



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Shane Love, MLA
(Member for Moore)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 16 April 2013

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Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore) [8.52 pm]: Good evening, Mr Acting Speaker and fellow parliamentarians. It is a great honour to stand here tonight as the member for Moore. Firstly, I wish to thank the constituents of the Moore electorate for their support, and in due consideration of that I commit to representing them to the best of my ability with both energy and integrity. I thank my family—my wife, Kareen, and four children, Callum, Rebecca, Brendan and Kieran, for their unwavering support during the campaign and on election day, and for their ongoing support since. My extended family—my brothers, sisters and father—have also been very supportive and have contributed their time and personal effort, and some of their money, to the campaign. I thank them. Last year my dear mother passed away, and when I heard that the election was scheduled for 9 March, which would have been my parents’ sixty-ninth wedding anniversary, I knew that mum was supporting me also.

I want to acknowledge the work of Grant Woodhams, my predecessor, who represented the Moore electorate over the past four years and the electorate of Greenough in the term prior to that. Grant worked hard to represent the electorate on projects such as the \$30 million Dongara District High School upgrade, which he was passionate about and which he was able to see to fruition. Grant was universally known as “Woody” throughout the electorate and was terribly well respected and a much-liked figure in the region and this house, where he served as Speaker in the last Parliament. I wish Grant all the very best in his coming years of retirement.

I decided to stand for Parliament after being approached by Grant, and I enjoyed his strong support throughout the campaign. Thanks also go to Colin Gardiner, the president of the Moora branch of the National Party, and other local members, especially Jonathan Nelson from Badgingarra, who has been a great support to me in the past year. I would also like to thank the rest of the Nationals team; people such as Bryn Butler, Martin Aldridge, Clair Creegan, Jill Sounness, Paul Brown, Cathie Bowen, Rosalba Butterworth, Mia Davies, Jacqui Boydell and Hon Col Holt, to name a few, and everyone else in the party who worked very hard to retain Moore as a Nationals seat.

The federal Nationals who assisted in the campaign, Senators Fiona Nash and Barnaby Joyce, and federal leader Warren Truss, helped by not only spending time in the electorate, but also giving me very sound advice from which I learned a great deal. Throughout the electorate there has been strong support for the Nationals. I thank all those who contributed financially or by helping with signage, helping to organise events and publicity, and manning the many polling booths, because without those people there would not have been a campaign.

THE ELECTORATE OF MOORE

The seat of Moore is the largest non-pastoral electorate in the state and encompasses 17 local governments. It takes in the Shires of Toodyay, Chittering and Gingin in the south and extends to Northampton in the north. It includes the Mullewa ward of the City of Greater Geraldton, while excluding the rest of that city. Moore covers nearly 72 000 square kilometres. Large parts of the former Greenough electorate were incorporated into Moore when Greenough was abolished.

Industry in Moore consists mainly of fishing, farming, mining and tourism. They are vitally important industries in this electorate. The western rock lobster industry and other fishing industries have sustained coastal communities for generations. The transition to a full quota management system, although a positive change brought about by the decline in the puerulus count, has had far-reaching consequences for coastal communities, with considerable financial impacts. Still coming to terms with the quota system, communities such as Kalbarri in the north of the electorate have been doubly impacted by a downturn in tourism associated with the high Australian dollar, and recreational fishing restrictions. There is a need to re-examine those restrictions to revitalise those communities and restore confidence in the tourism sector.

Mixed farming involving grain and livestock production spans the entire electorate. Wheat was first grown in the Carnamah district in 1915 and in Dalwallinu and Three Springs more than 100 years ago. In the Kwinana port zone, the two main bulk grain receiver points in the Shires of Dalwallinu and Moora have in the past received more than 432 000 tonnes of grain in one season, while the vast majority of the 2.5 million tonnes annually produced in the Geraldton zone is produced in the electorate of Moore. These figures serve to illustrate the importance of grain production across the entire electorate, from Mullewa and Binu in the north to Regans Ford in the south and Dalwallinu in the east.

