



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Stephen Price, MLA
(Member for Forrestfield)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 16 May 2017

Reprinted from Hansard

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 11 May on the following motion moved by Ms J.J. Shaw —

That the following Address-in-Reply to Her Excellency's speech be agreed to —

To Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, AC, Governor of the State of Western Australia.

May it please Your Excellency —

We, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign and to thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield) [4.06 pm]: Mr Acting Speaker, thank you, and can I congratulate you on your election to your position and also the Speaker on his election to his position in this house. May I also thank the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and all of the support services here in the house who have been outstanding in their support and assistance to me and all the new members.

It is with a great deal of pride and humility that I stand here before you today in this house as the proud member for Forrestfield, in this the fortieth Parliament of Western Australia—as a proud member of the McGowan Labor government and as a proud member of the Australian Workers' Union. The magnitude of the honour, the privilege and the trust the electors of Forrestfield have bestowed on me will not be forgotten and never taken for granted. I promise to do my best for them all of the time.

Can I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Whadjuk–Noongar people, and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. Aboriginal people were first recorded in the Forrestfield electorate area at the time of colonisation in 1829. The Beeloo people inhabited the area in which the Shire of Kalamunda is now located and were a subgroup of the Whadjuk people. According to the Kalamunda Library Service and researchers Carol Mansfield and Marcia Maher, the Beeloo lands covered an enormous area, which was bounded by the Canning River on the south, Melville Water on the west, and by the Swan River and Ellen Brook on the north. The eastern boundary was a bit harder to ascertain, as it seems that the tribe liked to traverse the ranges looking for food and to get out of the wet, and they moved to the much drier east, as far as present-day York or Beverley. I thank them for their custodianship of the land.

I was born in Bunbury and moved to Harvey, a small south west town about two hours from here, when I was five months old. I was the youngest of four children to Margaret and Darryl. Originally dad, his brother and father ran and owned Price Motors, the Holden dealership in Harvey. After a number of years, dad left the dealership and he and mum took on the Harvey newsagency, which they ran for about 15 years. Due to some health challenges that dad had, they sold the newsagency and took on a less onerous role as proprietors of the Harvey health food shop, which they ran until they retired.

Unfortunately, my dad passed away just before the election this year, but I am joined today by my mum, Margaret, my brother, David, and my sister Jane. Unfortunately my other sister, Amanda, was unable to make it. Thank you, mum and dad, for everything. You taught me the values I have today and brought me up to be the person I am. I miss you, dad.

After attending Harvey Primary School and Harvey Senior High School, I completed my secondary schooling at Bunbury Catholic College. This was followed by a stint at university that did not quite work out as planned, and after a number of years, I left! This, at the time, seemed like a good thing to do; however, reality does not take long to kick in when one is looking for a job and does not have many skills with which to get one. Fortunately, a friend was able to help me get a start on a goldmine as a fly in, fly out worker. This was an extraordinary opportunity that led to the sequence of events that has brought me here today to stand before the house.

At that time it was very difficult to obtain work within the mining industry; fly in, fly out work was even more unusual and gold was only \$US400 an ounce. Working at that mine allowed me to pick up some valuable skills and experience, which enabled me to take advantage of future employment opportunities. Two life-changing occurrences also happened at that mine: it is where I first became a member of the Australian Workers' Union, and it is where I met my wife, Melanie.

I left that mine after nearly five years to try to get a job back in the city. I went to another goldmine for a while and then, in 1995, I was able to secure a job at an alumina refinery just out of Yarloop. There I worked as a rigger–crane driver on a maintenance crew in an area known as OC2. I also became more involved in the AWU onsite at the refinery. It was here as a delegate, then a senior delegate, and finally as a site convenor, that I learnt the true benefit of being part of the union movement. It was also here, during the AWU elections of 2005, that I first met Bill Shorten—then national secretary of the AWU—and a young national organiser by the name of Paul Howes. After watching and being involved with Bill and Paul over the following years as they reinvigorated and reunited the AWU, it was with a sense of anticipation and excitement that I made the approach to work for the Western Australian branch of the AWU.

After 12 years at the alumina refinery, I left at the end of 2006 to start as an organiser for the union in January 2007. I was privileged to be appointed as the assistant secretary in December 2007, and then secretary in July 2008. I remained as secretary of the union until I was preselected, after which I stepped down to enable a smooth transition for the new leadership team and allow time for Mike Zoetbrood to establish himself as the new secretary.

This also allowed me to concentrate on the upcoming campaign. Any campaign is a team effort, and I had one of the best teams going. I would like to wholeheartedly thank Marie Liau, who was my campaign manager. Thank you, Marie. Without you, I am sure I would not be standing here today. I was the beneficiary of your wisdom, your experience and your strategic thinking. You had a campaign plan, which we stuck to, and the result speaks for itself.

