

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Consideration of Tabled Papers

Resumed from 2 June on the following motion moved by Hon Barry House (Parliamentary Secretary) —

That pursuant to standing order 49(1)(c), the Legislative Council take note of tabled papers 773A-H (budget papers 2009-10) laid upon the table of the house on 14 May 2009.

The PRESIDENT (Hon Barry House): As I give the call to Hon Nick Goiran, I remind members that this is the member's inaugural speech and that the normal courtesies apply.

HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan) [7.31 pm]: Mr President, I rise in support of the motion to take note of the tabled 2009-10 budget papers. I do so with a spirit of thankfulness, celebration and privilege. Firstly, I am thankful to the constituents of the South Metropolitan Region for electing me as one of their six representatives of the region. Equally, I am thankful to the Liberal Party for preselecting me in February 2008. It is indeed an honour to serve alongside my colleagues Hon Simon O'Brien and Hon Phil Edman. Secondly, I celebrate with the members of my family at this time. A number of them are here today in the public gallery. In particular, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge Jody, who continues to do me the honour of being my wife. Together, we have a wonderful family and, due to its size and variety, we generally refer to our children as our tribe. I publicly want to acknowledge the generous support of my entire family in arriving at this date and I commit to ensuring that, notwithstanding the pressures of being a member of Parliament, I will continue in a very intentional and deliberate way to make sure that our family retains its rightful place in the priorities of my life. In addition I would like to acknowledge my friends and professional colleagues both in Western Australia and interstate and thank them for their support, particularly over the past two years. I look forward to an opportunity to celebrate with each of them. I particularly wish to acknowledge those friends and colleagues who have been able to attend this evening in the public gallery. I thank them for their support—it is very much appreciated.

Thirdly, it is a great privilege to be able to serve the people of the South Metropolitan Region in this capacity. On reflection, it amazes me that I should be here today. In my formative years as a young adult I had not the least interest in entering politics. However, for reasons I will elaborate on later, I have been inspired to retire at a young age from the legal profession and commence a new season in my life as a member of Parliament. In preparing to debate the motion before the house on the noting of the tabled papers, it seemed best to me that I consider the motion from three broad perspectives. Firstly, I thought it important to consider the motion in light of the role of the Legislative Council. Secondly, I would like to take note of the budget's impact on the South Metropolitan Region. Lastly, I would like to reflect on the wider interests of Western Australia. Firstly, I would like to discuss the role of the Legislative Council. In doing so, I would like to briefly pause to acknowledge the work of the Clerk of the House and his deputies in providing several comprehensive induction sessions. Their professionalism, together with their welcoming approach, was very much appreciated.

Given that the tabled papers that we are considering in this motion are in fact more commonly known as the budget papers, it was a matter of great interest to me to learn that since the establishment of responsible government in 1890, this house has never blocked supply; and, further, that it is generally understood that the members of the other place control the public finances. Accordingly, during my preparation I wondered what purpose this motion really serves. As my preparation continued, it became clear that although this house ought not to block supply, it nevertheless plays a vital role in scrutinising the government of the day, with particular emphasis on its policies and actions. I acknowledge that the debate on this motion is only one of the ways in which this scrutiny is undertaken—it is also undertaken within the Legislative Council committees and in the legislative functions of this house. However, it is the scrutiny role of this house that is of particular interest to me.

In the 10 years prior to my entering this place, I worked in the legal industry. Over that time, I found myself becoming more and more frustrated by the problems within many of the statutes that have been passed by our Parliament. My frustration reached its peak during the tenure of the immediate past Attorney General. From the outside looking in, it appeared to me that the sheer quantity of law reform being attempted resulted in this house not being able to completely fulfil its scrutiny role. Having had some opportunity to interact with the members of this place, I have no doubt that every best endeavour was made. However, when faced with what can only be described as an avalanche of law reform, it is no wonder that some of our statutes are in the state that they are in.