Yesterday, along with other members, I attended the crisis meeting attended by around 1 000 farmers in the Merredin area. No doubt a number of our primary producers are facing a difficult time right now and will also face difficulties in the coming year. Although it is true that most of those distressed farmers live in the eastern wheatbelt, at least some of those attendees were from the Moore electorate. I thank the Premier and the current Minister for Agriculture and Food for the interest they have shown in this situation and I look forward to the government's response in the coming weeks to the farmers' requests. On the whole I remain very positive about the future of agriculture in the electorate of Moore and in the state of Western Australia. I believe there is a positive way for agriculture and that lies in capitalising on opportunity. That is outlined by the Nationals in our \$300 million Vision for Agriculture. That was a cornerstone of the campaign that was run in Moore and in other agricultural electorates.

Mining has long been present in the Moore electorate. Copper, lead, titanium, ilmenite, zircon, rutile, garnet, hematite, magnetite, talc and oil and gas have all contributed to the wealth of the electorate. The diversity and magnitude of these resources should not be underestimated. Three Springs, for instance, boasts the largest talc resource in Australia. Gindalbie Metals' Karara mine east of Perenjori, which was opened a week or so ago, is the second-largest magnetite operation in Australia. Tronox's Western Australian operations, including the mining of mineral sands at Cataby and processing at Muchea, represent the world's largest integrated titanium dioxide plant. Western Australia's onshore gas industry has enormous potential. There are known to be large reserves in the Mid West region—in fact in the electorate of Moore. These reserves have the potential to be an important energy source for the south west of Western Australia. In considering the future use of these reserves, I believe we need to proceed with caution and in a manner that reflects the community's concerns around possible environmental consequences associated with the safety of our important water resources such as the northern Yarragadee and Leederville aquifers. We need to recognise the rights of landholders to operate their businesses and allow farmers to fairly negotiate access agreements with the petroleum industry. Community and landholder confidence in the safety and equity of this industry will be essential if it is to develop smoothly in the future.

Economic diversity in Moore is further enhanced by an important tourism sector. There are many notable tourism attractions in the Moore electorate. The pristine coastline that forms the southern part of the coral coast, Kalbarri National Park, the Pinnacles and Nambung National Park, Wildflower Way, Australia's only monastic town, New Norcia, the Gingin Observatory

and Gravity Discovery Centre and Dalwallinu's Discovery Centre are all enjoyed by national and international visitors looking for a bush experience or what they may consider the real Australia, and all found in a setting right on the doorstep of one of the country's major cities, Perth.

In Moore there are beautiful and deserted beaches that give way to heathlands boasting an extremely diverse and unique flora. The opening of Indian Ocean Drive in 2010, during the term of the last government, has seen a dramatic rise in visitor numbers to Cervantes, Jurien Bay and the towns to the north. This scenic road has opened up sections of the coast that were previously inaccessible. The economic spinoffs for these coastal communities are demonstrating themselves to be enormous.

The Western Australian government's move to create a new Department of Parks and Wildlife will be of great benefit to the Moore electorate. Kalbarri, Mt Lesueur, Coalseam and Badgingarra national parks are rich in flora, with many caves and different landforms, and they have enormous potential for environmental tourism. This new department will have an important role in allowing visitors to enjoy these natural assets without causing them harm. Responsible use of land and enjoyment of the environment are very important to the residents of Moore. Many of the citizens of this electorate willingly contribute to the effort of land care by their volunteering. Those volunteers are supported by government and by the presence of entities such as the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council and its partner organisations operating at the local level. Together they provide professional help and an important framework that sources and administers funds for the management of environmental assets throughout the electorate. The economic future of the electorate is highly dependent on the maintenance of its environment and I thank the Western Australian government for its past support of natural resource management and look forward to working with the new Minister for Environment to further this important activity.

The historical development of Moore really commenced after the initial pastoral developments with the establishment of the Midland rail line when land was cleared for farming in the nineteenth century. An eight-year project that was completed in 1894, the Midland railway joined Midland Junction to Walkaway, south of Geraldton. While roads were unreliable, this rail line enabled development throughout the district, transporting all grain, fertiliser, general supplies, the post and people. Amid the current debate regarding foreign ownership of land, it is interesting to note that the British-owned Midland Railway Co received 12 000 acres of land for each mile of railway that it built. This early inland development, associated with farming and the railway, makes Moore an electorate of two halves. The coastal communities of Lancelin, Cervantes, Jurien Bay and Kalbarri were in the beginning populated by fishing shacks, and development of the southern coastal communities was initially limited by poor access tracks and the availability of fresh water. These towns were gazetted only in the 1950s and 60s and grew rapidly with development of the crayfish export industry. However, they lacked the legacy of infrastructure, hospitals and high schools et cetera that were established in the inland towns on the Midlands Road.

