



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Sean L'Estrange, MLA
(Member for Churchlands)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 16 April 2013

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 16 April 2013

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

INTRODUCTION AND THANK YOU

MR S.K. L'ESTRANGE (Churchlands) [8.08 pm]: First, I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your re-election as the member for Mount Lawley and on your election to the position of Chair of this house. I congratulate my Liberal Party colleagues and all members of this house on their election success. For me, the 2013 election was an endorsement of the achievements and vision of the Liberal Party of Western Australia under the leadership of our Premier, Hon Colin Barnett, MLA, and I congratulate you, Premier, on this result.

It is with a great sense of duty that I stand before you today. I enter the chamber as the first Liberal to be elected to the seat of Churchlands since its inception in 1996. The seat of Churchlands was renamed from the seat of Floreat that existed from 1968 to 1996 and the only Liberal to represent the former electorate of Floreat was Andrew Mensaros who contested the seat at the 1968 election—the year after I was born—and who held the seat until 1991. I replace the retired Independent member of Parliament Dr Elizabeth Constable who held the seat under both names from 1991 to 2013. By way of an anecdote of history, I am the first Western Australian-born member to represent the people of my electorate.

I will take this opportunity to thank a number of people. I thank the people of Churchlands for electing me to represent their interests and the Liberal Party of Western Australia for providing me with this opportunity. As everybody in this house knows, elections are reliant upon a number of volunteers and supporters. I am most grateful for the large number of people who assisted me throughout my election campaign and in particular I would like to thank my campaign chair, Mrs Sandra Brewer, and my campaign head of finance, Mr Ian Warner, plus my campaign committee members Ben Allen, Jocelyn Griffiths, Daryl Pranata, David Straface, Peter Moore, Ann Patrick, Terry Mader, Pauline O'Connor, Julie Barrett, Sarah Panizza, Whitney Jago, Tom White, Brett Miller and Gemma Whiting. In addition, I would like to thank the existing members of this Parliament who provided support and guidance, with a particular vote of thanks to the Premier, Hon Colin Barnett, MLA; the Treasurer, Minister for Transport and Fisheries, Hon Troy Buswell, MLA; and the Minister for Education, Aboriginal Affairs, Electoral Affairs and Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, Hon Peter Collier, MLC. Thank you to my family, some of whom are here today, including my dad, Gordon L'Estrange, sister, Louise Robinson, and my aunt, Catherine Morgan, and a number of other family members, close friends, supporters and colleagues. I pay particular tribute to two very important women in my life: my mum, Marjorie, who died from cancer when I was 21 and whose spirit lives on in those who loved her and my wife, Alyson, who is a great sense of love and support to me, evidenced most recently while I was on the campaign trail when she picked up much of my share of caring for our young boys, James and William, while at the same time holding down a professional job in the city. I also extend my gratitude to the Clerk of the House and the parliamentary staff on making me feel most welcome and for assisting me to settle in to my new role.

PURPOSE

Mr Speaker, I will now take this opportunity to highlight some of the policy challenges that relate to the electorate of Churchlands, which have a broader application for Western Australia. I will then provide you with a synopsis of my background and present a core set of values that underpin my philosophy for parliamentary service.

CHURCHLANDS DEMOGRAPHICS AND EMERGING ISSUES

The Churchlands electorate has the beautiful expanse of City Beach and Floreat Beach as its western boundary and its eastern boundary is the busy Mitchell Freeway. The electorate comprises all or parts of the suburbs of City Beach, Churchlands, Floreat, Glendalough, Mt Claremont, Wembley, Wembley Downs, West Leederville and Woodlands. It takes in Bold Park, Perry Lakes, Herdsman Lake and Jackadder Lake. It is home to the very popular Wembley public golf course and to some of our city's best schools, such as Churchlands Senior High School, Hale School and Newman College. The 2011 census identified 38 per cent of the electorate's residents as coming from professional backgrounds. By way of an example, the suburb of Churchlands itself has 37.9 per cent of the population recorded as fully owning their own home. Whilst these are enviable economic indicators, they do mask a set of unique challenges that mirror the changing demographic of many of our inner city suburbs and are cause for close planning attention.

The ageing population of the electorate, as with other parts of Western Australia, will continue to put increased pressure on the need to provide local medical and health support, plus easier access to public transport, shopping and service providers. The fixed incomes of many retirees will make them more vulnerable to macro-economic challenges such as rising inflation and their reduced level of economic engagement may put pressure on state fiscal policy. In turn, the gradual buying up of old homes by younger families, coupled with subdivision of land, is increasing student numbers at some local schools, which is putting pressure on dated infrastructure and has increased local road use. The increased local road use is further exacerbated by heavy trucks originating from Fremantle that pass through the electorate to link up with the Mitchell Freeway, which adds to congestion and encourages suburban rat runs. The net result is that previously quiet suburban streets become busy networks. Notwithstanding the above, Churchlands is a beautiful part of Western Australia and it has the potential to be a shining example of how to carefully balance the preservation of its parks, lakes and beaches with efficient road use and broad-based housing options supported by the requisite schools, services, recreation spots, shopping areas and business precincts. My vision for Churchlands aligns with my vision for Western Australia, which is for it to be the best place in the world to raise a family, to work, to run a business, to play and to retire.

