



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

VALEDICTORY SPEECH



Hon Diane Evers, MLC
(Member for South West Region)

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Thursday, 6 May 2021

Reprinted from Hansard

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 5 May on the following motion moved by Hon Pierre Yang —

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley, 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 DIANE EVERS (South West) [12.36 pm]: Four years ago, at the 2017 election, I was given the opportunity to make some positive change. I took the role seriously, learnt quickly and did my best to do some good. I listened to people, travelled throughout the south west and found the issues people felt were not being heard or were being ignored. I also found issues that were so big that people felt powerless to even speak out. I soon realised that my role was not just to speak in Parliament on behalf of the people who are not being listened to, but also for those who had not found their voice and those who did not have a voice. I was also to speak for the animals, the plants and the planet. Our system of governance does not provide a voice for the environment. Our government structure was originally designed to represent the voices of wealthy, white males, reluctantly advancing to include those without wealth, women and eventually First Nations peoples. But the design of our system is not finished yet, because there is no voice for our young people or for their future and there is no voice for the health of the landscape, biodiversity or the planet.

Many times I have sat in Parliament hearing old, tired phrases about jobs and growth. But the words belie the motivation. The jobs-and-growth story often seems to gloss over the workers, the employees, and speaks more to the shareholders, the owners and the industry. There is unearned income for the owners of capital. Our system perpetuates the ability of those with wealth and power to increase their wealth and power at the expense of others, driving us to a more inequitable society. Yet this is the system we have, the system I was elected to and the system I learnt to work with. It has now delivered a government with a very strong majority. The majority is so strong that Premier Mark McGowan and his team can do just about anything. They have the choice either to maintain the status quo, keeping the gas industry, property developers and other big donors on side, or to be courageous, progressive and forward thinking and address the ills of our society, act to reverse the causes of climate change and lead us to a bright new future.

Western Australia is a wealthy state and our vast mineral reserves and other assets plus the knowledge and experience within our population means that we have the capacity to provide homes for the homeless, to care for people with addictions or who have mental health issues, and the ability for true recognition of First Nations peoples, alongside the ability to provide supporting social infrastructure as determined by First Nations peoples.

As a state, with Labor in government, we have the capacity to make Western Australia a more equitable society and to stop the degradation of our landscape. This government has the capacity to introduce carbon offsets that can direct funding towards rehabilitating degraded landscapes.

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It has the capacity to reach a 100 per cent stationary energy target by 2030 and, with the cooperation of the federal government, to rapidly increase the uptake of electric vehicles and move freight transport to electric or hydrogen-powered trains on rail. This government could preserve our remaining native forests, invest in the plantation industry and encourage a rapid uptake of regenerative farming. This may sound like utopia, but it is well within the reach of this government. It has the capacity, but does it have the will? It has four years with only its major donors or the general population to appease. Its major donors can fund the next election, but the population will vote. Imagine four years from now. What would Premier Mark McGowan and his team want on their résumé? Would they want an increase in the number of roads widened and skyscrapers approved? Would it show a decrease in the number of homeless people, people needing mental health support and in the prison population, alongside a decrease in crime? Would the résumé list the reduction in major weather events and wildfires, or will this government expect people will be accustomed to an ever-increasing climate crisis?

I have been privileged to speak in the Western Australian Parliament over these past four years on many issues. Sometimes, I saw that my words had been effective in getting positive change. Unfortunately, I leave now with many of the issues I feel strongly about still in limbo. Given the motion on soil carbon that was debated just moments ago, I think maybe I have had an impact. I thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for that little boost to my ego.

Throughout my term, regenerative agriculture has been mentioned quite often in this chamber. Not only is the minister a keen advocate, but also there has been some neutral or even positive acknowledgements from some members of the crossbench. Considering the rapidly increasing uptake and development globally, it has been positive to see fellow members of the chamber opening their minds to change, however reluctantly. Within the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, I understand change is brewing and I sincerely wish I could be here to see it mature into full-on support. I appreciate that the minister's promotion of regenerative agriculture will require broad support to fend off the detractors who benefit from the current industrial agricultural systems of land degradation and decreasing nutritional value. Current estimates of viable agricultural land are showing that globally we have just 40 to 60 years remaining worldwide should current practices continue. If that is not a wake-up call to people who like to eat, I do not know what is.

