



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Hon Alison Xamon, MLC
(Member for North Metropolitan Region)

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 23 May 2017

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 18 May on the following motion moved by Hon Dr Sally Talbot —

That the following address be presented to Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, 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 ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [7.30 pm]: Thank you, Madam President. Congratulations on your appointment as the first woman President in the Legislative Council.

But as I was saying, members—before I was so rudely interrupted!—it has been four years since I last had the opportunity to speak in this place. I would like to begin by acknowledging that this Parliament is meeting on the lands of the Whadjuk Noongar people, a proud people who have been the custodians of this country for tens of thousands of years and who, despite a history of violent colonisation, have a strong culture that has survived. I acknowledge that ownership of this land was never ceded and that this is and always will be Aboriginal land. I pay my respects to the elders past, present and emerging, and recognise that it is beholden on myself and, indeed, all of us in this place, to ensure that our decisions work toward ensuring justice for Aboriginal people and to addressing the ongoing impacts of colonisation and racism.

Over the last four years much has changed yet much has not. I have plenty of things to say about a great many things but I will just touch on some of my favourite topics tonight. I am really pleased that the Greens have reclaimed our seat in the North Metropolitan Region. It is a seat that was held by my friend and former colleague Hon Giz Watson very capably for 15 years. For those members who have not worked with me before, here is a potted version—a very small version—about who I am. If members want to know more about me, they can read my original inaugural speech or, indeed, any of the hundreds of speeches I gave when I was last in this place during the thirty-eighth Parliament. I am sure they will find them absolutely riveting reading. I was born and bred in Perth and I have lived here my whole life except for a couple of years when I was a toddler and my family lived in Merredin. I am the daughter of a Uniting Church minister. My mother was originally a teacher. My life changed irreversibly and absolutely for the worst when I was 11 years old and my dearly loved father lost his battle with depression and chose to take his life. This experience rocked me, my family and my world. None of us ever fully recovered. The ensuing fallout was enormous and has defined much of what I now do with my life. I feel like I have lived many lives and have had to overcome a fair amount of subsequent adversity, but it is always my hope that these experiences assist me in becoming a better advocate for people whose lives are not easy or simple, or have been adversely affected by trauma. I hope to be someone who reflects what recovery from profound unwellness can look like. In my twenties I became the sole parent to my wonderful daughter and my life began to turn around. A couple of years later I met the man who would go on to become my now husband and the father to our two sons.

From a career perspective, I started off as a qualified play leader working with children at risk after graduating with a cert IV from TAFE, which I did not have to pay for, by the way. Eventually, I made my way to the union movement where I worked as an organiser, industrial officer, equal opportunities specialist and lawyer, picking up two university degrees and admission to the Supreme Court along the way. I am really proud of my union background. It is often considered to be a bit of an unusual one for a Greens member, but it was my job to uphold the human rights of workers and I think that is a pretty honourable way to earn a living. I was elected to sit in the thirty-eighth Parliament, but I was not elected to the thirty-ninth. For the past four years I have been immersed in mental health and suicide prevention advocacy, working with prisoners and disability advocates and have continued my legal work, including working with refugees. I note that when I was working with refugees it was meant to be a respite from the mental health and suicide work that I was undertaking simultaneously. Unfortunately, I can assure members that the way we currently treat those who arrive at our shores seeking protection from terror and persecution ensured that there was no chance that I would be working with a clientele who was unaffected by the impact of mental illness and suicide. To be plain, our detention centres produce a level of despair, misery and hopelessness for our fellow humans who are already suffering from losing so much and having experienced so much trauma. The way we treat refugees and asylum seekers who arrive in Australia should be a source of great national shame. I believe that history will judge us poorly.

Members will hear me talk a lot about the issue of mental health. It is one of my key concerns and a core part of my life's work. I do not believe that the issue of mental health is one that belongs to any one party. I firmly believe that champions for mental health can be found right across the political spectrum. Likewise, governments of all persuasions can be held responsible for the legacy of chronic underfunding and neglect that the mental health sector has traditionally experienced Australia-wide for decades.

