



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Hon Phil Edman MLC
(Member for South Metropolitan)

Loan Bill 2009

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 23 June 2009

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Second Reading

HON PHIL EDMAN (South Metropolitan) [7.30 pm]: Mr President, as I stand to speak in this chamber for the first time, let me begin by congratulating both you on your election as President of the House and the Chairman of Committees on his election. The performance of this chamber depends heavily on these positions and I am confident that we will all benefit from the skills and experience that both of you bring to these roles.

I would also like to thank the Clerk of the house and the parliamentary staff for helping introduce all the new members to the workings of Parliament; your help has been invaluable. Furthermore, I will also take a moment to congratulate those members who, like me, are also giving their maiden speech. I can appreciate the hard work that everybody has put in and I look forward to working with all of you.

While it is customary that a maiden speech focuses on the member and his or her background, I prefer to start with some of our state's history, because we tend to forget, in such beautiful surroundings, about the vision, hard work and determination of our forefathers that brought us to where we are today.

Notwithstanding the history of the First Australians, Western Australia's road to colonisation began in 1827 with Captain Stirling's exploration of the Swan River area, which drove him to argue for the establishment of a colony for "free" settlers, as opposed to the penal colonies of the east. Backed by a favourable botanical report and a desire by the British to prevent French colonisation, Stirling won government support to start the new colony. Much to the dismay of Stirling, the requirements of other colonies at the time meant that British support for the colony was insufficient. Despite this and a lack of land and coastal charts for the Swan River area, the five-month voyage from England was made, and on 1 June 1829 the Western Australian coast was sighted from HMS *Parmelia*, a moment which we celebrate every year on Foundation Day.

While we can appreciate the natural beauty seen by the first settlers, it would be hard for us to relate to the hardships they faced. It was only emergency supplies from outside and the constant search for farmable land that saved many from starvation. Apart from getting enough food, the clearing of land and the building of shelter were also challenges.

Today some members may agonise over having to share offices in Parliament House, but we should take comfort in knowing that, unlike in Stirling's time, the roofs of our offices do not leak and our newspapers are delivered, because back then the local newspaper was nailed to a eucalyptus tree on

St Georges Terrace. Hard times saw many settlers leave the colony, but those who stayed on did so because they had a vision they believed in and the courage to carry that vision through.

My family history in Western Australia began in 1948 when my grandparents, David and Cynthia Raeside, migrated to Australia. Like many at the time who arrived with no family or friends, they considered themselves a pioneering couple. Soon after arrival, my grandfather began working for Westrail, and during his career he saw many changes as Western Australia grew through the second half of the twentieth century. Working as the assistant district engineer in Kalgoorlie, he saw the final days of steam and helped to receive the first diesel loco in Kalgoorlie. After this, he worked in Geraldton as district engineer when Sir Charles Court was Minister for Industrial Development. It was during this time that Western Mining hauled its first shipment of iron ore from its Mid West operations to the Geraldton port. Liaising between government and the resource companies of the time, he oversaw the laying of new tracks and several upgrades where existing tracks could not handle the ore trains. The heavier axle loads caused many problems and moving forward was neither easy nor without its challenges.

Beyond his work, my grandfather was also a keen contributor to the community; an attribute that has been passed from one generation to another. Despite his demanding career, he gave up much of his own time to sit on the WA bush Fires Brigades Board, and to be an active member of the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Knights of the Southern Cross. In short, he loved this state and its people.

My parents, whom I am blessed to have with me today, are also strong believers in contributing to the community. My father ran a financial services business, was a member of Jaycees International and was a district governor for the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal in 1984. My mother, who started her own counselling practice in 1994, helped out in the school tuck shop, did meals on wheels and volunteered on the Samaritans' help-line.

Educated in Perth, my upbringing instilled in me the principles of reward for effort and giving to the community. My brother, Mark, and I earned our pocket money doing chores. We learnt to save for the things that we wanted and were taught to care for what we had. I recall Mark and I spending our Christmas holidays helping out on Father Brian Morrison's Christmas Appeal by collecting and distributing gifts for the needy.