Regenerative agriculture is not rocket science. We need living micro-organisms in the soil to efficiently deliver nutrients to the plant roots. We need to keep the soil covered to hold the moisture in to keep the micro-organisms alive. We need to stop killing the micro-organisms. That is about it. If we do this, we will vastly increase the carbon in the soil. We will massively increase the water retention capability of the soil, enormously diminishing the impacts from drought. We will grow food with more nutrition and fewer chemical contaminants. Alongside these benefits, the diversified farming operations that go hand in hand with regenerative agriculture will increase economic and social opportunities in regional areas. Integrating animals, crops, trees and even hemp on one farm run by a number of families can provide a diversified experience and a wealth of shared knowledge. Investment in a hemp industry will open new industry opportunities for building materials, clothing and other textiles, as well as food and body-care products. We can even use hemp for railroad sleepers. We could go so far as to integrate timber plantations on farms to be milled on site to be used to construct the homes as the families grow.

This brings me to the topic of forestry. Early in my term I engaged a world-renowned consultant to detail a deliberative process for the government to use to determine the desires and expectations of a broad cross-section of people with regard to our native forests. I received no feedback. Now I desperately wish that this process is picked up and considered as the Conservation and Parks Commission prepares the next forest management plan due in 2024. Following the lack of action to protect our forests, I introduced a bill into this house last year to amend the

Forest Products Act 2000. This bill sets out the steps necessary to make changes to conserve our remaining forests, protect our remaining biodiversity, develop the softwood and hardwood plantation industry and dissolve the Forest Products Commission. Please, no-one likes it. The Forest Products Commission is not required.

Understand that the state is losing financially on the timber industry even before we consider the \$135 million write-off in 2018 for an accounting error over the previous 10 years. Understand that there are fewer than 500 full-time equivalents employed in the native timber industry. Compare that with the 3 800 registered beekeepers in the state, with an additional 50 new registrations each month. Does this not indicate that it is time for a change? As bee populations decline worldwide, the opportunities for bee export become nearly limitless.

The associated benefits of forest protection are extensive. An active and thriving forest draws down more carbon. A healthy and resilient forest contributes to rainfall through evapotranspiration. Reducing threats to the forests will support our globally significant biodiverse ecological systems. The timber industry will not end; it will simply be based on plantations. If we have not planted it, then we should not cut it down. Please do not knock this back with comments that it takes too long to grow a tree. Start now. Tree cropping integrated on regenerative farms works. Considerable work has been done over the years to determine where the mills and trees should be located. Use this information. It is now time to invest—urgently.

While on the subject of forests, please stop burning them. Dropping incendiaries to ignite them may help with your outrageous key performance indicator of dollars per hectare burnt, but it does nothing to protect endangered species, avoid critical ecological habitats, nor allow for the cool burns associated with Indigenous science and practice. These massive scale hot burns do not even protect us, because if regrowth occurs, it can be denser than ever, will likely have more weeds and may eventually deplete the seed bank for obligate re-seeders—that is, the plants that can regenerate from seed only after a fire and require continued harsh management.

If we are after safety, please acknowledge and consider all the research, and recognise that there are different methods or mechanisms dependent on species mix, geology, past human intervention, rainfall patterns and so forth. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and it is not a process that should be undertaken with emotion. Fire is a tool—one of many. Let us put aside fear and emotive language, look at the facts and work to find sustainable outcomes. A desert will not burn, but do we want to turn our magnificent southern forests into a desert?

For some time, it has been known that the state's acts pertaining to water are well overdue for review. The southern forests irrigation scheme, regulation changes to charge miners and public drinking water suppliers for the actual costs of licensing, as well as the contemplation of the same for agricultural water users, have raised many important questions. Changes occurring to spring rights is also causing concern. On top of this, we must figure in climate change and the expected continued decrease in rainfall, particularly if we do not act quickly to restore our forests and soils, as mentioned previously.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's website indicates there will be a new act to replace the existing six acts. As this new act will cover water provision, drainage, sewerage, irrigation, allocation and waterway conservation, the drafters of the legislation certainly have their work cut out for them. I have concerns that the magnitude of this new act might overwhelm the potential for scrutiny available from this lopsided incoming house of review. There is so much that could be put into this act and so much opportunity to address many of the impacts of climate change. This new act cannot simply look at the past. It must address the future as modelled by experts, understanding the coming changes. Rainfall decline, more frequent violent storms, increasing pressure on limited water resources through pollution, development, population, industry and intensive agriculture, all these things will need to be addressed. This is an area for collaboration like no other. The stakeholders include not only industry, farming and residential