REGIONAL SERVICES

Perth and Geraldton, at either end of the electorate, are where many constituents access a range of services and facilities; for instance, those more specialised medical services. Given the extent of the electorate and the location of these two major centres, there are many different and confusing administrative boundaries associated with the regional development commissions and the provision of policing, education, transport, health and emergency services. The north of the electorate is a major component of the Mid West region, while the south lies in the Wheatbelt region. Within Moore the population dynamic has changed in recent years, as tree changers have made peri-urban areas such as Toodyay and Chittering their home and sea changers have moved

into our coastal towns. Despite the influx of those seeking a change in lifestyle, there has been little provision for their educational, health and aged-care needs, and there are real and serious service gaps. Services in Dongara, Lancelin, Jurien Bay and the like were based on a static population of the 1980s, and these towns are now struggling with increased demand from both resident populations and the influx of visitors.

The two major highways traversing the Moore electorate are essentially two main arteries linking Perth with the state's resources sector. Brand Highway—Highway 1—links Perth with Geraldton and the west Pilbara. Great Northern Highway—Highway 95—is one of the lifebloods of the nation and the principal link between the east Pilbara and the metropolitan area, but it is narrow and the condition of sections of this highway, called the Perth–Darwin highway, is deplorable. Countless oversize loads transporting mining equipment use this highway. Within the townsite of Bindoon, 13 sets of overhanging powerlines have to be temporarily raised with the use of a portable pole to allow the passage of oversize and overheight loads. Bindoon is effectively a town in lockdown during this time. A bypass plan for the town has been developed. Although the plans for the town's bypass are public knowledge, they have not yet been gazetted and in the meantime are affecting adversely, I am told, property values of the residents. The further improvement of this vital transport link is of great importance to the communities that lie along its path and to the mining industry in the Pilbara. I welcome the future funding commitments for the highway that have been made by the Western Australian Parliament and the government, but we will be urging priority for future funding to be placed from the state and federal governments on this road.

My own connection to the electorate dates back to the 1980s when I bought land in the Shire of Gingin, and later in the Shire of Dandaragan at Badgingarra, where my wife and I continue to farm today. A desire to influence the future direction of the local district led me to nominate for and be elected to the council of the Shire of Dandaragan 12 years ago. After an apprenticeship under then shire president Gary Snook—himself a former member for Moore—I served as shire president for the following nine years. My service in local government, coupled with the co-parenting of our four children and caring for ageing relatives, has reinforced my understanding of the importance of some key issues common to regional WA—those being education, health and aged care. According to the 2011 census, 22 per cent of Western Australia's population reside in the regions outside greater Perth, but we must not overlook the wealth generated in those regions in the agricultural, mining, fishing and tourism sectors.

Let us consider the imbalance relating to funding spent on infrastructure, services and facilities beyond the fringes of Perth's CBD and suburbia that has endured for many decades. Under the inspired leadership of Brendon Grylls, the Nationals' strong independent advocacy for regional Western Australia and the subsequent introduction of Royalties for Regions have gone some way to redressing that imbalance. Many community facilities and services, such as the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme, hospital upgrades, improved mobile coverage and funding for education and regional residential colleges, have injected new life into regional communities.

The devolution of power is one of the core principles that underlines and defines the Nationals' beliefs, and one that I wholeheartedly support. Allowing those in the regions to contribute to bottom-up decision-making processes is not only respectful, but also empowering to local taxpayers and residents. To this end, the Country Local Government Fund provides local government with a flexible means of building and maintaining infrastructure. Council and community, with full knowledge of the local and unique circumstances that they confront, can prioritise spending on infrastructure. In recent years this funding has provided, for example, the repair and improvement of a footbridge over the Avon River in Toodyay. Without that expenditure, children in the town would not be able to walk to school, as the local school lies on one side of the river and most of the developed town lies on the other. The redevelopment of the

