



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Mr Gary Snook MLA**  
(Member for Moore)

**Address-in-Reply Debate**

**Legislative Assembly**

**Thursday, 31 March 2005**



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#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

*Motion*

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**MR G. SNOOK (Moore)** [11.35 am]: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your invitation. Firstly, may I congratulate you, along with many others, on your re-election to the position of Speaker of this house. At the outset I must express my appreciation to you and the Clerk of the house and all the parliamentary staff for the assistance and guidance they have given me as a new member. The introductory and induction sessions are of great value and help. I thank Mr Speaker and all parliamentary staff for making me feel welcome.

Mr Speaker and fellow members of this assembly: I feel most humbled yet honoured and privileged to stand before you today as the Liberal member for Moore. Those of us who sit in this house know full well how much effort, hard work and support is required by many to be elected to this chamber. I will take a few moments to acknowledge those most important people whose efforts and commitment resulted in my successful election. I firstly thank the WA Division of the Liberal Party for placing its faith and trust in me by endorsing me for the seat of Moore. I am committed to not breaching that faith and trust placed in me. Firstly, I must acknowledge and thank my ever enduring wife, Joan, who has been my stalwart and steadying adviser for 36 years. Without her wonderful support I would have achieved very little and would never have withstood the demands of 23 years in local government, let alone being elected to this Parliament.

To our four daughters, Sharon, Coralee, Marika and Giselle, and to our sons-in-law, Grant, Daan and Danny, thank you for making us the complete family we are. Their encouragement and support and useful perspective has helped me enormously. I thank them all. I also thank my three brothers, Stan, Ron and Trevor, and their families for their support and encouragement to step forward and take up this challenge and, in their words, “have a go”.

I also acknowledge my campaign chairman, David Roberts, who, despite a battle with serious health problems of late, did such a wonderful job in organising my campaign. I also thank all my campaign committee and the dozens of volunteers who also worked so hard to get me to this place. I also acknowledge the Liberal Party branches in my electorate for their fantastic support and fundraising efforts. It was an outstanding effort by all of them. It is now my job to repay their confidence in me.

I will also take just a moment to acknowledge and pay tribute to Bill McNee, the previous member for Moore. Bill gave 16 years of dedicated service to the electorate of Moore and this Parliament. Bill was passionately committed to his electorate and I look forward to the challenge of earning the respect and regard that the people of Moore had for Bill. I thank Bill and his wife, Leslie, for their service to the electorate of Moore and wish them well in their “retirement” to the farm. May the seasons be kind to them.

#### BACKGROUND

I take this opportunity to relate briefly a little of my background and the values to which I hold. After the return of my father from war service in 1945 and the terrible disruption of World War II, my parents continued their farming career on a war service land settlement block at Buntine in the Dalwallinu district of the wheatbelt. Like many of that era, they started with virtually nothing and with sheer hard work and commitment carved their future out of the land developing their farm. Along with my three brothers I grew up on that wheat and sheep farm. It was a time when life, compared

with today, I am sure seemed much simpler, less demanding and stressful and when our communities were built around strong social and family values. For a number of years I farmed in partnership with my parents and brothers both at Buntine and Jurien Bay. The 1968-69 drought meant I had to look for work off the farm. As with many in the eastern wheatbelt that year, our crops had failed. Crayfishing at Jurien Bay seemed the natural way to go, but just for a year, and then back to full-time farming. Thirty years later I decided I had had enough of the sea, and left the fishing industry in 1998. After considerable inquiries, I have not found evidence that there has been before either a fisherman or a former fisherman elected to this Parliament. Either way, I bring to this Parliament my experience and knowledge of the fishing industry.

During this time in my career, and my interests being community based, I had the privilege of serving on the Dandaragan Shire Council for a total of 23 years, 17 of which were as shire president. I believe strongly in the value of local government and the role it plays in serving local communities as the government closest to the people. Some changes to local government may be inevitable in the future. I advocate that it is essential that local government actively participate in designing and guiding any change to its structure.

Like others, my parents set the standard and instilled in me all of the good basic values and principles of life - the principles of contributing and participating in our community, sharing, helping those less fortunate than others and not standing back but getting in and making things happen. Between them, they taught me to be patient, tolerant, courteous, respectful of my peers and others, and to have total commitment to family, even when the going becomes difficult, which can test relationships and resolve.