developments, but also local governments, the landscape, and all our waterways, including the ocean and its biodiversity. Consider being visionary for this act and look to how we can improve our situation. Now is the time to invest wisely in assets that will reduce our ongoing costs, or even bring in future revenues. We must look to recharge our aquifers with clean potable water. We must maintain the health of our wetlands and waterways. We must ensure that rubbish and high nutrient loads are not headed downstream and out to sea. We need a government department that has responsibility for the quality of the water going through our ancient drainage systems. Even if good water management does not win votes, like new roads seem to, this is a time for bold action and visionary leadership. The government has the majority; show us what it can do.

On the subject of environment, there are a few items on my wish list, all of which I have mentioned in here before. First of all, how about a state of the environment report? Would it not be good for the government to have that on its résumé in four years' time—something to show that it has taken action and made a difference? If the government started that now, it could complete it by mid-2022 and have two complete years of results by the time electioneering begins again. The government could use it when the Liberals take the reins in the future to hold them to account. If the government needs assistance in writing key performance indicators for the environment, let me know—I know a few people who could help.

During my term I introduced a few private member's bills on the environment. I would like to take this time to remind the government about that. I understand that the Rights of Nature and Future Generations Bill was considerably more progressive than would ever enable it to get a look in, but I also understand that this is how some acts begin. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, which passed through this house in 2019, began nearly 30 years earlier as a private member's bill. I am not quite that optimistic, but I hope that suggesting that bill may have woken up a few people to the idea that we are not making decisions just for the people living today. Our decisions affect many people and the entire biodiversity for some time. One of the acts to be superseded by the new water act mentioned earlier was originally passed in 1914. I guess that there are other bills in force that are even older.

I continued with a more likely bill for the establishment of an environmental court, as has occurred in New South Wales, or an environmental tribunal similar to our existing State Administrative Tribunal, an entity that can make binding determinations rather than simply provide advice. If our Environmental Protection Authority is to perform its role adequately, it will require considerably more funding and considerably more power. I would not go so far as to say it provides a rubber stamp, but having seen some of the proposals and developments that have gone through in this term, I am sad to say that we sorely need considerably greater environmental protections. We have to get away from sizing up new industry or new developments based solely on their financial aspects, and really consider what sort of environment we want to leave to our descendants.

To make environmental protection very simple, I introduced one further bill that I hope to see influence the coming budget. Many in this place have acknowledged the difficulties and lack of accountability with which royalties for regions funds are distributed. On many occasions I have tried to demonstrate to regional constituents that royalties for regions is not being used as intended. It is not fully allocated, and some of the allocations are for services that were previously provided through other sources. An amount of \$250 million a year goes to the Water Corporation to provide equal water pricing across the state; and, as the Water Corporation then makes a surplus, the funds are returned to the state as a dividend. An amount of \$80 million a year comes from royalties for regions for a school bus service previously provided through the Department of Education. The private member's bill I introduced would provide positive benefits into regional communities by allocating \$100 million a year to the environment through the numerous land care and environment groups operating with an extensive workforce of willing volunteers working alongside government departments to restore, protect and rehabilitate our landscape.

The environment does not need humans; we need the environment. This state and our government must wake up and seriously protect, preserve and restore the home that our environment provides. Put an end to clearing unless commensurate replanting or restoration work has provided results. Put an end to native forest logging. Seriously monitor water contamination or misuse; clearing without a permit; and contamination and pollution regulations. Impose effective charges when regulations are ignored or broken.

If members have not already noticed, regional development is something I care deeply about. Development of the regions should not be a piecemeal, ad hoc or laissez-faire exercise. We need some long-term planning. Part of that planning should be focused on supporting and encouraging decentralisation of the population. COVID has driven many people to flee the city and head for greener pastures. This is a positive for the state. This should be seen as something to encourage. The regions provide funding for the state through mining, and food for the people through agriculture, which also provides export dollars. The regions are where we can fight climate change by drawing down carbon into our trees and our soil.

COVID has shown us that people see the regions as a place to be physically and mentally healthy. Encourage this. I recognise that there are some economies of scale in having people in close proximity, but this only goes so far. Perth already has dispersed across a broad landscape, increasing both financial and environmental costs. Economies of scale can also be achieved in regional areas by increasing the density in regional communities and getting benefit from the underutilised existing infrastructure. These regional areas can be hubs of activity if we plan ahead and make the best use of the local resources. Rather than get big, let us get smart. Localise food processing and manufacturing. Create abattoirs where the animals are raised. Make furniture and housing frames where the trees are planted. Process food where the crops are grown. We can do better.