SEAN L'ESTRANGE — BACKGROUND

I join this Parliament at 45 years of age with a diverse background—old enough to have some life experience and young enough, I hope, to offer a lasting contribution. I am first and foremost a dad, sharing the joys and challenges of raising two young boys with my wife, Alyson. For the past seven years I established and ran a successful leadership and performance improvement consulting business and I thoroughly enjoyed working with large resources sector companies, city and regional businesses, and government departments, helping them in a variety of ways such as writing strategic plans, improving business resilience and enhancing leadership systems and performance. Throughout my professional and business career I have also served our country as an infantry Army officer in both the Army Reserve and on continuous full-time service with the Regular Army. Career highlights included reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel; commanding a reserve infantry regiment that trained and deployed soldiers for the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands; preparing and deploying troops for

national security tasks; and myself deploying to Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force where I was the Australian Task Force commander's Operations Analyst to Uruzgan province and posted in direct support of the Australian battle group led by the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment and the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. Prior to my business and senior Army officer experience I also had a highly rewarding career as a senior school economics teacher, head of an academic department, middle school leader and leader of school-based youth development programs. I worked in schools such as Christ Church Grammar School, Ursula Frayne and Mandurah Catholic Colleges and Wesley College. All of my working life to date has involved working with others to set and achieve high standards with a mission focus, to solve problems and improve efficiencies, and to help individuals and teams to reach their potential. I see my entrance into this great Parliament of ours as an extension of this work on the behalf of the people of Churchlands and in the service of Western Australia.

PHILOSOPHY

Each of us has unique and interesting skills, attributes and experiences that we bring to this house and I believe we are here today because we believe in what Western Australia can be. In the midst of an uncertain global economy we believe in the ability for Western Australia to be able to stand as a beacon of economic hope and prosperity. For many in this chamber we are aggrieved at the mire of a dysfunctional federal Labor government that continues to seek to overtax our prosperous industries, rob us of our fair share of GST revenue and punish us with east coast-centric policies that are divisive to the fabric of federalism itself. We are aggrieved because we believe in our ability to stand up for our Western Australian state rights plus, closer to home, in many parts of our community where we must confront a breakdown of social values that brings crime and despair closer to home, we believe in strong leadership and the rule of law. We believe in these things because they are underpinned by a core set of values—values we can all embrace such as liberty, the family, personal and community responsibility, individual dignity, free enterprise and small business. These values are evidenced in Liberal Party philosophy and I will now expand on these values because they are both entwined in my own personal history and they will continue to serve as a guide for my parliamentary service.

For many of us present in the house, we value liberty because liberalism is the enemy of privilege, sectional interests and narrow prejudice. It is this value that drove my decision to one day enter politics. In my early 20s I left home to see the world and I had the privilege of teaching in an inner city London high school situated in a low socioeconomic area, a multicultural hotspot where many just wanted a fair go. Juxtapose this experience with time spent serving on a commonwealth attachment to one of the finest army regiments in England, where a number of my fellow officers had been schooled at places like Harrow and Eton. Whilst I was very well looked after, the lesson gained was that I observed the institutional barriers of a class system, perpetuated in the type of school you went to or the family you were born into. It made me value that in our country, Australia, what we had was different. Here, institutional barriers such as this do not exist. Here you can be the son of a post-World War II politically displaced migrant, like me, and make a go of life on equal terms with anybody else.

We must value the importance of family because the family is the fundamental institution for the raising and nurturing of children and for making each individual an integral part of society. I would not have committed myself to serve in this Parliament if I did not have the motivation, like you, to want to make a positive difference to Western Australia for our children and for all our future generations.

We value personal and community responsibility because we rightly expect people to live in a civil and respectful manner while contributing positively to the communities in which they belong. We value community service because a highly functioning community is reliant upon

voluntary participation in the institutions of a civil society. To support these values, we know that we need to support families in their quest to raise their children to be good citizens and that this support extends to delivering a highly effective education system, which both expands each child's intellectual horizon and instils a strong sense of civic duty, volunteerism and an appreciation for community standards. To ensure that we are successful, we must continue to improve the education system in Western Australia so that all schools are empowered, resourced and encouraged to offer a holistic approach to education. However, we must do this without throwing the baby out with the bathwater. We must aim to be the best in the world with regard to the teaching and learning of the functional skills of literacy and numeracy, along with the physical and social sciences and information–communication technology. But we must also build a strong sense of self-worth in each child, linked to their unique aptitude and abilities in areas such as spatial awareness, interpersonal skills, self-reflection, nature, spirituality, sport, art, music and drama.