All through my school years I had a strong desire to one day own and run my own business: I, just like both my parents, wanted to be my own boss. Consequently, I left school early to enter into an apprenticeship as a cabinet-maker, and in May 1991, just nine months after finishing my apprenticeship, I started my own cabinet-making business. Since then, 18 years as a small business owner has made me very aware of the issues that small businesses face, and it is a privilege to be a member of the Liberal Party, which works so hard for small business. Having been an apprentice, I am proud to say that I have personally employed several apprentices, and some now own their own businesses and compete directly with my own. Although becoming a member of the Legislative Council has led me to place my business under management, it continues to take on apprentices, with all staff living in the South Metropolitan Region.

Although being a small business owner is a large part of my life, it was a terrible storm that hit Rockingham at night in May 2003 that started me towards a life in politics. That night, I saw many boats lose their moorings and be pushed onto the foreshore. That event reinforced my view, and that of many others, that a marina was badly needed for Rockingham, and the government needed to act. After six months of lobbying government for the construction of a marina and six months of disappointing responses from elsewhere, I travelled to Canberra to meet with the then Prime Minister, John Howard, as only he and the Liberal Party had shown any interest in building this much-needed community facility. It was encouraging to finally meet people who appreciated the needs of our community and who saw the need for government involvement.

Five months later, I became a member of the Liberal Party, and in 2004 I stood for the federal seat of Brand, achieving a 15.9 per cent primary vote gain, which made Brand a marginal seat. My desire to see more amenities and services in our region remained strong, and in February 2005 I successfully ran for the council seat of Safety Bay in the City of Rockingham. During my four years as a councillor in the City of Rockingham many things were accomplished; however, the most memorable achievements were helping to obtain \$6.7 million in federal AusLink funding for the Mundijong Road extension and being at the opening of both the Gary Holland Community Centre and the Lark Hill Sports Complex after personally sourcing regional partnership funding from Canberra. Being involved in bringing amenities and infrastructure to our region and seeing just how much government could do inspired me to run for office again, and, thanks to the support of those in my electorate, I am here today.

Having spoken about this state's history, and my own, it is now time for me to speak of the future that I would like to see for our state. We all know how lucky we are to live in Western Australia but having such a large state with natural beauty and plentiful resources should not be taken for granted, and it should not stop us from seeing the many problems that still need to be fixed and the many opportunities that are still out there. No government was ever elected to simply administer everything, change nothing and hope for the best. Governments are elected to make things better and to make a difference, and to do this we must be innovative. Not all the opportunities for innovation are obvious; often the best ideas are the ones that take society by surprise, forcing us to accept that there is a better way. To be able to identify, develop and act on the kinds of ideas that throughout history have pushed society forward, we need vision, imagination and creativity. It was, for example, vision, imagination and creativity that saw the first settlers through. It was also vision, imagination and creativity that helped our resources sector grow into what it is today, but the need to push forward is never-ending. Technologies change, markets change and humanity changes, and if we do not respond—if we simply sit back—we risk being left behind.

In recent times we have been reminded of just how volatile resource markets can be. We have seen the fallout of dropping prices and we have seen many people lose their jobs as a consequence. The lesson from all this is that even though the resources sector has contributed so much to Western Australia, it still has to deal with local and overseas markets and economies, all of which are beyond our control. To date, we have done the right thing by working in partnership with the private sector and responsibly developing our resources, and although I am a great believer in our resources sector and its ongoing importance to the state, we must become more than our resources; we must be more than we are today. As a government we can do this by working with industry and the community to make this state a place where things happen; a place where people from all over the world want to visit. This is where tourism can tell us just how attractive our state really is because when people plan their holidays, our state is compared with the rest of the world, and the reality is that we need to offer a more diverse experience to visitors than we currently do.