Getting freight on rail will provide a long-term solution. Do not tell me we need a return on investment over 20 years. We have seen that rail lines can be built to last 100 years. Do it once; do it right. I have heard recently how much is being spent on roads in regional areas. This government cannot deny that the majority of this spending is justified by the number of truck movements. Plan for a sustainable future. Plan for freight on rail.

As we plan ahead and create infrastructure to reduce heavy freight transport on our roads, our regional areas will be safer for the rapid increase in regional travel. Again, COVID has changed our travel behaviour. I see this as providing many positive benefits to the regions and for our population. The more people who get out to the regional areas, the more people will choose to live there. The increased economic activity will make it more appealing to more people. The people who are moving into the south west are moving for a better lifestyle, not necessarily a lifestyle in which they spend more, but rather a lifestyle of good health, a friendly community, activity that takes them closer to nature, and so forth.

As people arrive in our regional communities to live, we are desperately finding that we need more homes. This provides a tricky problem for the government as many of our small regional communities want to stay small. Here is where good planning can step in to work with the people, the local governments and the developers to ensure that sustainable communities with a range of price points, including some social housing, are integrated into the existing fabric of society using a collaborative approach to find solutions that work for everyone. Dream big. Here is the place to be aspirational. Open your horizons and see what possibilities exist.

Before people move regionally, they often visit as tourists. Our regional areas have so much to offer. First Nations tourism must be nurtured and supported, as it is our roots—our connection to the landscape, to time and to the natural environment. The more we can listen to Indigenous science and Indigenous history, the more we will understand our place in this world and understand the responsibilities of long-term management of this landscape. We have much to

learn. Sharing this knowledge widely through tourist-type adventures will assist in keeping the knowledge alive. Combining Indigenous knowledge with ecotourism just makes good sense and assists visitors in getting the most out of their stay.

We can also build on opportunities for accessible tourism to be inclusive of people and their differences or limitations. I understand that some cave tours are now planned to limit noise and excess light to provide a calmer experience for people with heightened sound or light sensitivities. We can also develop activities specifically for people with mobility issues. Providing alternatives can make us a more inclusive society.

One idea which I have come across recently, and which makes sense if planning for a bright new future, is the suggestion of a vehicle racetrack specifically for electric vehicles. Think about it. Unlike the Albany Motorplex, which will be outdated in the not too distant future with its noise issues and concerns of pollution run-off, electric vehicles would make little noise and have minimal run-off concerns. The suggestion is to locate it at Greenbushes near the lithium mine and open it up to everything from trucks to scooters, and even gophers. Out of interest, during the election campaign I asked a few gopher drivers and received unexpected enthusiasm. I had not realised so many gopher drivers had an interest in racing! Universities and other research organisations could be involved to study battery and motor technology. Its location next to the lithium mine would add to the knowledge that we could obtain about how to develop it to grow the industry in that area. Noting the greater performance capabilities of electric vehicles, the researchers should have a rather enjoyable time.

I have noticed over the past four years that the view of this government and its energy entities towards renewables is evolving. From the initial complaints about how rooftop solar will damage the system, the government has advanced to tolerate rooftop solar and is even beginning to appreciate the benefits of integrating it into our systems. Over this coming term, I hope to see an embrace of distributed community-driven renewable systems, as this is where our future lies.

One brief comment on uranium. We know it to be problematic on many counts, and with all its associated negative impacts it is unfathomable that anybody would give any consideration to nuclear energy. In the previous Liberal government's last few weeks in government, it slid through approvals for four uranium mines. Now this government will see those environmental approvals time out. Please let them. These projects pose serious environmental risks and economic liability that will extend over decades, if not centuries.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Hon DIANE EVERS: Back to business, and particularly small business. This is where our opportunity lies. Small business should figure prominently in our future. It is where innovation can occur. It is the largest employment sector. It can take on the development of the tourism operations and the value-adding to agricultural produce, hospitality and manufacturing. There are unlimited possibilities and opportunities for the development of small business, particularly in the regions.