Without the constant support and guidance of my good friend and campaign director, Senator Glenn Sterle, I would not have been able to undertake the campaign I did. “Sterley”, you are one of the best. Thank you for everything—not only over the last 12 months, but for the decade before that as well. Your continued support and mentoring is something I will always treasure.

To the rest of my incredible team, I would like to put on the record my eternal gratitude, thanks and appreciation to the following people: Fiona Sterle, Karen Newby, Cheryl Potkura, Ben Wholagan, Joseph Creese, Peter Brisbane, and Shaun Hawkes. Thank you also to Terry

and Carmela Izzard, Geoff Madigan, Alethea Raspa, Chris Demonte and Molly Blumears. A special thankyou also goes to my staff, Natalie and Peter; thank you for your patience, commitment and understanding as well. To the many, many volunteers, party members, union members and community members who helped on the Forrestfield campaign, thank you, thank you, and thank you again. I could not have done this without all of you. Thanks also have to go to my now parliamentary colleagues, state and federal, and to Patrick Gorman, Lenda Oshalem, and everyone at party office. I would not have been able to do this without all your help.

I would also like to acknowledge the unwavering support from the AWU, both state and national. To Mike Zoetbrood, Brad Gandy and the AWU WA branch, thank you for your constant encouragement, support and belief. Thanks also to Daniel Walton and Misha Zelinsky, respectively national secretary and national assistant secretary of the AWU. It is great to have Misha in the gallery this afternoon; thank you for everything. To previous national secretaries of the AWU Scott McDine, Paul Howes and Bill Shorten, thank you. None of this would have been possible without your encouragement, guidance and support over the years. To my good friends and other AWU state secretaries Ben Swan, Ben Davis, Ian Wakefield and Peter Lamps, and the New South Wales trio of Russ Collison, Wayne Phillips and Richard Downie, I thank you all for your continued friendship and advice.

I must also record my thanks to all the unions who helped out—not only on my campaign, but all the campaigns, especially the Use Your Power campaign by the Australian Services Union and the Electrical Trades Union. In particular, I say thank you to Mike Zoetbrood and the AWU; Peter O’Keeffe and the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Union; Tim Dawson and the Transport Workers Union; Christy Cain and the Maritime Union of Australia; Mick Buchan and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union; and Wayne Woods, Les McLachlan, Steve McCartney, Caroline Smith, and their respective unions.

Prior to the seat of Forrestfield being established in the 2005 redistribution, it was part of the Midland, Belmont and Thornlie electorates. It is home to more than 27 000 people and is made up of three distinct areas, interwoven with various forms of industry and semirural properties. We have High Wycombe and Maida Vale in the north; Forrestfield and Wattle Grove in the centre; and Orange Grove and Kenwick, and parts of Maddington, in the south. This is the third election for the seat of Forrestfield, and, on each occasion, there has been a change of local member. I certainly intend to stop this trend! The voting intentions of the Forrestfield electorate are very clear. I would be a very unwise member not to learn from the hard lessons learnt by those before me over the last three elections. I also acknowledge the former members for Forrestfield—Nathan Morton, and, before him, Andrew Waddell, the current president of the Shire of Kalamunda.

Located in the foothills, the Forrestfield electorate is the gateway to the hills region, including Kalamunda, Lesmurdie and Pickering Brook, and also the Swan Valley region to the north. With rapid growth and development in suburbs such as Wattle Grove, Forrestfield, High Wycombe and Maida Vale, the electorate of Forrestfield has a very big and bright future. It is just a shame that parts of the electorate cannot even access ADSL1, let alone the national broadband network. I will continue to work with the Shire of Kalamunda and the City of Gosnells to ensure that development within the areas of Maddington and Kenwick in the Forrestfield electorate continues. I will strongly advocate for continued government investment in vital infrastructure projects to enable future redevelopment in these areas, which will also allow for the creation of future employment opportunities.

A significant number of constituents have raised issues with me regarding policing in the electorate of Forrestfield. During the campaign, I committed to extending the opening hours of the Forrestfield Police Station until 7.00 pm. I am pleased to confirm that the Forrestfield Police Station will be open until 7.00 pm as from last Monday, 8 May. I realise policing issues are not only Forrestfield issues, and I am pleased that the McGowan government has a comprehensive plan for tackling some of our most immediate policing challenges.

The Forrestfield–Airport Link project is a significant piece of infrastructure for the state and for the electorate of Forrestfield. We have the opportunity to plan the future development and infrastructure needs of the adjacent area to take maximum advantage of future development potential. This project will allow the establishment of new residential and retail developments. The development fits perfectly into the WA Labor metro hubs proposal and will enable the establishment of next generation industries and create local jobs for local people. We have to take advantage of its location in relation to the opportunities associated with becoming a major logistics hub to service the aviation, transport and surrounding industries into the future. We need to ensure that training opportunities and facilities are central to this development. This is the pathway to employability for local residents. This approach needs to be supported through improved educational opportunities resulting from increased resources being made available to the local schools.

