticals I pay to the wholesalers. In other words, all this extra work and cost is for a nil return. What a wonderful new system!

The situation is worse for some others in small business, because they have to pay, and when their bottom line is shrinking it is very difficult. We in the Labor Party know that small business is the backbone of our economy - the Leader of the Opposition mentioned it today - and how important the small business sector is for creating employment. It needs protection, for the benefit not only of our State's economy, but also the economy of Australia. The State Government has a limited ability in this area, but we need to understand that small business is hurting and is screaming out for help. The small business sector has turned to the Gallop Labor Government for help.

### **SPECIAL THANKS**

I would like to thank a number of people who helped me get to where I am today. Thanks go to my party's leader, Dr Geoff Gallop. During my preselection a number of issues were raised. I thank Dr Gallop for standing up and being counted when it mattered and for showing that principles do exist in the Labor Party and that his word is his word. I thank him for his support. I thank Michelle Roberts, John Kobelke, Jim McGinty, Damian Karmelich and Ted Cunningham, affectionately known as Father Ted, for their support. Around the time of my preselection there was a change in the Australian Labor Party's preselection processes. After the preselection I was told that I did not know what I had done. I still do not know what I have done. However, I see members around me today who would not be here if the structure had not been changed. After seeing their performances over the past two days, I am glad they are here. I think they will form part of a whiz-kid team of the future.

I want to thank some of the lay people of the party who supported me through my preselection. I am forever indebted to them. I thank the federal member for Perth, Stephen Smith. I refer to him as General Smith. He is probably the shrewdest tactician I have ever met and the best politician I have ever dealt with. He is a friend from the days when we were in the same class at Christian Brothers College in Highgate. I owe him the majority of praise for my being in Parliament today. I thank him for his support, loyalty and guidance and, as the state member for Perth indicated, for his bluntness when I needed to be told. Boy, has he told me a few times!

I thank my supporters. We have been campaigning for five years and not once have my supporters wavered. On polling day I had 400 helpers. I thank them all for their help. At one stage it was quite embarrassing as we had 17 people handing out how-to-vote cards at one booth. I had to take a few of them away as it looked over the top. I sincerely thank them. I thank my campaign managers, Graham Lilleyman and Adam Spagnolo, and my treasurer Fred Ward for their support. I thank my brother Tom who is my biggest fan and my hardest worker. I sincerely thank the others on my campaign committee, Lou Magro, Terry Kenyon, Sam Minniti, Charlie Tricoli, Charlie Fazio, Barry McKenna, Victor Rosenberg and Ian McClelland, for their help and support. I thank my son, Greg, and daughter Jessica and my partner Ailsa for the support shown to me. It was very difficult to operate a campaign office from the back of a chemist shop, particularly when it had to be done with six computers, and with pills flying left, right and centre. Ailsa did a wonderful job and, were it not for her, I would not be here. I thank all the other workers who have helped so much. Finally, I thank the electors of Ballajura for their support and confidence. I look forward to returning the trust that has been placed in me by working in the Geoff Gallop Labor Government knowing it will make a difference.

[Applause.]

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