This government needs to assist. It is not all about red tape and green tape. It is about equity and fairness. The issues are about competing with the larger players who have the means and motivation to reduce competition and ensuring that the big players meet their requirements and abide by the law even when they have better legal teams and financial wizards. I recognise that some work is being done on this front; for example, getting subcontractors to be paid fairly and on time, but this is all so slow. I hope to see further action over the coming term to level the playing field for small business.

In addition, if this government would like to be progressive, encourage cooperatives and other business structures that make it possible for more people to get involved in business ownership, sharefarming is becoming more of a global issue for agriculture. We all know that it is very expensive to get into agriculture, but through the opportunities of sharefarming—we can look

around the world and see how it is being done, and being done well—maybe we can do that here and get some of the young people who are currently in the city but who would like to be out on a farm to find a way by which they can do it without having to have a million dollars or family connections behind them.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: That is a very good point, member.

Hon DIANE EVERS: I think it is something for our future—I would love to be there—and I would not mind being involved in the conversation.

Innovation in this area can help to diversify our economy, making it stronger and more equitable. Growing small business is where local economies benefit—local jobs, less travel, good for local government, good for communities. There are many benefits to increased small business activity and I look forward to seeing this government take action in supporting small enterprise development.

Of all the portfolios I held within the Greens, I feel I did not speak often enough on sport and recreation; it just did not come up much. There were environment-related issues such as skiing at Lake Mullocullup, a place of significant Aboriginal significance, and the consideration of mountain bike trails in the Porongurup National Park, both of which should not happen. It is not appropriate. It is destructive and it is not what we need to do. Other than environment issues, most of my concerns or interest was related to ensuring that opportunities for sport and recreation were diverse, accessible, inclusive, financially possible and so forth to encourage broad participation knowing that the benefits of fitness, health and social connection make our population and communities stronger.

Given my accounting background, I had the most fun at budget time. I think only Hon Dr Steve Thomas would agree with that. I walked in thinking how depressing it was having watched as the previous Liberal government spent its windfall from the previous boom up through 2014, leaving the state with a mounting debt. Now I have seen this government do not much better. The debt trajectory continued even though extensive cuts were made to staff and services. Some explanation can be placed on COVID-19 and the decision to try to keep the economy humming. I get that. I understand the government's intentions to keep workers employed and money flowing to shareholders. So, as COVID struck, money flowed to shovel-ready projects. Unfortunately, this provided an opportunity for its property developer friends and donors to fast-track development approvals right past the desires of the communities, with little regard for the environment or long-term planning needs of the state.

As an accountant, and considering the big picture, what struck me hard was the speed at which shovel-ready projects were put forward by Main Roads Western Australia. I have not held back in voicing my wariness towards Main Roads. Governments understand that building roads gets votes. People can see the work progressing, and for the most part they get a smoother, more efficient trip to their destination, but at what cost? For example, the Albany ring-road, budgeted at \$175 million, is progressing swiftly, yet for whom? When I asked for the expected truck movements on the new road, it appeared there would be just 1 200 trucks a day, only 300 more than currently travel on the existing road—and those figures were provided for the year 2031! The existing road of two kilometres rarely has more than one or two trucks on it at any time. The new route will be 17 kilometres rather than the current distance of seven kilometres. Members must understand that \$175 million is being spent on a road that is unnecessary. If there had been any sort of comprehensive planning and forward thinking, not just the four years of an election cycle, and not just from the department for building roads, a different solution may have been found. Understand that nearly all the freight transport on that route is either grain or woodchips going to the port. If the government had simply consulted with Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, which was already exploring a grain terminal at Down Road industrial park, we could have spent \$20 million to \$30 million and shifted that freight task to rail. This would have

addressed the traffic concerns at the roundabout and on the connecting roads. I just cannot understand it—other than how I understand that building roads gets votes. There is nothing workers like more than having a clear run on their daily commute. Unfortunately, having more roads leads to more cars, more trucks and more traffic. I see, however, that investment is going to public transport in the urban areas. It seems as though we have put so much into roads and now there is a bit spilling over. Maybe Main Roads has just run out of roads to build. I am not certain, but there is money going into public transport and I am delighted. Well done.

I even feel that I have been heard. Every year for the past three years I have asked the Public Transport Authority whether free public transport would be considered. I am delighted at the plans to cap public transport at two zones. I ask the government that when the trains become crowded to please not put up the price. More passengers indicate that more trains are needed; it is simple. More trains mean fewer people on the roads, and fewer people on the roads mean less need to expand and extend the road network. Give Main Roads something else to do; we need to plan for 50 years, not five. We have to make public transport smooth, simple and inexpensive, and people will use it—even more so, if the traffic is bad.