Jurien Bay foreshore and jetty, which enables the town to provide a focal point for visitors and locals alike, was timed to maximise the economic benefit of the opening and development of Indian Ocean Drive. The Country Local Government Fund has provided for an early childhood centre in Perenjori, a town that is enjoying a growth spurt since the development of iron ore mining in the area, especially at Karara. It has provided much-needed funds that have allowed maintenance and upgrade work to be carried out on the Mullewa swimming pool, which is a vital resource for that community's recreation and health. Having walked the streets of Mullewa on a day when the temperature was about 46 degrees, I can personally attest to the value of that investment. Throughout the electorate many other investments and projects have been developed through the Country Local Government Fund—projects that, I contend, would be difficult for a state-based agency to identify and develop. One need not look much further than federal Labor's \$47 billion Building the Education Revolution program to see a stirring example of a government program that is top-down driven and that impresses someone else's ideas upon local communities. In that case, it was school communities.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr R.S. LOVE: The challenge of providing an adequate standard of education, health and aged care for those Western Australians living beyond the northern, southern and eastern fringes of Perth is enormous. Population density in Moore is relatively low and is dispersed over many small communities. In the south of the electorate many people live in rural subdivisions and in small holdings that lie just outside the Perth metropolitan area. With the exception of Moora, the larger communities in the electorate, such as Dongara, Kalbarri and Jurien Bay, have poorly developed services sectors. To some extent, this has been addressed in recent years with such things as the redevelopment of Dongara District High School and the planned developments in Jurien Bay, but much remains to be done. The need to provide adequate education, health and aged care to the citizens of Moore is the principal reason I stood for Parliament in the first place. I intend to do all I can to ensure that these services are improved for my constituents.

EDUCATION

Maintaining and improving standards of education in rural and remote Western Australia presents a huge challenge for this government. A dispersed population base and poor teacher recruitment and retention rates add to the challenge of making appropriate education accessible to all. One of the contentious issues at the moment, as many of you will know, is the change to the year 7 structure throughout country Western Australia. Moving year 7 students to high school, which is in line with the adoption of the Australian Curriculum, is a big step for rural communities that are already scratching to find a junior hockey, football or netball team. My wife and I have experienced firsthand the emotional wrench of sending a 12-year-old kid off to boarding school. In 2015 country parents will lose their 11-year-olds. I understand that the government is prepared to work with communities and families to ensure that this transition, which ultimately will improve the education of our children, is as smooth as possible. I thank the Western Australian government and the Minister for Education for their consideration and understanding of this sensitive issue. Public senior high school options in the electorate are limited to Central Midlands Senior High School at Moora and Morawa Agriculture College, which leaves parents and students with few options other than boarding in Perth and Geraldton. Nagle Catholic College in Geraldton recently announced that it will close its doors to boarders after 2015. This will remove one of the more affordable private boarding school options currently available to my constituents. An alternative boarding facility exists at Geraldton Residential College. The current and planned capacity of the residential college is, however, quite limited and unless it is able to expand its facilities, these students from the north of the electorate will have to make the long trek to Perth to a boarding school, a move which may

incur considerable extra cost for their families. I pledge to work towards supporting Geraldton Residential College in being able to ensure its students can remain in the Mid West region.

In my view, there is a need to investigate the use of technologies to provide innovative solutions and boost facilities at the many district high schools in the electorate to help make up for the shortfalls in rural and remote education. Distance education, though, needs to be engaging and relevant. We do not want to see a scenario in which small groups of rural students are offered subjects via distance education with inadequate supervision or stimulation. The community at Jurien Bay, with the support of the Western Australian government through Royalties for Regions, is currently developing a new civic centre that will house a purpose-built information technology communications centre. Through a formal partnership, the local high school will be able to access the best technology available, supporting its delivery of distance education programs. Such programs give rural youth access to quality educators anywhere in the nation and perhaps in the world. The quality of available education is a major consideration to families with children. In order to attract professional persons to a town, and in turn allow the town to achieve its full growth potential, parents want to be sure that their children will not be disadvantaged by the standard of education on offer. If parents can be so assured, then the growth of communities such as Jurien Bay will be accelerated, assisting the state to prepare for our expected and continuing population growth.

HEALTH

The difficulty of recruiting and keeping general practitioners in country districts has been well documented. Often on call 24/7, country doctors working in isolation run the risk of burnout. Supporting them with other GPs and a good network of allied health professionals is essential in the delivery of community health programs and preventive health. The Southern Inland Health Initiative, funded by Royalties for Regions, is supporting the communities in Moore to recruit both doctors and essential allied health staff. This initiative is encouraging the introduction of innovative service delivery to the region through programs such as Telehealth. Rural and remote health services stand to gain a great deal from the use of Telehealth whereby country patients are able to access specialist advice via video consultation. Telehealth services have been made available with specialists, consultant physicians, psychiatrists, nurse practitioners, midwives, practice nurses and Aboriginal health workers ready to assist the on-ground staff, thereby greatly increasing the level of care to those presenting to the many health centres dispersed across the electorate.