In speaking on tourism, I refer to the recently released Jackson Report, which highlights the many issues faced by the tourism industry. For example, the tourism industry depends heavily on external infrastructure, which means that before tourism businesses even get to see their customers, those customers have already been experiencing Western Australia, which makes infrastructure such as our ports, roads, airports and parking very important. We should be particularly aware of our airports and realise that we are a long-haul destination for most inbound tourists and that their first and last experiences of Western Australia are often at our airports. How good or bad these experiences are can have a strong impact on a tourist's lasting impression of our state, no matter how good we have performed in other areas. It is a harsh reality for our tourism industry that the external infrastructure it depends on is often developed and maintained by all three levels of

government, often with the involvement of the private sector, which makes getting the necessary infrastructure for tourism so much harder.

Even if infrastructure is not an issue, high-quality tourism operations, by nature, require exceptional locations if they are to succeed. Development applications must tackle not only well-founded and unfounded community fears of inappropriate development, but also excessive red tape, which means expensive and frustrating battles with complex planning requirements and regulations. Large-scale developments need to deal with not only all three levels of government, but also multiple agencies across governments, creating costly and unnecessary overlapping, which can block the investment our tourism industry needs. With this in mind, we must recognise that our world is so interconnected that if we become a state where ideas are held back by bureaucracy and red tape and where the biggest barrier to innovation and creativity is the government itself, our creativity and vision will go elsewhere. Where will they go? They will go where government does not resist change but, rather, embraces it. Unless we provide fertile soil for these ideas to grow, they will benefit other communities, grow other economies and provide new jobs for other workers. I am glad to say that this government is responding and ensuring that we are better placed for the future no matter what it holds.

Moving to a more local focus, my desire for the electorate that I represent is for the communities of the South Metropolitan Region to be whole communities where people can live complete lives within their local area without having to go to Perth for basics such as education, job opportunities and health treatment. This is not to say that we need a second capital city, but, rather, that we should provide for the needs of everyone, no matter where they live, because we are not a government of a select few; we are a government for all Western Australians.

As a member of the Legislative Council, I cannot claim that we will fix every problem faced by society or that we will not make mistakes, but I can say that when potential and vision come together we, like our forefathers with their vision of a new colony, and Sir Charles Court with his vision for the state's resources sector, will nurture that vision with hard work, determination and an unshakeable belief that what we are doing is both possible to achieve and a worthy legacy for our children to inherit.

I would now like to take a moment to thank some of the many people who have helped me over the years and provided me with advice, support and encouragement. Although not everyone is mentioned, you know who you are and how much your support is appreciated. I thank Rick Palmer, Tony O'Leary and Les Dodd for their help in the electorate of Brand. I thank Barry Sammels, Chris Thompson and the late Gary Holland, whom I worked with on the Rockingham City Council. I also thank some of my many friends from the Liberal Party—John Corser, Nick Rawlins, Phil Turtle, Donna Gordin and Frank Parker—for all their help. I also thank the 500 Club for its ongoing support for the Western Australian Liberal Party; its contribution often goes unrecognised.

I would also like to thank and congratulate the members of the South Metropolitan Region team. In the Legislative Council I am joined by Hon Simon O'Brien and Hon Nick Goiran. In the Legislative Assembly I am joined by Hon Christian Porter from the electorate of Bateman—one of the best Attorneys General the state has ever seen—Mr Joe Francis from Jandakot, Dr Mike Nahan from Riverton, Mr Peter Abetz from Southern River, and Mr John McGrath from South Perth. It is a privilege to be part of this hardworking team and to be part of the Barnett Government.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge those who are closest to my heart. I acknowledge my mother and father, who brought me into this world, and I would like to acknowledge my wife, Virginia, and my newly born son, Matthew: you are closest to me, and it is often your love and support that keeps me going when I need it most.

Having acknowledged those who have supported me in life and in politics, I recognise that my presence in this chamber is ultimately due to the trust and support that the people of the South Metropolitan Region have placed in me. Mr President, in conclusion, the South Metropolitan Region is a great place, where I am proud to live, work and raise my family. However, it is more than just a place; it is a community, of which our team in the South Metropolitan Region is part. We will be working hard not only for the South Metropolitan Region, and we will also be working hard to make Western Australia a better place to live. Thank you.

[Applause.]