Another issue that is well within the government's grasp to address is homelessness. Look globally for solutions; there are solutions out there. Many cities are addressing the situation by providing homes for the homeless—amazing. It is that simple. The reduction in costs associated with homelessness—including health costs, local government costs, policing costs and so forth—make it cost neutral, or even positive. Think broadly. We can be a better, more caring society without hurting the bank balance, and if we get that plantation industry going—or even more quickly, a hemp brick industry—we can build the homes using local sustainable materials.

There are so many more issues that have doable, affordable, progressive, sustainable, sensitive, systemic solutions. The government has the support of the voters, it has the financial resources and it has the capacity. Does it have the will and the courage to take action? I can see the shoots of progressive thinking. Green hydrogen—thank you, minister; I think we are going in the right direction, and there is so much future ahead of us that way to greatly expand the technology for renewables. Turn it into hydrogen and transport it where we need to. I have even heard about somehow making fertiliser out of it; I do not have the chemistry background to work that one out yet, but I will get there! There has also been investment in rail—well done. I am really pleased to see that. There is an increased number of national parks. It makes sense now; just give us more, and the resources to look after them. That is all I ask.

But for all these baby steps, it is still not enough. The increasing impacts of climate change are upon us at a rate faster than our system of governance can even contemplate. Corporate interests have more time and resources to keep laws and regulations in their favour than any government has to create or enforce these laws. The job ahead of this government, should it choose to be bold, is enormous. It will require vision and strength to stand up to the old, tired habits of privileged wealthy conservatives who clutch to the misguided belief that their death will arrive before they are personally impacted by the damage humanity continues to inflict on the planet. Harsh, but true.

I understand that saying the word “economy” gets attention from these people, and it even gets votes if people think the government's words indicate they will have more money in their pocket. But what value is a robust economy if rates of poor mental health skyrocket, alongside drug dependency and suicides? Where is the equity if a thriving economy channels wealth into the hands of a few, while more people become homeless, malnourished or physically ill? The strength and resilience of our social structures must be a priority before we rely on the economy to sort things out.

Where will our society be if we have not reversed the worldwide degradation of our planet? Right here in WA, we have so much to protect that this government and preceding governments

have taken for granted. How can we continue to believe developers and miners who consistently go bankrupt when projects go pear-shaped? How can we continue clearing and felling old, healthy, thriving forests, when we know their value for biodiversity, for human health and for moderating climate? How can we? How can the Premier? It is his government that has the opportunity to make a positive difference, to become world leaders, to raise its profile and increase its adoring crowds on an even larger scale. Be bold. Take action.

The steps have been laid out before you on many occasions. Do not worry about where to start, just start. Alongside green hydrogen and other renewables, make legislation to draw down carbon. In our soils alone, we have the capacity to capture enough carbon that we could go on burning coal. The point is to be carbon neutral by 2050—not just aspirationally, but in fact. In my world I would like to see us carbon negative well before 2050. Even as we become carbon negative, the excesses of our past and present will follow us for some time as the carbon already absorbed in our oceans is released. Carbon continues being sequestered in a mature forest, bringing it down from the heavens into its leaves, branches, trunk and down to its roots and into the earth. Carbon is captured in the trees of a plantation, to be cut and sequestered in those affordable and social homes we so desperately need.

Introduce carbon offsets on those companies that emit carbon in massive quantities. These companies must show results where they have sequestered carbon, and not simply hollow promises that they have plans to do so; otherwise, they pay someone to sequester it for them. This can be achieved in land restoration, soil carbon increases and forest restoration. The government should have a look online at www.drawdown.org if it needs some ideas about how to draw down carbon and how to fix this planet. The important message is: carbon negative. We must find a sustainable existence where we are drawing down carbon—that is, net negative carbon—just to make up for the excesses of the past.

My work in this chamber now comes to a close. I hope I have made an impact. It is a strange existence, watching the games that grown men and women play, not to make a positive difference, but to score points. From time to time this place seems so much like a classroom of around year 6, and that is not to put down year 6 students! My expectations of the character of members of Parliament were higher. We seem to act as though, by putting on a suit or the equivalent, we are giving our positions the respect they deserve. By my standards, that respect is demonstrated by our actions, our integrity and our character. I recognise that this system is based on the Westminster system that has been around for hundreds of years, but that does not make it best or right. I think humanity is capable of something more. I see a world where people work collaboratively, recognising that planet Earth is our home, and if we screw it up, we will lead to our own demise. Indigenous cultures around the world recognised the value of protecting their home, and here we are, day by day destroying ours.