My father was a successful farmer and always made the most of opportunities as they came along. He was often deemed to be lucky. His comment in response to people saying he was lucky was, "The earlier I get up and the harder I work, the luckier I become." I say the acronym of luck is labouring under correct knowledge. I have endeavoured to practise all of those principles all of my life. Sadly, my mother and father are not here to share this occasion with me, having passed on many years ago, but my appreciation of and love and respect for them continues. However, I do acknowledge my family in the gallery today.

#### **PERSONAL VIEW**

It is my view that many of life's so-called old-fashioned values taught to us in that era have gradually been slipping and eroding away, and in some instances have been lost completely to modern society. I would argue that as a modern society we are the poorer for that loss. Sadly, the media today are constantly full of events and incidences of assault and riotous behaviour perpetrated by a minority, reflecting the loss of those good old-fashioned values. Many people look to this Parliament with expectation for it to recognise the detrimental changes to our social values. Spiralling incidences of antisocial behaviour and the increase in crime and violence in our communities need to be addressed. People anticipate and expect that the Parliament of this state will set a new direction to help return dignity and respect to those in the community who have no knowledge of, participation in or adherence to these essential values. Our communities are crying out for something to be done. Leadership and direction must come from this place so that the broader community can play its role to help us rectify the situation.

#### **ELECTORATE**

In 1890 the electorate of Moore was established, and I am privileged to have been elected the eleventh member for Moore. I am proud to have won the seat for the Liberal Party, and I look forward to serving the wonderful people of this great electorate. The electorate has changed in shape considerably since its formation, with the shift of population now being concentrated towards the coastal and southern shires of the electorate. The electorate of Moore is some 26 000 kilometres in area, covering eight local authorities: Carnamah, Coorow, Moora, Dandaragan, Victoria Plains, Gingin, Chittering and Toodyay. It is a very diverse region that takes in most of the central midlands and part of the Avon region. My electorate also has approximately 215 kilometres of pristine coastline, encompassing the Jurien Bay Marine Park, and is home to the world-famous Pinnacles, which attract 160 000 visitors a year.

The main industries in the electorate are agriculture, fishing, mining and tourism, with many small businesses providing support and services across a wide range of these and other emerging industries. There are new industries such as aquaculture, horticulture, viticulture and silviculture. This diversification is creating employment and broadening the economic base of the electorate. These new industries, coupled with the growing tourism industry, are creating the prospect of a positive future in a number of areas in the electorate.

However, the issue of native title is creating unacceptable delays in residential subdivisions, with development and growth stymied in some of our coastal towns. With no development, real estate prices are being driven to heights beyond the reach of many individuals. Business growth in some towns is stalled. Unable to capitalise on potential, local communities and the state are losing out. For example, there has not been a new residential subdivision in Cervantes for more than eight years, despite the high demand. Action needs to be taken to exclude gazetted town sites in WA from the native title claim process, thereby allowing subdivision to occur, with the immediate benefits from growth flowing on to all Western Australians.

In the main, the agricultural areas of the electorate enjoy reasonably reliable rainfall, allowing the region to claim to have some of the most productive agricultural areas of the state. Also, approximately 30 per cent of the state's rock lobster catch is produced from the ocean that bounds the western side of my electorate. Primary industries in general, though, are currently facing some of the most difficult economic conditions for decades. Spiralling input costs for agriculture and fishing are cutting profit margins razor thin, despite reasonably productive seasons.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

Diversification and improved farming and fishing techniques are helping to counter the cost-price squeeze, but I have to draw to the attention of the members of this house that there is a growing concern and an increasing pessimism among my constituents and many other rural people about what the future holds. People in the agricultural and fishing industries feel threatened and under attack from many quarters, such as the apparent climate change, spiralling input costs, fickle markets, the rising Australian dollar, animal rights activists and the imposing threat of government legislation and regulations that cut across the capacity of farmers and fishermen to function and operate their businesses in a practical and efficient way. For example, many landowners feel threatened by current and proposed environmental regulations in the form of environmental protection policies, such as the Swan coastal plains wetlands policy. The imposition on landowners of water source protection areas has the potential to restrict the rights of landowners to diversify their activities and to restrict their ability to vary the agricultural usage of their land, thus threatening their viability and imposing on them a real loss of benefit, both currently and in the future.