I turn now to one practical example of how I have found this principle demonstrated during my law career. There are many examples, but I will endeavour to restrain myself at this time and highlight some of the injustices that exist in Western Australia for victims of crime. I have had the opportunity of helping hundreds of victims of crime, primarily by way of advice and advocacy. It has been a privilege to help each of these victims. But I cannot in all good conscience describe it as an enjoyable experience. Many of these people have been victims of

sexual abuse—heinous crimes that I would argue are of the highest magnitude. The suffering that many of these victims experience during the crime is indescribable. However, sadly I must report to the house that, in some cases, the legislation passed by this place has only added to their torment. On 2 December 2003, this house passed the Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill 2003. That was a bill that had been generated in the other place and had been championed by the immediate past Attorney General. In considering such legislation, in my view members ought to take note that it is very difficult for a victim of sexual abuse to report the matter to the authorities. In some instances, that difficulty has been magnified when those in authority have failed to involve the police. In the event the matter does get to the police, the victim must relive the ordeal by painstakingly detailing every memory of the incident or—unfortunately in many cases I must use the plural—incidents. The victim must then agonise during the wait that results from police investigation. In the event that charges are laid, the victim is put through our justice system. It is inevitable that this journey through our courts will be a protracted one. Finally, the victim must again relive the ordeal by again painstakingly giving evidence of every detail of the incidents. The victim is then cross-examined by the accused’s advocate. This tortuous process finishes with a verdict. My time today will not enable me to explore why it is that a guilty verdict is not the end of the journey for a victim of such abuse. Rather, I wish to draw to the attention of members of this place what happens when a not guilty verdict is issued. At this point, members ought to take note that a not guilty verdict simply means that the charge was not satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt. This does not change the reality that the abuse occurred. In saying this, I of course want to acknowledge that there are a rare group of accused who are authentically innocent.

Under the former regime, a number of criminal injuries compensation acts were in force, depending on the date of the offence. In any case, under the former regime, provision existed for a victim to apply for a certificate from the Attorney General. I quote for the benefit of members section 15(1)(a) of the now repealed Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1985 —

Where a person has suffered injury or loss in consequence of the commission of an alleged offence and it appears to the Attorney General that —

- (a) that person is not eligible to apply for an award of compensation for that injury or loss and the circumstances of the case are such that it would be unjust if that person were not so eligible ...

...

the Attorney General may certify that a claim may be made under this subsection, and if the Attorney General does so the person who has suffered injury or loss may apply to the Chief Assessor for an award of compensation for that injury or loss.

In essence, this meant that if the Attorney General considered it was unjust for a victim not to be eligible for compensation, the Attorney General could grant a certificate that would enable the victim to proceed with a claim of compensation, notwithstanding the not guilty verdict. An application would be made, an assessment made and an award granted, including an allowance for future counselling. This was how we used to be able to assist such victims prior to this house’s decision on 2 December 2003. However, this house passed the 2003 bill, championed by the immediate past Attorney General, which among other things removed the provision for such a certificate. Perhaps members may be interested to know how a victim in this situation can now claim. The victim can still claim but needs to convince the assessor, on the balance of probabilities, that it was someone other than the accused who had committed the offence. Quite frankly, this is a disgrace. It is not as though a victim of sexual abuse would be able to identify some other perpetrator. With respect, it was either the accused or it never happened. Just because the prosecution was unable to convince a jury beyond reasonable doubt does not mean the sexual abuse did not occur. I point out this example to re-emphasise to the house how critical our job of scrutinising legislation is. I challenge the members of this place to make this Parliament the best in producing quality legislation that is just and practical. Our efforts to do this must be redoubled, as our failure to do so will result in more Western Australians continuing to suffer.

I could of course continue to cite myriad further flaws in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 2003, which I note had to be amended on several occasions by the immediate past Attorney General, due to the poor state in which it first came before Parliament. I confess to having great sympathy for the position expressed by Hon Peter Foss when he said, in speaking to one of the amendments on 28 September 2004 —

I therefore believe this is a good Bill, although it is a pity we had to have it. It is a shame that it has taken three years to come into the House, during which time victims have been deprived of the capacity for larger recompense. It was quite unnecessary to take three years, given the power to increase compensation by regulation. It was also quite unnecessary in view of the fact that the Attorney General could have amended the old Act by introducing the Bill he drafted in 1997 to Parliament the first time it sat. The Attorney General did not even need to wait for Parliament to sit; he could have introduced a regulation on day one of Parliament. He had full authority to do so and had promised the people of

Western Australia he would. It would have been the simplest matter to do that, but he chose not to. We are now seeing one of the consequences of his foolish pride; that is, he has ended up having to make these amendments somewhat belatedly. As they always say, better late than never. I hope that not too many people have been penalised as a result of it.

I report to the house that the words of Hon Peter Foss were prophetic and that many people have been penalised by the present system and continue to be, and we must now work to untangle the mess that exists.