I give my thanks to my husband, Tony, for all he has done to support me through the past four years; thank you. Thank you to our son, Carl, and daughters, Rose, Jessica and Tia, for being there and giving my life value.

I must thank my Greens colleagues here in the chamber. I thank all of them. Having a Greens team made scrutiny and oversight so much more possible. I appreciate that having the four of us looks nigh-on easy compared with the daunting task ahead. Thank you to all Greens and Greens voters.

It is unfortunate that all the work we have done leading up to this day has resulted in just one Greens MP being elected. I have great expectations for the incoming Greens MLC, Brad Pettitt. I wish him all the best of good luck and support from the progressive thinkers in WA, to carry him through the next term. I really feel that scrutiny of this government is going to happen out on the streets, in the community, amongst the people who care. That is what I hope to encourage with my own work. I encourage people to work through Brad to make sure that their voices are heard here. We have to work together if we expect to have a positive future for our children and our grandchildren.

I would also like to thank my staff for all the work they have done supporting people who needed assistance to have their voices heard. Many supporters have said to me that the amount of work put out through my office was staggering, and I could not have done it without the excellent staff I have supporting me. My heartfelt thanks and appreciation goes to all the brilliant people I have met through the past four years. I have learnt so much, I grew as a person, and I made some good connections that may last a lifetime.

My genuine thanks and appreciation go to all people who work towards a progressive, inclusive, sustainable and equitable society for Western Australia, and to all those people who I feel so close to—the people who recognise that this planet is our only one, and when we damage it, we damage ourselves. When we lose a species, we lose it forever. When we reach that climate change tipping point, this planet will no longer be habitable by the billions of people who now live here. If you think the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, you ain't seen nothing yet. You had better get used to those climate-related natural disasters: floods, fires, droughts and cyclones. When they affect you or you cannot get insurance for your home, you will have to then step back and think: can I do more? The answer is: yes, you can. We are the privileged ones who have the time to actually make the laws and regulations in here that will affect our future.

In this room in the coming term, a positive difference could be made. Work like professionals and we could all prosper. If you continue to work like children and give us more of the same, we will all be watching as our beautiful habitable climate deteriorates. The new crossbench may see Brad Pettitt as the only voice on the progressive side of politics. That could result in many of the issues that I have raised over this term being all but forgotten—the environmental impacts of prescribed burns, the indiscriminate clearing of native bush, the need for and benefits of regenerative agriculture, the continued destruction of native forests, the lack of real recognition for environmental damage, the loss of biodiversity and so on. Those are just the environmental issues; I leave it to my colleagues to discuss some of the other issues. I focus mostly on my shadow portfolio responsibilities because I see so much possibility for our future, and it is in here where a lot of that can start.

Knowing this, I am committed to raising the voices of people who care about our future, who care about our landscape and who care about all people and not just those like ourselves. A great number of people put their trust in government to manage our society and to keep us healthy, but we need to do more. We need no new gas—of course, I mean LNG and not hydrogen; hydrogen, go for it—an end to native forest logging; an Environmental Protection Authority with authority; a planning department that understands systems thinking and innovation; innovative, sustainable long-term planning; a public transport system that people prefer over driving; electric vehicles running off renewable energy; bulk freight transport on renewably powered rail; a health system that works to prevent injury and disease; mental health systems that address the causes of poor mental health; and a police system that works to prevent and reduce crime, alongside a justice system where all people have equal access to justice that aims to keep people out of prison while ensuring that people who do harm are dealt with fairly and victims are supported. Western Australia has the funds, through the iron ore royalties, which we see flooding in so quickly in great amounts, to be used for good purposes. Those royalties could be used to address these issues.

We need to look at the problems as we try to address them and consider—just consider—whether there is another way to look at the problem. Is there a solution that does not require the traditional response of bandaid solutions or billion-dollar infrastructure? Can we look globally, think with an open mind and act with care and concern for the planet, people and prosperity? I finish here with a dream of utopia. Go on, Mark. Leave a great legacy for future generations. Be visionary. Be bold.

Thank you.

[Applause.]