I want to start by acknowledging and commenting on some of the positive reforms that have occurred within Western Australia over recent years and to give credit where credit is due. These reforms, which had been long lobbied for and were at the instigation of the mental health sector, were enacted under the Barnett government. It is important to acknowledge when things are done well. There were many positive structural reforms that have begun to turn around what is happening with mental health. We finally established a separate mental health ministry. This was a positive thing because it meant that for the first time, mental health, within the spectrum of health, was able to get the individual attention it so desperately required. For too long the needs of people with mental health issues were left to become secondary to the pressing issues surrounding health. By having an independent Minister for Mental Health we were finally able to focus attention on reform in this very important space. When this Labor government made the decision to put those two ministries under one minister, there was concern about that from the mental health sector. At the same time, perhaps it is an opportunity. I am prepared to keep an open mind about this. I think it is important that we maintain two independent separate ministries, but maybe there is the opportunity to ensure that there is genuine structural change within the Department of Health about the way it responds to mental health issues. I can be very clear that if I feel that mental health is once again taking a backward slide, I will be the first one in this place who will draw it to everyone's attention. It will not happen on my watch. Another really important reform was the establishment of a Mental Health Commission. I do not think people should understate how important a reform that was. WA is still the only state that has a Mental Health Commission with the power to procure services. That is enormously important. From the work that I have done nationally, I know that the capacity for our Mental Health Commission to effect real change is the envy of many states. Mental health commissions in other states work really hard on developing great policies and putting forward proposals but, frankly, power in mental health will always be with whoever has the dollars.

It is very important that we have an independent planning commission that can develop the policy, preferably and, in fact, necessarily in conjunction with people with lived experience, and then have the dollars to purchase what is required in order to achieve reform. I note that when the Labor government made the decision to combine a range of government departments, the decision was made to stick with the commitment that was made in opposition to keep a separate Mental Health Commission. I commend the government for doing that and I am going to insist that the government does not backtrack on that at any point in the future. I know that there is pressure coming to bear, particularly from large doctors' organisations that might feel very strongly about the need to get rid of the Mental Health Commission, but I believe this would be absolutely a step backwards. It is very important that we ensure that the Mental Health Commission retains its full power and ensures that services are still able to be purchased as part of what it does.

We also recognised the importance of ensuring that the voice of lived experience—the voice of those people who live with mental illness and who use the services and that of their carers and their family members—is put at the centre of not only why we provide mental health services, but also ensuring that the voice of lived experience designs the very services that are provided. This is the way it needs to be within mental health. Nobody knows better what they need for their own mental health than the person who is struggling. The power of co-production cannot be understated; we can have the wisdom of people with the clinical experience and know-how, along with that of the people who are living through the experience. This has been transformational in how we address mental health services and how we see that mental health services need to be developed into the future.

I also want to commend the decision that was made to fund systemic advocacy. The mental health sector has ensured that it is ongoing, but it has not been enjoyed in other sectors, and I will get to that later. The reason this is so important is that it ensures that the voice of lived experience, in conjunction with the voice of service providers and clinicians, can be heard to effect real changes. The one thing we want to ensure is that real change within mental health does not degenerate into party politics. We want to make sure that we can effect genuine change, and part of the way to do this is to ensure that those organisations that can best incorporate that voice and best analyse what needs to occur are able to do that. If the decision is made to gut systemic advocacy, the decision that is effectively being made is to silence people who are best placed to tell us what we need to do to ensure that we are making the best reforms we can. We now understand the notion of recovery and the need to work within trauma-informed frameworks. I think this has become more mainstream and people recognise this. The wonderful thing about recovery is that it acknowledges that people can and do get better with the right services and supports and with the right understanding within the community that people can live good lives.

I want to acknowledge the importance of the fact that we finally have a new Mental Health Act. It is not perfect. We will need to do a proper in-depth review, but we always knew we would have to do that because it was such an overwhelmingly transformational piece of legislation. A piece of legislation that large was never going to be implemented without problems. One of the key problems with the implementation of the new Mental Health Act has been the lack of practical support to implement it, in particular the lack of investment in ensuring that the electronic systems enable us to best enact the provisions of the act. This is an ongoing problem. I am sure that if I start talking about the Department of Health and information technology systems, I will not be an orphan in this place in recognising what a huge problem we have. But it is also important that people know that with pieces of legislation such as the Mental Health Act, which of course has the potential to rob people of their own authority, it is especially important that we are mindful of ensuring that we provide the best possible support to enable it to be implemented. I also want to acknowledge and

thank those clinicians who have taken on board the new provisions so well and have worked so hard and are trying to embrace the new provisions and do the right thing, despite not getting enough support.