I would now like, in light of the role of the Legislative Council and in noting the tabled papers, to consider the impact the budget will have on the South Metropolitan Region. As previously mentioned, it is our role in this place to hold the government of the day to account. I am pleased to say that in light of the global economic crisis it is clear that the present government is performing admirably well. I am delighted to note that the papers forecast a surplus for the next two years. In particular, I am pleased to note that this government has not blindly followed the lead of other governments, both in Australia and abroad, where in effect a licence to print money has been given. Economists and others more learned than I am may choose to use seemingly impressive terms, such as quantitative easing, but the truth is that what governments are doing is just an experiment and they do not have the faintest idea what the outcome of their strategy will be. At the end of the day, the proof is in the pudding and governments will and ought to be judged in part on their economic management and performance. It is easy to label oneself an economic conservative; it is another thing altogether to act as an economic conservative.

I am delighted to note that the people of the South Metropolitan Region are major beneficiaries of the government's budget. Again, time does not permit me to take note of all the benefits for my region; however, I am pleased to note the following benefits. There has been \$10.6 million set aside over two years for workers' compensation premium rebates to employers of first-year apprentices and trainees. The small business owners with whom I have discussed this have said that it will help them to increase and retain a number of these new employees. There has been \$8.9 million set aside for planning, investigation and design activities for the extension of Roe Highway from Kwinana Freeway to Stock Road. A number of my constituents have expressed their great relief that this is once again moving forward. Meanwhile, a young adults' prison will be built on the site of Rangeview Remand Centre. This 80-bed prison for male offenders aged between 18 and 22 years is estimated to cost \$36.3 million and will be completed by the end of 2011. It is intended to create a facility for young males to be imprisoned in a safe and secure environment away from mainstream adult offenders. I believe congratulations are in order for the government on this and also the custodial infrastructure program, which I am informed is the most significant custodial accommodation change in the state's history. Lastly, I note a total of \$46.6 million has been provided over the forward estimates to implement the better transport system strategy, which will deliver 1 280 additional Park 'n' Ride car bays at six stations on the Mandurah and Joondalup lines, including Warnbro and Rockingham stations, during 2009-10 at a cost of \$17 million. Having been a keen frequenter of our bus and train services over the past 10 years, I am all too aware of the sardines-in-a-can style of public transport at peak hours, so I note with interest that \$95 million has been allocated towards additional bus and train acquisitions. If the minister could ensure that six carriages instead of three leave the Esplanade train station at 5.00 pm on weekdays, many of my fellow long-suffering commuters would be most appreciative.

Thirdly, in light of the role of the Legislative Council, I would also like to take note of the tabled budget papers by considering the budget's impact on not only the South Metropolitan Region, but also the wider interests of Western Australia. As was previously mentioned, it is our role in this place to hold the government of the day to account. I congratulate the government for producing a well-considered budget that maintains the state's AAA credit rating. The government can truly be considered an economic conservative. However, when considering the wider interests of Western Australia, I encourage the government to place a high value in its policy considerations on the interdependency of all members of Western Australian society. In fact, this house ought to have this at the top of its mind when fulfilling its function on behalf of the people of this state. Sadly, I have heard many times people propose the notion that what people do in the privacy of their own homes is their own business. This idealistic notion fails to adequately consider the interdependency of our relationships as a society. When children are sexually abused in the privacy of their own homes, it becomes a matter of state interest. When children are malnourished and mistreated in the privacy of their own homes, it becomes a matter of state interest. The very fact that a Department for Child Protection exists confirms that the idealistic notion proposed by some in this state is merely that—fanciful and baseless, and, frankly, a notion for either the lazy or the unsympathetic. To illustrate this point I will provide a recent example in which I find that the truth of interdependency was not considered adequately, if at all, during deliberations. Arguably the straw that broke the camel's back for me and convinced me to commit wholeheartedly to a change in career was the immediate past Attorney General's attempt to legalise brothels in Western Australia. As I observed the process unfold, I was staggered to see what I can only describe as a bulldozer approach applied to an issue that, put simply, is the abuse of women. My reference to a bulldozer approach is my reflection on the decision of the previous government to refuse its members a free vote on the Prostitution Amendment Bill 2007. My dismay was not at all limited to the approach

taken, which must have made some members opposite sick to the core, but was magnified when I realised the outcomes of the working group into the issue. On examination, I noted that the terms of reference given by the immediate past Attorney General to the Prostitution Law Reform Working Group were as follows —

1. Draw up the broad principles upon which prostitution reform should be based.
2. Consider laws in other jurisdictions including New Zealand.
3. Address the practical issues for Western Australia.

