



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Tony Simpson MLA
(Member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale)

Address-in-Reply Debate

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 31 March 2005

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

MR A.J. SIMPSON (Serpentine-Jarrahdale) [12.01 pm]: It is both an honour and a privilege to speak in this chamber as the first member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale. I have heard the member for Moore claim to be the first fisherman in the house, and I, too, lay claim as the first baker in the house. The seat of Serpentine-Jarrahdale was formed after a redistribution of the boundaries of the electorates of Roleystone and Southern River. The 2003 redistribution created a very diverse electorate. The seat extends from the rapidly growing urban areas of Canning Vale and Atwell in the north across to the fruit orchards along Brookton Highway near Roleystone in the east. South of Brookton Highway, the electorate includes the Canning, Wungong and Serpentine Dams and the tall timber country and former bauxite resources of Jarrahdale. On the South Western Highway, the growing town of Byford spills into the rolling pastures and equine studs of Mundijong and Serpentine. These areas also have a diverse range of farms, from chicken farms and dairies to marron farms. The electorate extends west to the rural areas of Baldivis and Wellard. In short, this seat covers 1 359 square kilometres; an area encompassing all or part of 28 suburbs and seven local governments.

The people of Serpentine-Jarrahdale are as diverse as the landscape. The inner-city style of the various housing estates in and around Canning Vale and Atwell, and their close proximity to the Kwinana Freeway and Perth, have attracted many young families. I recall that some years ago Canning Vale was little more than a handful of commercial units, scattered alongside the rickety limestone-edged track that was Ranford Road and Atwell was just a beautiful wetland. Today, both Canning Vale and Atwell are vibrant urban villages with landscaped housing estates, and both will continue to grow rapidly during my first term in Parliament. Many young families in the area have bought their first homes and are sensitive to interest rate changes and taxation fluctuations. They want a visionary, fair-minded government, with one eye on industry and the other on the environment. Although stone-fruit orchards still dominate the landscape in and around Roleystone, a growing number of young professionals are settling into the quiet lifestyle on large wooded blocks.

Although the population of Roleystone is certainly on the rise, it maintains the character and charm of an old-fashioned country town. I learnt from my doorknocking in the area that that is exactly how the residents like it. Many of the people I have met in Roleystone are passionate about the environment and social justice issues and demand accountability from the government.

Through the Darling scarp to the heritage town of Jarrahdale, the people begin to reflect the quiet peacefulness of the area. Jarrahdale has a long history dating back to the 1830s, when sandalwood was discovered and harvested for a then thriving trade with Asia. The harvesting took place between the track to King George Sound and Bunbury Road. As time passed and more traders trod these tracks, Albany Highway and South Western Highway became, and remain, critical to the development of the regions.

After Governor Weld decided to stimulate the establishment of the timber industry in the late 1860s, the Ballarat Timber Company was granted a land lease over the area and the population began to grow quickly. In 1872 the first timber mill was erected in Jarrahdale on the banks of Gooralong Creek and a 38-kilometre wooden railway to Rockingham was constructed. This provoked the creation of the 80 metre long deep-sea jetty on the coast, and shortly thereafter the first

load of Jarrahdale timber was bound for Melbourne on a ship called the *Northern Star*. Jarrahdale became a powerhouse of employment and a leader in the timber industry. In the late 1890s, Jarrahdale had the state's fourth largest population after Perth, Bunbury and Kalgoorlie. After the Fremantle Harbour Trust denied a request to deepen the channel at Mangles Bay, it was decided that shipments via the rail route to Rockingham would be scaled down and Bunbury would become the state's major port for the export of timber. Consequently, Jarrahdale junction, which was on the route from Perth to Bunbury, became an important consolidation and distribution point for Jarrahdale timber and the town Mundijong was born.

In the early to mid-1900s, the Jarrahdale timber industry and the strong people who forged it survived many disasters - floods, major fires, the Great Depression and the death at war of many of the town's men. Jarrahdale was strong. However, as new technology created cheaper, stronger and more flexible building products, it became clear that the decreasing demand for timber would eventually see the demise of the industry. As the recently appointed opposition spokesperson for forests, I take great pride in living in my electorate of Serpentine-Jarrahdale. The growth and development of the southern end of my electorate owes a great deal of its current prosperity to the successful management of its forestry resources, and that is why I will work hard to ensure that the Jarrahdale heritage park comes to fruition as a monument to the forefathers of Jarrahdale and to bring life and industry back to the community of Jarrahdale.

Some will undoubtedly disagree, and I am more than willing to accept their dissent, for that is politics. However, I am acutely aware that in the mayhem of noisy debate among polarised opponents, every solution requires at least one participant to compromise. Although I remain a strong supporter of industry, I am also committed to sustainable living. I believe that natural resources can be managed to maximise the return to society and minimise the cost to our environment. Governments should encourage development but should also ensure, with a strong hand, that we take only what we need and remain ever mindful that our earth and its beauty are fragile and unique.