Of course, a big thing that has occurred has been the introduction of the 10-year services plan for mental health, which also incorporates alcohol and other drug services. I really hope that this place makes a decision across all party lines to embrace this plan and to ensure that it is implemented and that we stick to the time lines in the plan as far as practicable. The principal thing that the plan does is recognise that in order to stop the sheer number of people who end up in our acute and subacute systems within the mental health system, we need to start looking at investment in prevention and early intervention services and how absolutely critical this is. Most of these services are going to be successfully provided by the community-managed mental health sector. I am disappointed that since the plan came into effect, we have still looked at putting most of our investment into the acute and subacute areas rather than looking at what we term “turning off the tap”—stopping the situation in which people get so unwell that they end up in the most expensive delivered services, which is acute and subacute services, and that is without even looking at the human impact of what happens to those people and their families. It is really important that we start looking at genuine investment. I am the first one in this place to know that we do not have a lot of money, but I also know that if we do not start investing in early intervention and prevention services, it will cost this state—that is without us talking about the human cost—millions and millions more in the long run, because treating people once they have got to the point of being critically ill, rather than assisting people early on when they start to experience mental health distress, is just bad economic sense. The plan is not perfect. There was some intervention by cabinet with a few provisions, and I suspect that that might be the subject of discussion at various points, but generally it is really sound. I am going to ask anyone who has an interest to look at it, because it also outlines the need for specialised services in this state for a whole range of people.

I also want to note the establishment of the mental health court, or the Start Court as we refer to it, which is a really important intervention for those people who are experiencing mental health issues and getting into early trouble with the law. It is an enormous success. The success rate for this program is on the record. It is turning people’s lives around. It is steering people away from the justice system and saving us money in the long run. It is a very important provision. We need to look at expanding it so that it goes out to the regions. We need to look at expanding the services that are attached to this court to make them available to the Children’s Court.

I also want to acknowledge the specialist services that have been established, such as the statewide specialist Aboriginal mental health service. I hope that continues. We saw the establishment of specialist services for eating disorders, for example. It is about time. We are starting to go in the right direction. That is the good news.

We also saw the establishment of the Mental Health Network. I was lucky enough to be appointed to be one of the co-leads for the statewide Mental Health Network. This is a very important initiative of the Department of Health. It brings together multidisciplinary clinicians—psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, peer workers, nurses, people with lived experience, primary health providers and community-managed health services—to develop models of care, models of service and clinical guidelines. It is genuine co-production. It meant that we were able to harness the expertise of an enormous number of people. There are literally thousands of people involved in this network to effect reform. I am very disappointed that that network has failed to attract the level of support that it requires from the Department of Health in order to succeed. It is co-run with the Mental Health Commission. The Mental Health Commission has been pretty fulsome in its

support but we are not seeing that at the moment with the health department. I really hope that that gets turned around because it would be an absolute mistake to not allow something as important as the Mental Health Network to achieve the extent of what it can.

What has not happened? The first thing I will talk about, because I banged on about it for four years when I was here before and I have been banging on about it for the last four years, is what has not happened with the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act, which I am really angry about. As I said earlier today in this place, the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act is a heinous piece of legislation. It is diabolical. The United Nations has recognised that it breaches the human rights of people with disability. It is a great disgrace that this state still has it on its books. It came into effect in 1996. As early as 2003, through the Holman review, it was recognised that we needed to drastically transform that legislation. It has left vulnerable people with mental impairment, mental illness, intellectual disability, cognitive disability, senility or acquired brain injury rotting in our jails—people who have not been afforded the right to have their day in court.

We saw the case of Marlon Noble. As members who were here before would know, he was one of the people I advocated for to be released from custody. He was left to rot in jail for 10 years, only to find that eventually the charges were dropped. To this day he remains on a custody order. He is not facing charges anymore. He never got a chance to have his day in court. It is an absolute diabolical disgrace. Some fundamentals really need to occur. I believe that we need to make sure as a matter of urgency that we reform key provisions of the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act. From consultation with people from the mental health and disability sectors, who are the people who best know, I also believe we need an entirely new piece of legislation so that we can achieve the policy outcomes that were originally envisaged when this act was created, which was to allow people with mental impairment who come up against the justice system therapeutic options to get the services and support they need so that they no longer engage in offending behaviours. We are talking about incredibly vulnerable people who, by the very nature of their mental impairment, do not intend to commit offences against anybody.