I have no particular issue, as such, with the brief, but I have a big problem when a working group undertakes its brief only by visiting New Zealand and examining its model. This was in the context of an environment in which the model used in Sweden was being advocated by many groups in this state. What appalled me most was when I read on page 12 the working group's comment on the extent to which it had investigated the Swedish model. It stated —

Some submissions received by the Working Group referred to the 'Swedish' model which has criminalised prostitution with respect to clients. The Swedish Government, in an effort to remove women from the sex industry, has targeted clients rather than sex workers. As the New Zealand Committee observed, although the effect of the law introduced in 1999 was a decrease in the number of women working visibly as sex workers, Swedish researchers point out that clients and workers have found less visible ways of making contact.

With all due respect to the New Zealand committee, on an issue as important to the interests of women as this one, I would have expected our working group to investigate the model used in Sweden more substantively than to merely accept the observations of the New Zealand committee. One of the key recommendations of the working group, under the banner of "Health, Safety and Working Conditions" on page 8 of its report, was —

A minimalist decriminalised model be adopted focussing on the provision of information and education to increase awareness of health and safety issues within the industry, provision of support to sex workers, reducing stigmatisation of sex workers, recognising the right of sex workers to work in a safe environment and empowering them to assert their rights.

In essence, the working group was telling us that it should be okay for a person to be a prostitute if that is what a person wants to do. I am here to say that it is not okay—it is an abuse of women. There is a great deal of delusion going on if any member believes that the majority of women in the prostitution industry really want to be there. In the vast majority of cases, they have not exercised genuine free choice. Melbourne University Professor of Social and Political Science, Sheila Jeffreys, wrote that —

Legalisation and decriminalisation are actually institutionalising, promoting and teaching the abuse of women and creating an ever expanding industry which normalises that abuse.

For the benefit of Hansard, that was sourced from "10 Reasons Why The Prostitution Reform Bill Won't Work" at www.maxim.org.nz. Meanwhile, those members in this place who are big fans of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission may care to review its 1989 report entitled "Our Homeless Children", which showed that, of 25 000 homeless children in 1989, 9 000 were between 12 and 15 years of age, and the majority were fleeing abuse. Most of these children tried prostitution within two weeks in order to survive. I acknowledge that no sane person will advocate that these are facts to be celebrated, but the point is that if prostitution is legalised and decriminalised, we are sending a message loud and clear that this is okay. The truth is that it has never been okay. In my view, it is better to say that in Western Australia we will not condone the abuse of women. It seems to me that we need to bring back the TV advertising of the former Howard and Costello federal government which repeatedly sent the message, "To violence against women, Australia says no". What is all the more remarkable is that the immediate past Attorney General could get away with this type of law reform in an era in which we now have a ministerial portfolio for women's interests. The existence of prostitution in Western Australia is not in the best interests of women. The existence of prostitution in Western Australia is not in the best interests of children. The existence of prostitution in Western Australia is not in the best interests of men. These three unique interest groups all work together to make up this great state. Each group is interdependent upon each other. If men do not make a valuable contribution to society, the state suffers. If men do not treat women and children with love and respect, the state suffers. If men fail to do either of the above, they will in fact suffer themselves. All of this creates an ongoing domino effect of dysfunction within families, which in turn creates greater burdens for our state.

Mr President, I will conclude discussing this issue of interdependency by reading from an article by Marybeth Hicks. If members think the name sounds American, that is because it is. Nonetheless, I encourage members to consider the obvious parallels to Western Australia. Time does not permit me to read the entire article, but for those who are interested it can be found at www.marybethhicks.com. The article is entitled "Men are women's 'issue'". It states —

Last week, President Obama signed an executive order creating the White House Council on Women and Girls ...

...

The folks who did attend seemed thrilled that a special White House council had been created to advance feminist ideas. I doubt it's going to do much good for women and girls.

If Mr. Obama wanted to actually do something significant for American's women and girls, he would have created instead a White House Council on Men and Boys.

Just imagine the estrogen-induced response to something so sexist as a council chartered to address the concerns of one gender over another. Oh, wait. That's what this is.

But anyway, his is a council to address the issues of women and girls, so of course it is entirely fair.

Actually, I'm the mother of three girls, and I happen to think Mr. Obama's new council won't win the battle of the sexes. That's because the best thing anyone can do for American women and girls is to encourage men and boys to "man up."

A council on men and boys would promote stable marriage as the best avenue to improve the lives and living conditions of America's women and families. A council on men and boys would address the crisis in American manhood that results in the scourge of infidelity, divorce, lack of commitment and fatherhood with multiple partners.