There is no question that I, like the overwhelming majority of people, including those who derive their living from the land and the sea, wish to see our environment better managed and protected. I believe, however, that there is an undeniable basic right that should be unquestionably recognised and adhered to by all governments; that is, the right to own property and enjoy the use and benefit of that property as intended, in a fair and proper manner for the purpose and use that it was legally identified for. If, for the benefit and good of the greater community, private property, leases or licences, in part or in total, are required for conservation or other purposes or uses that the state deems necessary, the cost or loss to the property owner should not be at the owner's expense. In most cases the future superannuation of property owners and fishing licence owners is held in the value of that property. In my view, it is totally immoral and wrong to penalise individuals or people by diminishing the value of their investment without fair and just recompense by the state. In future deliberations I implore members of this house to give this matter careful consideration. This Parliament should legislate to protect the rights of property owners and enshrine that in our state Constitution.

### **ONE VOTE ONE VALUE**

The single most important issue currently on the minds of rural Western Australians is one vote, one value. Country people are extremely concerned at the ramifications of the introduction of one vote, one value. There is a genuine fear that services and facilities in country areas will suffer as a result of a reduction in representation. The introduction of one vote, one value could further exacerbate the country-city divide, which sadly exists. Country people already tell me that they feel, to a degree, like second-class citizens, because they have to fight so hard for basic services and facilities that city folk expect and in some cases take for granted. The spirit of country people is currently facing its greatest test of resolve. Whatever we do, we must not kill the spirit of the bush on which this great state was originally built and from which it continues to prosper.

### **EDUCATION**

I am heartened by the recent announcement that one of the government's main focuses in its second term will be on education. In the area of education and training we have a great opportunity to bring some real positives to our rural areas. Included in the region of Moore are five state high schools and one private college, all of which, with additional capital, I believe have the capacity to handle introductory schooling in trade and apprenticeship training for students. I support the concept of giving students the distinct option of choosing a pathway to trade and apprenticeship training or a pathway to university and academic careers. I believe we need to better capitalise on our investment in the infrastructure in our district and senior high schools and, with the move to keep students at school longer, give them more choice and future career options. Investment in this area will bring greater meaning and direction to the lives of those students who require it, hopefully resulting in lessening the chance of those few losing their way. The result of increased apprenticeship training will begin to address the shortage of skilled tradespersons with which we are currently faced. I also very strongly believe in the introduction of school cadet programs, such as police rangers and military cadets.

We also need to promote and support projects such as the proposed science academy at Toodyay. For nearly two years now the Toodyay community and its chamber of commerce have thoroughly researched and planned a privately funded science academy in their town. The project committee is currently seeking state government support for approval to commence this project. I will be supporting them to the fullest and encouraging the government to give favourable consideration to the proposal. We cannot afford to lose this current opportunity with the availability of private funding. Further deliberation places the project in jeopardy of being lost to WA and being relocated to the eastern states.

### **ROADS AND TRANSPORT**

I now turn to the matter of road transport in my electorate. Networks of well-maintained and effective rural roads are the virtual arteries that carry the economic and social wellbeing of our communities in the country. The road network in my electorate is suffering due to a lack of funding and increased volumes of heavy traffic. Local governments in the electorate of Moore are finding it increasingly more difficult to maintain the standards of their road systems. If we do not significantly increase road funding to rural Western Australia, we will in the future face, I predict, a road-funding crisis of proportions not before seen in this state. Two major arterial highways pass through the electorate; namely, the Brand and the Great Northern Highways. At long last the commonwealth government has allocated substantial funding to upgrading the Great Northern Highway, which is long overdue.

With the increased oil and mining production along Brand Highway at Dongara, Eneabba, Cataby and Gingin, traffic numbers continue to noticeably rise, with a dangerous mixture of heavy road trains and increasing caravan and tourism traffic, which is creating a recipe for disaster. Along this section of the highway, between Bibby Road in the north and Gingin in the south, a distance of more than 100 kilometres, there is not a single dedicated passing lane, in my opinion creating one of the most hazardous sections of any highway in the state. I urge the government to give urgent consideration to addressing this situation and allocate funding to a series of passing lanes on this section of the highway.