We need to get in some key provisions. I really hope that when we finally see an amended Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act in this place, at least five provisions have been urgently addressed. I am calling on the Attorney General to make sure that all five of these, at a bare minimum, are included. The first thing we need to ensure is that there is a finite limitation on terms, so that nobody who is held on a custody order under this act is ever able to be left in prison for any longer than they would have been had they been found guilty of the original offence. The second thing is we need to allow a special hearing. Even before people get to the point of being incarcerated, we need to allow the evidence to be tested to see whether there is even a case to answer in the first place. It happens in other Australian states; there is no reason in the world that we cannot have that in Western Australia. We need a whole range of procedural fairness provisions. There is no right of appeal under the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act. We need to ensure that politics is removed from decisions. A decision to release a person from a custody order should be put in the hands of the judiciary—those decisions should be taken away from politicians. That is surely a fundamental principle of justice. Probably one of the biggest things our Supreme Court judges have been calling for is the need to ensure that there is judicial discretion for a range of options. At the moment, if someone is deemed to be a mentally impaired accused, a judge is faced with two options: either just release them or put them in prison, potentially indefinitely. Our judges are screaming out for a middle-road option to be available for vulnerable people; that is, to put them on some sort of order that enables them to live in the community with appropriate services. It would allow people who have often fallen through the cracks, particularly people with disability, to finally get the services they need. It is absolutely ludicrous that we do not have these basic provisions.

That is one of the key reasons I basically needed to come back to this place. I felt I really needed to; it was not resolved in the last four years. We have been begging for reform. I recognise that it is not a politically popular decision to take. Seriously, go out into the general public and say, "I am fighting for the human rights of people with disability who engage in offending behaviours." People absolutely hate it, but we have to take it on. For once, let us actually do the right thing. Let us talk about human rights and let us not just go down the cowardly, populist line. I hope that this is addressed. I hope we get it addressed early on in this Parliament so that it does not become some hideous political issue going into an election. But let us get it finally reformed!

I want to refer to other issues within mental health. I hope we will finally see the establishment of recovery colleges in Western Australia. I note there has been some commitment by this government to establish recovery colleges. I will put forward a word of caution: I have had the privilege of seeing many recovery colleges, both overseas and around Australia. A recovery college and a recovery college are not necessarily the same thing. There is a whole bunch of different models. In this state there is a committed group of people who have lived experience; they are service providers and advocates who have been working towards a model for many, many years. They know the sort of model that has been agreed within the sector. The one thing I would encourage this government to do, before it proceeds with any idea for a recovery college, is to ensure that it takes clear direction from these people about what is required. Otherwise, it is effectively bypassing good co-production, which would be utterly counterproductive. If we have a recovery college, or even recovery colleges, of an agreed model within this state, it would be transformational for people with mental illness.

I really look forward to the day we have a proper transcultural mental health unit for people of various cultural backgrounds. We had a semblance of one run out of the health department, but I will not pretend for one second that it was really any sort of service at all. We need a proper statewide service that can provide appropriate levels of services. For that matter, we need a range of specialist services for people with personality disorder for example. The number of people with personality disorder who turn up in crisis to our acute settings and end up being turned away and who go on to take their lives is an absolute travesty. We need to ensure that we start looking at specialised services for this very complex area of mental health.

I remain concerned about what will happen with what we term tier 2 services for those people with psychosocial disability or mental health issues who will not be eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme because they do not quite meet the criteria. We need to ensure that they get services. We will have to ensure that they keep getting funded because guess what will happen? They will become critically unwell and they will need to go onto the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We need to ensure that we keep that level of service going. We have to do something about what has happened with our private psychiatric hostels. Some of them are amazing and they try really hard to provide an incredible home-like environment despite having absolutely no money. But I have walked into psychiatric hostels that I believe fundamentally breach human rights. I have walked into psychiatric hostels that look clean and smell like disinfectant, but the people who live there are so drugged up, it is like I am walking among the living dead. It is absolutely devastating and heartbreaking. That should not be allowed to happen in this day and age. We need to look at how we can drastically reform this space. By that, I will be really clear: I am not talking about closing down these hostels overnight, because these people will be left on the streets and they will be homeless; I am talking about generations of people who have come from institutions straight into psychiatric hostels. These people have long ago lost contact with their family and these are now their homes. This is what they need. We need to be able to do it better, and we do not.