I was fortunate to have been educated at one of Perth's finest schools, Aquinas College, a school of immense pride and tradition where, through the commitment of a highly dedicated staff, I was able to pursue non-academic interests that shaped my character. I had coaches like Misters Dale, Campbell, Doney and Cox who pushed me on the track and in the pool; Misters Bradstreet and Stanley who led by example on the cadet bivouacs; Ms Hammond's passion in the drama and debating hall; and Brother Dally, Brother Paull and Mr Daniel, who shaped my early spirituality and leadership; plus, of course, those great classroom teachers who could connect with their students and motivate a love of learning such as Misters Tonkin, Lowrey, and Wray. I reflect on these people because, for me, they were key enablers to what a school experience should be—one of multiple opportunities to express yourself, to build confidence, to learn and to grow.

We believe in individual dignity because freedom can be meaningful only if individuals have the opportunity to participate, to achieve and to develop their talents. My life journey was heavily influenced by a band of women who espoused the values of individual dignity and who were integral to the development of my character. These were, of course, my mother and grandmothers. All three were headstrong, independent women of high intellect and strong personal drive who were devoted to their children and grandchildren. But, like many women of their era, they faced barriers, barriers which made it difficult for them to pursue a career while raising a family. My mother overcame this barrier by establishing with my father a family business. My grandmothers took on community leadership roles and nurtured in me a strong sense of duty in community service. I remember as a boy joining one of my grandmothers on her Association for the Blind visits and joining my other grandmother during her rounds of Meals on Wheels. These were valuable lessons.

It is fantastic that we, as a society, have progressed to a point at which many of the managing directors, managers, senior defence force officers and school principals I have worked with are women. I am proud of the fact that my wife, Alyson, a University of Western Australia commerce graduate, a former chartered accountant and now a principal strategic information technology change consultant for a large global corporation, has the dignity of being recognised for her professional skills and that she chooses to balance this so that we are able to share the responsibility of raising our sons, James and William. In short, Alyson is an example of the modern Australian professional woman. Nevertheless, I know from Alyson's experience that we, as members of Parliament, must continue to work hard to identify and remove any further institutional barriers that hold women back from being able to reach the highest echelons of their chosen path while also being able to remain central to their family unit.

We value free enterprise and small business because we do not trust big governments and big unions to effectively manage the economic factors of production. Like many members here today, I worked in a family enterprise.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: My parents mortgaged the family home to build and operate two of the first indoor learn-to-swim businesses in Western Australia. Through this I learnt what it meant to run a family business. I worked in the business as a swimming instructor, I helped my parents with repairs and maintenance, and I learned from my mother, who did the banking, paid and managed the staff and ran the office, and from my father, who, as a professional coach, would head off to work at 5.00 am six days a week. I gained an awareness of how hard both my parents worked and the sacrifices they made. The 1970s and 1980s were economically tough, with boom and bust economic cycles impacting on the family budget, and this provided me firsthand experience of the impact of macro-economic policy failings that can leave small businesses vulnerable. Wherever possible, we should set the macro-economic conditions for small business success, while simultaneously limiting the amount of government interference evidenced by antiquated labour market laws, bureaucratic red tape and discouraging taxation measures.

Whilst for many of us here today our core economic ideology centres on open and free markets, we must always ensure that the policies we pursue do no harm to the fabric of what binds our communities together. Our policies must address the unique problems facing the communities of rural and regional Western Australia, as well as metropolitan Perth. We need to acknowledge the social and economic divide between the city and the bush, and we need to work hard to empower all businesses and industries throughout Western Australia by making it easier for them to succeed and not weighing them down with lengthy and overbearing approvals processes, which unrealistically hold them back from capitalising on fast-flowing and fast-changing markets and trends. At times we will be challenged by conflicting economic philosophy. On the one hand, we may be strong advocates of deregulated city markets, while on the other hand, we may want to support a rural industry in order to provide protection and certainty for rural producers so that they and their local community can survive. On the one hand, we may want to free up the use of land for industrial purposes and in so doing create improved employment opportunities, while on the other hand, we may want to preserve the use of this land for the protection of natural ecosystems. In many cases there are no definitive rights and wrongs in the application of economic theory, but rather there are very clear consequences, more often than not born out of an assessment of the overarching opportunity costs to the society itself, now and into the future. In short, the path to solving these problems is complex.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and gentlemen, I will conclude by saying that in this day and age a parliamentarian cannot be a one-dimensional expert in one field of endeavour or be motivated to use the Parliament as a vehicle to champion one's own cause. We know this because we know life is more complex. We live in a time when the opportunities for Western Australians are vast; however, we also live in a troubled global community evidenced by failing economies and conflicting ideologies. Some of the problems and challenges that our state will face will be uniquely Western Australian, while other problems will extend across our national and international borders. It is because of this that as Western Australians we must forever be mindful of the need to preserve our enviable standard of living and our uniquely Australian way of life and we must foster in our citizens and communities a desire to support each other through service, volunteerism, mateship and community spirit.

As members of this Western Australian Parliament our collective community responsibility requires that we first and foremost must defend Western Australia's interests while working with others, as part of a team, to find practical solutions to the many and varied challenges that we will face.

Mr Speaker and members, I look forward to serving the people of Western Australia with you.
Thank you.

[Applause.]