One of the most talked about new roads of recent times and a project that I have fought for for 25 years is the remaining section of Indian Ocean Drive between Lancelin and Cervantes, a distance of some 68 kilometres. I remain astounded that the decision to begin construction continues to appear to be pushed further out, despite the apparent bipartisan support for this road. In fact, independent research indicates that upon completion the revenue generated by this road and return to the state would nearly recover its construction cost over a 10-year period. This road would bring many millions of dollars of investment to the central coast region, creating education improvements, jobs for our youth and better medical services and facilities for our aged in the region, to name but a few benefits. The economic flow-on effect to the state would be significant. Additionally, the natural environment in that vicinity would be a beneficiary. Currently, there is virtually uninhibited and uncontrolled access to many sections of the coast via myriad tracks. I continue to seek the government's support in bringing forward the early commencement of this urgently needed road that, in addition, would ease the pressure of tourist traffic on the Brand Highway.

Another priority road project is the Toodyay bypass. The current situation is untenable and highly dangerous, with all heavy traffic passing through the centre of town on a narrow road that was never designed to carry heavy truck configurations. I call on the government to include construction of the bypass in this year's budget estimates. With the planned establishment of the new saleyards at Muchea coming on stream in the near future, there will be the addition of numerous stock trucks to the current cavalcade of trucks through the main street without the alternative of a bypass route. Along with the Toodyay community and others, I am keen to see the detailed planning for the east-west road access via Toodyay to the proposed Muchea saleyards.

## HEALTH

I draw to the attention of the house a matter and a proposal for which I hope I will receive the total support of this house. This is an issue that eventually, in one way or another, will touch or affect almost every single one of us, either through family or friends. I speak of the scourge of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Currently in Western Australia there are over 17 000 people suffering with dementia. Australia-wide there are 160 000 people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. Dementia is the second-biggest cause of disability in Australia and it is estimated that by 2016 dementia will be the major cause of disability in this nation. Unless a cure can be found for this disease, research figures indicate that by 2040, 500 000 Australians will suffer from dementia. This will cost the nation about 5 per cent of its gross domestic product, or nearly \$85 billion at today's value. Not only will the economic cost potentially cripple us as a nation, but the social cost will be devastating. However, there is hope, Mr Speaker, and in true Western Australian fashion we have some champions to the cause. At Hollywood Private Hospital there is a small team of researchers led by Professor Ralph Martins, who is a world-renowned leader on research into Alzheimer's disease. Professor Martins and his team have recently made major breakthroughs in defining the causes of this debilitating disease. I am told that, currently and historically, very little government funding goes to assist this research. All the achievements attained so far would not have been at all possible had it not been for the dedication and commitment of the wonderful people who support the McCusker Foundation for Alzheimer's Disease Research, led foremostly by Mr Malcolm McCusker, QC as the patron of the foundation. The generosity of the McCusker family has been outstanding, and I take this opportunity to applaud that generosity and the generosity of many others to this most worthy cause. However, what is required now to retain Professor Martins' research team and push on to find the cure for this disease is to bring together government, industry and the public in a collaborative effort to raise substantial funding required to achieve the goal. I propose that the government of Western Australia, with the full support of this Parliament, contribute generously in partnership with the corporate sector and the general public to establish a centre of excellence in Alzheimer's disease and care. The aim would be to develop a treatment and cure for Alzheimer's disease within 10 years. I will endeavour to seek the support of the corporate sector in the ensuing months. I look forward to the support of fellow members of this chamber to progress this proposal, which has great merit and should not know the political divide.

### **THANKS AND CONCLUSION**

I wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his vote of confidence in me by allocating to me the shadow portfolios of planning and the wheatbelt. I am honoured to have been offered this position and I look forward to the challenging task ahead.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I again thank you for the opportunity to address this house. I look forward to my time in this Parliament. I pledge my commitment to serve the people of Moore to the best of my ability and to contribute to the good governance of this state. I hope that the experience I will bring will add to the quality of debate and the balance and fairness of outcomes. Thank you.

[Applause.]

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