Obviously we need services in the regions. I congratulate the previous government for establishing telehealth. I understand it was a royalties for regions initiative. It has been a very important initiative and has helped regional people enormously in being able to access services. It is really important that we do not lose that particular reform. We need to look at expanding that even further, particularly as we now have legislation such as the Mental Health Act, which, effectively, relies on its existence. That is particularly important.

I refer to Aboriginal mental health. The Specialist Aboriginal Mental Health Service is great, but out in the regions we do not have the services that we need. I would really like the federal government to get out of this space. I would like it to hand over the money to the state and let us organise this, because one of the problems we have with Aboriginal mental health and, indeed, suicide prevention, is that the left hand does not know what the right is doing. There is so much crossover and many gaps; it is such a big problem. We need to get the governance of this right, because, at the end of the day, people are suffering because we do not have it right.

I am really glad that the Mental Health Commission is continuing to progress work on its accommodation strategy for people with mental health issues, but it requires money. We know that safe and secure accommodation and housing is one of the key social determinants of people's mental health. Therefore, we have to ensure that we find better ways to enable people to be appropriately housed. Particularly at the acute end when people have been discharged from places such as Graylands, we need appropriate accommodation for people to go into. We have to start learning to work across sectors. The housing department will have to learn to work with the Mental Health Commission and a range of other areas, yet we do not do it well. We need investment in forensic services. I think the time frame on that in the mental health plan is all wrong. We have the same number of beds for forensic services that we had decades ago and we do not have enough. It is a problem. It is becoming more of a problem because of the ice epidemic. This acute problem needs to be addressed.

Finally, the key area that is often left to the Feds to deal with—but I am going to keep raising it at a state level—is support services for people with mental health issues who want to go into employment. Occupation, employment and keeping busy are other social determinants for mental health. We do not invest enough in those areas. I really hope that we start encouraging people to work because I firmly believe that when people work, they have not only a purpose and an income, but a sense of citizenship, and that is critically important.

It has been interesting to note what has been happening with the Department of Health. One of the things that came out of the Stokes review, which followed a series of suicides, was the need to ensure the consistency of service across the state. I note that the decision made by the previous government to split services into four different regions and to move to boards was not necessarily consistent with ensuring that we have the capacity to ensure a consistent service across the state in either mental health or indeed health services, and I am really concerned about that. In addition, I reflect that Royal Street seems to be fairly confused about what it means to be the system manager in this new regime. We need statewide policies, but there does not seem to be an appetite to develop them. We need lots of them. That is how we ensure that even though the boards run the show at the local level, no matter where someone lives, that person will have the consistency of service to access either mental health or health services. People do not have that at the moment. We need to remove the postcode lottery when people are trying to access these services. Likewise, we need to look at earlier intervention in health in the same way that we look at it in mental health. We need to look at early intervention and prevention to avoid stroke, heart disease and cancer. We end up paying top-dollar for these issues once people are at the point of being critically ill, yet we know the solutions to stop people getting that unwell in the first place. It is really hard to justify dollars for that when we have people screaming for acute services. I recognise that. We have to find a way to start doing it better.

This issue has been brought to my attention previously and I have decided that I want to raise it specifically. I do not usually concentrate on specific issues, but I want to raise the issue of Lyme disease. It has been brought to my attention a number of times. Two people who do not know each other are listening right now in the gallery and both have independently spoken to me about this issue. I recognise that it is complex and we still need to do more research into this area, but people who are experiencing Lyme disease or the Australian equivalent of Lyme disease, if that is indeed what it is, are really struggling. They are struggling because they have been told their illness does not exist when it does and because they are told they cannot get the support that they need. I want to raise that issue in this place because if members have experienced chronic fatigue or any of those debilitating illnesses, they will know that it really, really messes with their life.