I would also like to make special mention of a few very important local groups: the Lot 20 Adelaide St Community Awareness Group, the Foothills Information and Referral Service—also known as FIRS—and the Friends of Brixton Street Wetlands.

Adelaide Street in High Wycombe is a unique street for all the wrong reasons. The residents on Adelaide Street and within the surrounding neighbourhood of Jacaranda Springs are caught up in a terrible set of circumstances regarding planning, development and environmental issues. I will continue to advocate and work with the group with the aim of achieving a satisfactory outcome for them. FIRS provides a number of vital services to the people in the Forrestfield electorate who are in desperate need of assistance. It is also a platform for many community groups and play groups to operate within the area, bringing together the diverse community of the electorate. Unfortunately, FIRS has some significant financial challenges ahead of it. Sometimes, biggest is not always best, and I will continue to fight to maintain this very important local service. The Friends of Brixton Street Wetlands perform an amazing role in protecting and re-establishing this globally unique wetlands in Kenwick. Their work in ensuring this area is revegetated and cared for is amazing and I will continue to support them in any way I can.

My previous role as secretary of the AWU allowed me a unique insight into the challenges confronting the state's economy and the working people of Western Australia. In my view, the current attack on penalty rates is one of the biggest challenges we will see on workers in this country. The fact that only a small group of workers have been singled out as inferior to others and therefore deserve a lesser penalty rate is disgraceful. The point I need to stress here and make sure every working person understands is that this will affect everyone, and most importantly of all, it will affect our children. These cuts are meant to take effect from 1 July 2017, and it is a Saturday. As sure as night follows day, when you walk into your local coffee shop on Sunday morning, 2 July, there will not be extra staff employed to serve you because penalty rates have been cut. Your skinny decaf soy latte will not be any cheaper because penalty rates have been cut. You will not even notice the change unless you are the person serving that skinny decaf soy latte, and you have had your penalty rates cut.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr S.J. PRICE: You might be one of those people who think that cutting penalty rates does not impact on you because you might be on a contract or on an annualised salary. If that is you, you are wrong. You may not be able to physically see it on your pay slip, but an amount for penalty rates would have been included in the overall construction of your total salary. The attack on hospitality and some retail workers is only the first salvo. We need to do what we can to protect penalty rates. This is not the end game. This is only the beginning. The end game is to get rid of penalty rates—full stop.

Another area that we need to focus on and ensure there is an improvement in support and resources is workplace occupational health and safety, focusing on workplace deaths. Occupational health and safety in WA workplaces is very complicated. We have the Resources Safety division, which is responsible for resource sector workplaces; EnergySafety, which is responsible for the technical and safety regulation of all the electrical and most of the gas industry in Western Australia; the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority, which is responsible for safety in the offshore industry in commonwealth waters; the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator, which is responsible for safety on railways; the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, which is responsible for safety in the maritime industry; and Worksafe, which is essentially responsible for all other workplaces. On average, a Western Australian worker is killed every 19 days. This is according to a Worksafe report released in September 2016, which states that 19 days is the average number of days a person is fatally injured in a workplace in Western Australia based on a five-year period from 2011–12 to 2015–16—19 days!

As I stand here in this place tonight, Madam Deputy Speaker, and look around our side of the chamber, I wish to congratulate all the new and re-elected members and want to draw your attention to the number of female members who were elected. This is a fabulous outcome for the people of Western Australia, and credit needs to be given to the WA Labor Party for our affirmative action policy. People have been critical of gender policies or female quotas previously. They are right, we should not need them, but when the willingness to change is less than committed, it certainly ensures there are improvements, and actions speak so much louder than words. As a father of four daughters, gender equality is something that is dear to my heart. It is disgraceful that Western Australia has the highest gender imbalance in Australia when it comes to wages. There is no acceptable reason for this. WA continues to have the worst gender pay gap in the nation, with women earning around 24 per cent less than what men earn, compared with that really good average of only 16 per cent less across the nation. This is not good enough and this is why we need strong policies and legislation to ensure gender equality and to drive that change. The issues that could lead to workplace gender disparity are not new and all of them can and should be addressed. We need to ensure that women can maximise their earning potential and can return to the workforce. We must ensure that there are family friendly employment arrangements and flexibilities in place to facilitate this and that every person is paid appropriately. We must ensure that our daughters can aim for the sky.

I have saved my final thanks for my wife, Melanie, and our four beautiful daughters, Abbey, Erin, Rani and Tia. I am extremely fortunate to have the family I have. Without their unwavering love, belief and support, none of this would have been possible. To Mel, our girls and everyone who has supported me and to all of the people in the Forrestfield electorate; thank you. I will not take your trust and belief in me for granted and I will always work as hard as I can in your interest in order to repay the faith you have shown in me. Thank you.

[Applause.]