Within the communities of the electorate, a number of different organisations provide services to patients requiring mental health services. Over the past few months I have had many conversations with residents who were either unaware of the services on offer or told me of the difficulties their family members had experienced in gaining access to those services—sometimes with tragic consequences. While there are a range of private and public agencies operating in the electorate, greater coordination of available services and integration of services would lead to better outcomes.

The Patient Assisted Travel Scheme, which has received a funding boost through Royalties for Regions, has provided invaluable support to country persons who have to travel to access specialist medical services in major centres. The qualifying criteria for this assistance are set at a level that rules out many of the residents of Moore—people who often live just a few kilometres too close to Perth to be eligible. These residents are living in communities without any regular public transport links to Perth and are therefore greatly disadvantaged. I will be seeking recognition for their needs in future funding.

AGED CARE

The lack of aged care in the electorate is very serious; the lack is probably greater in Moore than is the case in any other electorate. Facilities are provided at the Northampton and Dalwallinu hospitals, in Mullewa and at the Moora lodge, but they are grossly inadequate for an electorate with a population the size of Moore. Towns such as Dongara, Kalbarri and Jurien Bay present as an attractive option to retirees, but they are severely lacking when it comes to aged-care services. Jurien Bay has taken the positive step of working towards becoming an age-friendly centre. A recent study found that 21 per cent of Jurien Bay residents were over the age of 65 years, compared with the state average of around 12 per cent. The same study noted that there were few residents over the age of 80, suggesting that while retirees are attracted to a town such as Jurien Bay, they must in the longer term leave as their needs increase and their health fails. The situation is quite similar in other communities such as Dongara and Kalbarri. The Moora Frail Aged Lodge, located adjacent to the Moora District Hospital, provides a fine example of the benefits of having elderly citizens remain in the community and maintain family connections. The young can appreciate the value of the elderly and the elderly can continue with community activities and maintain their networks. I am happy to say that recent funding from Royalties for Regions under the Action Agenda funding scheme and the Country Local Government Fund will enable the Moora Frail Aged Lodge to expand. There is, however, very little secure dementia care in the region, and whilst it is difficult to make provisions for that care, it certainly warrants consideration in our larger centres. The Wheatbelt Development Commission in conjunction with local communities will be developing strategies to provide a more appropriate level of aged care in the wheatbelt region and this will benefit the southern part of the electorate. I will be seeking to extend the lessons learnt by that strategy to benefit the entire electorate of Moore.

Mr Acting Speaker, the Royalties for Regions program has provided much-needed funds for regional infrastructure and services. It has helped to address the imbalance between country and city, be it the Fuel Card that assists pensioners with the cost of country travel, the upgrade of country sporting facilities, the boarding allowance to assist those who by dint of their geographic isolation have no choice but to send their children to boarding school, newer upgraded medical facilities, housing to attract medical and other professionals or the upgrade of telecommunications. Further investment in technology will serve the vital purpose of enabling those in the electorate to access health and education services regardless of their location.

In closing, the experience of traversing the electorate of Moore over the past year and speaking to so many constituents has left me with an overriding view that the issues I have spoken of tonight are of the utmost importance to many residents throughout the electorate. Perhaps the most indelible impression of the election campaign has been made by my interaction with the Aboriginal community at Mullewa. The recollection of walking past many empty brick houses owned by the state of Western Australia in the town where families are crowded into 50-year-old asbestos-ridden hovels surely needs some investigation. The most touching of conversations I had whilst doorknocking was in Mullewa; it was an exchange with a very articulate and intelligent young Aboriginal woman with a baby in her arms, just a teenager herself I am sure. She was despairing about the life that lay ahead for her girls. She wanted to know what I could do to make a better future for her daughters and to ensure their future safety. I have to report that I walked away that day thinking that probably I would not be able to do much for those concerns. I do not want to feel that way at the conclusion of the next four years. Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for listening to me.

[Applause.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr J.H.D. Day (Leader of the House)**.