I am going to channel my inner former member, Hon Linda Savage, and talk about the need for child health centres. She is a former member in this place, a member of the Labor Party in the thirty-eighth Parliament, who did an enormous amount of work. I am proud to say that I continue to work with her on the issue of early intervention for children. It is very easily overlooked, yet it is so important to ensure that children from the very earliest stages have issues addressed before they become too much of a problem. I experienced this with my younger son and it meant that he did not speak until far too late.

I refer to suicide. I was really fortunate to be appointed to the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention, and I thank the previous government for enabling me to do that. Together this group of people from a wide variety of political persuasions and different backgrounds and lived experiences helped to advise in a range of areas around suicide prevention. We have seen significant investment, but I suggest that we still have very far to go. We know that we have shameful rates of Aboriginal suicide. We know that particularly young people, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and people who identify as queer and who are subject to homophobia and transphobia, are at higher risk of suicide. We need to address this problem as a matter of urgency.

I am very concerned about older Australians who are increasingly looking to suicide. What does that mean with isolation and lack of services and the value that we are putting on older people's lives? I say the same thing for people with disability. Some people with disability choose to take their life because they do not feel valued because they cannot get the services they need to live a quality life. This is deeply concerning. In particular, I acknowledge how relieved I am that we were able to establish a service for children who have been bereaved by suicide. Children who have been bereaved by suicide are three times more likely to take their life later in life and are at huge risk of having mental health issues. It is a pilot program in this state. It is already inundated with demand. They cannot keep up with the need. I will be keeping a very close eye on that program because it is critically important.

I am looking forward to working with the disability community. I have already in this place started asking some questions about the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I do not know whether we need to go with the state system or whether we need to go with the federal system. I think that there are problems with and merits to both, and I think in many ways it is not even up to me to make that decision. It is up to people with disability to make that decision. The one thing that I ask is that whichever way we go, we need to make sure that people with disability are helping to design the system, are involved with renegotiating bilateral agreements and are able to say what they think it needs to be. There is a huge amount of uncertainty at the moment and people are distressed. The NDIS was hard fought for reform and people are desperately concerned that they are going to lose it.

I also note with interest the decision to devolve the Disability Services Commission into another department. I have mixed feelings about this. I am sad because we need a separate

Disability Services Commission and we need to look at ways to ensure that disability has the same focus that mental health does. At the same time, I acknowledge that many people with disability have felt that the Disability Services Commission lost its way, so there has not been a huge amount of sorrow over what has happened. That is not a slight on the wonderful people who are working there, because there are dedicated people; it is recognition that there have been problems. We have lots to do to ensure access to transport for people with disability and that our planning and housing laws better reflect accessibility requirements. We need to ensure again that we invest in services around employment. We need to look at the issue of seclusion and restraint and how that is used in our schools. We need to again look at the issue of systemic advocacy. The decision to defund disability organisations that engage in systemic advocacy was appalling. We need organisations that can provide a clear, coherent voice so that all reforms and policies have the best possible impact they can for people with disability, and defunding that was a mistake. We need to ensure that we are doing everything we can to uphold the human rights and, indeed, the valued citizenship of people with disability.

I also note that we need to look at making sure we invest properly in alcohol and other drugs services. Again, I draw members' attention to the 10-year services plan that outlines what we need, but we must look at a different approach to dealing with alcohol and other drugs. It is pointless sticking people in prisons if they are simply caught up in the cycle of drug abuse. We need to treat this as a critical health issue and ensure that people are getting support. People's lives are being ruined and families are being destroyed because they simply are not able to get the support they need. Our prisons are no place for anybody. I have been working in the prisons, and the training facilities are absolutely substandard. They are not preparing people to do anything. Mental health services and health services are virtually non-existent. I hope that this place can unite to ensure that Medicare is provided within our prisons. That responsibility should not be sitting on our shoulders; it should be part of the general scheme in the provision of health funding. In prisons there are no dental services and virtually no alcohol and other drugs services, and people need basic legal services as well. People do not understand how to do things around tenancy issues and really basic things that could assist people to keep out of prison.