In the 1960s the WA government granted a bauxite mining lease in the Darling scarp near Jarrahdale. When the construction of the Kwinana aluminium refinery began in 1964, the area became the new home for many young men and their families, who arrived in search of work and a relaxed country lifestyle. Many of these families settled along the South Western Highway in the town of Byford. Byford was an idyllic place, conveniently located between Jarrahdale and Kwinana and only a short drive from the relatively large range of services and facilities in Armadale and Rockingham. For decades it has been a favourite fuel and snack stop for travellers heading south along the South Western Highway for the holidays. However, things are changing in Byford. A new shopping centre has been built, housing several restaurants, new shops and the first ever bank in the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale. I had the privilege of being the founding chairman of the company that, after three very long years of hard slog, formed and opened in January this year the first ever bank in Byford. The community bank project was made possible only through the hard work of a handful of committed locals who shared my vision and the faultless donation of their time and energy. I congratulate each of them.

Another major project for our shire is the establishment of the first high school in the district. I was on the committee that was successful in lobbying for the establishment of a local high school. A board has now been formed and the Serpentine-Jarrahdale grammar school will open its doors for a minimum of 64 year 8 students in 2006. This is an amazing achievement considering the obstacles that had to be overcome before the high school could be approved.

The townships of not only Byford but also Mundijong, Serpentine and Jarrahdale are now in the throes of rapid expansion due, in part, to these two major projects. Currently, major subdivisions in and around Byford are promising to sustain the population increase over the next five to 10 years. Many of the subdivisions will make available for the first time small apartment-style blocks that are unfamiliar to many of the long-term residents of the town. Byford contains a whole generation of people who literally built the town with their own hands. They are waiting on the edge of their seats for the imminent changes that are about to occur that will affect their community.

As Byford's local baker for the past 14 years, I witnessed great changes in the town. As the member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale, I hold great hopes for the future of its people. As a shire councillor considering development applications, I was always conscious of the fine balance between progress, heritage and the environment. As the member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale, I will endeavour to maintain that balance.

In the years leading up to the election, I spent many months travelling around the electorate, mostly on foot, and speaking with as many residents and interest groups as possible, including the Atwell Community Association, the Canning Vale College parents and citizens association and the Wandie Progress Association. I also met a fantastic group of people in Roleystone on the eve of the election who met to discuss the danger of the bushfire at Araluen. All the people I met along the way were hardworking, honest people who want only the best for their family and local communities, as I am sure do all members of this chamber. They took issue with things that affected them directly.

Although it is the second-largest metropolitan electorate, Serpentine-Jarrahdale currently has only one police station and one government high school. It has three prisons and one juvenile detention centre. It does not have a hospital. I am not sure what that says about the Serpentine-Jarrahdale electorate, but considering its size, it shows a severe lack of fundamental infrastructure. The lack of police in the area, the quality of the children's school buildings, the availability

of educational facilities and the state of our local roads is foremost in people's minds. However, the main issue that affected a majority of my electorate was the number of power cuts and blackouts that they have had to endure as a constant part of their life. These are all issues that affect people on a day-to-day basis and they are things that, in this day and age, people should be able to take for granted. However, as we all know they cannot.

Of course, there is a long list of those whom I should thank for the opportunity to stand in this chamber today and share my vision for the future of not only my electorate, but also the fine state of Western Australia. As members would know, campaigning takes a lot of commitment. I would like to thank my wife, Kim, and my daughters, Sian and Casey, and our host daughter, Lexie. I thank them for believing in me and supporting me. I also acknowledge my father-in-law and my mother-in-law, Mike and Val More, for their help and support.

The Serpentine-Jarrahdale electorate is fantastic, diverse and sometimes surprising. I thank its people for their faith and especially for their vote. As the member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale, I will always do my very best to represent that electorate's interests and promote its endeavour.

I would also like to thank Paul Everingham and the team at Menzies House, Don Randall and Ben Franklin and his band of bright young folk. I also thank Helen Morton and Donna Taylor and the small yet dedicated group of local branch members, family and friends who worked so tirelessly and passionately on my campaign. I thank them most sincerely. They knew what needed to be done and they did it in a way that deserves only credit. Without them, I would not be standing here today. To all my many friends and supporters who have travelled with me on this wonderful journey and who have shared their time, energy and valuable insight over the years, I thank them deeply.

I am extremely proud to stand here today and represent not only my electorate, but also the Simpson family, who have supported me not only throughout my campaign but also my life.

In conclusion, I join this Parliament with real life experience. I was not born owning a silver spoon, let alone holding one in my mouth. I am a real person. I am a baker, a husband and a father.

I thank members for their consideration in the house today. I hope my contribution over the next four years leads to a more prosperous and safer Western Australia.

[Applause.]