I commend the previous government for the establishment of the disability justice centre. It was really needed. It is not perfect but it is a step in the right direction. I condemn those people who ran the vile, bigoted campaign against the disability justice centre which created so much distress for people in the disability sector and which was so unnecessary. It is really important that we have places like that so people are not stuck in our prisons. This is going to be more of an issue as we go on, particularly as more and more people are diagnosed with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Our approach to law and order is populist, ill thought out and knee-jerk. It is not making for safer communities; all it does is ensure that justice is not served. I am despairing about the mad rush towards the desecration of the rule of law. Mandatory sentencing is a blight, and it should not happen. We need to ensure that there is judicial discretion. We are seeing challenges to the right to silence and the reversal of the onus of proof. It is really important that these things are challenged and that we do not lose sight of the rule of law, which is fundamental in ensuring that people receive justice.

A shout-out for community services that provide so many important services. I want to say how disappointed I am with the cutting back of so many of our essential public services as well. I will have more to say about that, but because I am running out of time, I will focus on some key issues that are important to me. I want to talk about how angry I am about what happened to WorkSafe WA under the previous government. It lost staff and expertise. There was a culture within WorkSafe to not go out and check workplaces and to ensure that

we have the safest workplaces that we can have to the degree that I believe we need. We need to make sure that WA has uniform occupational health and safety laws. We have some of the worst OSH laws in this country. How that can happen is beyond me. We should be looking at making sure that not only do we finally adopt the uniform laws, but also improve them, because real concerns about apprenticeship safety and what is happening in this area are being raised with me. We are losing fundamental safety regimes.

People in this place may be aware of my desire to ensure that we introduce legislation for industrial manslaughter. I think that is a critical addition to the Criminal Code. I firmly believe that if an employer makes a decision that they know could reasonably result in someone's death and someone dies as a result, they deserve to go to prison. They are the people who should be in our prisons; not the people who are caught up with petty drug issues, like possession and people who need support. We need to start getting serious about worker safety. We spend too much time focussing on the carrot; I am saying that it is time we employed a little bit of the stick.

I am very disappointed about what has happened to TAFE. As I said before, I went to TAFE and it helped me to get to my first job. TAFE is now simply unaffordable for too many people. We should not be putting any barriers in the way of people to retrain and get employment. It is particularly important in this post-mining world, and we need to ensure that people have every opportunity they can to get work.

I will be saying much in this place about electoral affairs and the need to change our voting tickets, and will be looking at reform. Also, for the integrity of government, we need to start looking at donation reform and restrictions on lobbyists' access to ministers. We need to make sure that people are not able to buy their way into influence within this place. Everybody deserves to be able to access their member of Parliament without worrying whether they have enough money to do that.

I am also going to be very supportive of changes for whistleblowers, while at the same time making sure that we do not allow whistleblower legislation to be used by cowards to make vexatious allegations to pursue personal agendas. That is important.

I will continue to talk about climate change. It is a key area of concern. It is unbelievable that we are not doing everything we can to stop it. Even today's paper showed that the WACA might be submerged by the river—if that is not a national emergency, I do not know what is! Can we finally do something about this matter? Uranium is not the solution; it is dirty. If anyone here has the solution as to how to safely store radioactive waste for tens of thousands of years, please, speak up, because they will be the only person in the world who knows. We have a responsibility to future generations to not go there, and uranium mining itself displaces Aboriginal people. Likewise, fracking is not the solution. Farmers hate it, and I do not blame them. It puts our water sources at risk; but, more than anything, it continues the endless cycle of using fossil fuels, which stands in the way of us making the transition to a jobs-rich future in renewable energy. We have talked about it ad infinitum; we need to finally start making that transition.

In terms of a vision for a more positive future, I am a huge supporter of public transport, particularly rail and light rail and the place-making opportunities that that provides. We can design our cities better than we do by providing housing that is sustainable, and has an appropriate mix of private ownership and low-income housing. We need housing designed so that it is passively heated and cooled with the use of photovoltaics and for the now emerging use of battery storage to become the norm. We need housing that makes better use of our precious water, including water capture, third-pipe systems and also water-saving and recycling technologies, and we need housing that is accessible for older people or people with disability.

We need to preserve what is remaining of our urban bushland. The Swan coastal plain is a biodiversity hotspot yet I am concerned at how many people do not even understand what that means. To be a biodiversity hotspot is not a good thing; it means that we have a biodiversity region that is acknowledged is under threat. At this point I have to say something about the farce of offsets. If we wipe out one type of vegetation in order to preserve a completely different type of vegetation, we miss the point. We only have pockets of our urban bushland left. They are home to wildlife and they cool our cities and provide amenity, yet they are under constant threat of inappropriate developments. Kudos to those local governments that have made the effort to preserve their local bushlands, but most of our urban bushland remains unprotected and we need to do something about that.

I am aware that the vision I describe is very urban based and it is a formula for how large groups of people can live together, but I also acknowledge the need for people in our rural and remote regions to also have access to sustainable technologies, affordable housing and services. I think in particular of the need to ensure that our Aboriginal communities are given the resources and the governance opportunities to ensure that they are able to not only stay open, but also thrive. I understand that to take Aboriginal people from country is to effectively kill them. We should be doing all we can to ensure that our actions do not sever this connection and to ensure that current and future generations of Aboriginal communities are supported.

I have many people to thank for enabling me to be back in this place. It was the Greens that placed their trust in me and the Greens to whom I owe my gratitude. Of course, I thank all those who voted for the Greens in the North Metropolitan Region. I thank those members and supporters who doorknocked, phone banked, leafleted, stood on stalls and staffed polling booths. These are people who gave of their time and energy because they put their hope and trust in the Greens to advocate for a kinder, gentler, cleaner, safer, sustainable and better future. I thank those people who ran the Greens' statewide election campaign.

I particularly thank those who were part of team North Metro who volunteered and worked so very, very hard, who had my back and who looked out for and supported each other. Special thanks to the North Metro candidates Sam Jenkinson and Ziggy Fatnowna who joined me on the North Metro upper house ticket, and then the amazingly talented lower house crew, Nicole Harvey, Mark Cooper, Tom Webster, Nadine Reeves-Hennessy, Jo Gurak, Greg Boland, Mushfiq Shah, Louahna Lloyd, Lisa Webb, Matt Ward, Dan Grosso, Hannah Milligan, Jude Cullity and Robyn Treacy. In addition to those candidates I want to acknowledge the tireless efforts of Jordan Gibbs, Andrew Woolley, Patrick Hyslop, Sebastian Tudor, Annemarie Hindinger, Louis Marchant, Graham Hansen, Caitlyn O'Dea, Lisa Thornton, Chilla Bulbeck, Cadell Eynon, Claire McCormick and Dan Loden. The whole North Metro team ran like clockwork because of the leadership and sheer hard work of Laurel de Vietri, Ben Herrmann, Andrew Markey and Justin Blanch, and the ongoing support of our party co-convenors, Grahame Bowland and Sarah Nielsen Harvey. Thank you so much to all of you. I hope to make all your efforts worthwhile. I am looking forward to working with my old colleague Hon Robin Chapple and being joined by new members Hon Tim Clifford and Hon Diane Evers, and of course continuing to work with my friends WA Senators Rachel Siewert and Scott Ludlam. I am disappointed that I will not be working again with Hon Lynn MacLaren and I want to thank her for all her work over the past eight years and particularly her support during the election campaign. I am so very pleased that I am being re-joined by my former staffers the uber-talented Kirsten and Jocasta, and our team is being joined by the lovely Leigh.

On a personal note thank you to all those members of the Uniting Church who have been so loving and supportive; it means the world to me. I want to thank those people who know me the best and who remain my most precious and loyal of friends—Ali, Taryn, Ramona, Alex, Liz and Mark. I want to also note that this election was particularly hard with the devastating passing of one of my dearest and most special of friends, Marc Newhouse, who lost his battle with cancer in February. Marc would have been known by many of you as the powerhouse behind the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Watch Committee and numerous human rights and anti-racism campaigns. But to me he was also my friend, and I loved him, and his death has left a hole in my life. Finally, everything in my life makes sense and has purpose because of my three beautiful children—Miette, Jackson and Blake—and my husband, partner in everything and best friend, Luke Edmonds. You are my world and I can only ever do what I do because of you.

So, Mr Deputy President, I am back, and there is much to do. I know enough to know that I may only get these four years. This is not my inaugural speech, it is my contribution to the Address-in-Reply, but let us get going, because I am ready to start.

[Applause.]