A council on men and boys would seek to eliminate the objectification of women in the media. It would battle our hypersexual culture by fighting against the "hook-up" mentality that defines the way in which young men view young women. And most importantly, it would stamp out the violence against women that emanates from men's widespread exposure and growing addiction to pornography.

Such a council would work to train a new generation of boys to become real men, who honor and uphold women as equals in the workplace, the community and the home — not because the government regulates such an attitude, but because it's right.

A council on men and boys also would address the underlying problems that create "women's issues" such as child care, inadequate pay and domestic violence. These aren't "women's issues," but issues related to the systemic collapse of the American family.

Believe me, I'm not man-bashing. Rather, I think the feminist agenda is a false promise. A council on women and girls that seeks to infuse feminism across the government propels us further from real solutions.

In conclusion, I confirm my support for the motion to take note of the tabled 2009-10 budget papers. In doing so, I note the role of this house is to hold the government of the day to account. Accordingly, I congratulate the government on delivering an economically conservative budget.

In addition, Mr President, it would be remiss of me to not take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as President. I noted on accepting your position as President of the house that you undertook to fulfil your role without fear or favour. In my view, each member of this house ought to follow your lead in that regard, irrespective of which side of the chamber one sits on. In particular I undertake to the people of Western Australia that I will seek to comprehensively scrutinise legislation presented in this place and that I will do so always asking the question: how does this legislation address the truth of the interdependency of the people of Western Australia? In my view all governments could make major inroads into the true causes of social dysfunction by creating a ministry for men's interests. In our state this minister would work collaboratively with the Minister for Child Protection and the Minister for Women's Interests.

I look forward with keenness to contributing to the work of this house, which I hope will result in legislation of the highest quality together with outcomes that promote outstanding results for families. Thank you.

[Applause.]

The PRESIDENT: I give the call to Hon Helen Bullock. Once again I ask members to adhere to the normal courtesies, as it is the member's inaugural speech.

HON HELEN BULLOCK (Mining and Pastoral) [8.00 pm]: Mr President, surely no new member of this house could rise to speak for the first time without being struck by the enormous privilege that the people of the regions have bestowed upon us to be of service to them, to this state and to our Queen. It is a double honour for me, not only to be afforded the opportunity to represent the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region, but also to be, I believe, the first person born in communist China to be democratically elected to a seat in an Australian Parliament. Mr President, that, of itself, makes my story a somewhat unusual one and, given that my background

must bear upon my consideration of the issues which come before us, I seek to place that unusual story before the honourable members of this house free of the charge of self-indulgence which might otherwise be laid against one who sought to make their own experience the centrepiece of a maiden speech.

Mr President, I have lived two lives: the first in China, the second in Australia.

My life in China began during the Cultural Revolution. A great many Chinese, my parents among them, were victims of the Cultural Revolution, condemned to periods of deprivation and jailed from time to time by a totalitarian regime determined to set its people spying against each other and declaring them guilty by gossip without the benefit of a system of justice based on innocence until proven guilty.

In these trying circumstances, I was often, as a child, despatched to live with my grandparents and my extended family of uncles, aunts and cousins in the countryside. While born out of the hardship suffered by my parents, these were among the happiest days of my childhood—safe in the arms of my extended family.

It was while I was growing up that I began to escape into the wonderful world of western literature. Such classics as “A Story of Two Towns” and “Goodbye to Weapons” may have lost a little in translation but they were still a window into a world removed from the daily hardship of life in China. I read voraciously, I loved the Brontës, and while I may have tended to be something of an Anglophile, I nevertheless devoured French and Russian novels in translation.

It was through the eyes of the novelist that I began to appreciate the world outside China—a world of freedom and opportunity which other countries appeared to take for granted, to take as of right, but which for me was a world of wonder.

I determined that I must experience this new world. I determined to do everything necessary to earn that opportunity. I studied hard. I gained a professional qualification in accountancy. I learnt English to the extent available in China, and in 1991, aged 25, armed only with a suitcase and a Chinese-English dictionary, I arrived in Perth on Australia Day to start my second life.

I recall that I was surprised to find that Perth was closed for the public holiday. I now understand that the regulation of retail trading hours is a perfectly natural and proper state of affairs, which is just part of what gives Perth a great lifestyle!

The first thing I learned in Australia was that my hard-earned Chinese qualifications counted for nothing. Rather than building upon my initial education, I needed first to requalify. To earn a living, I needed to work, and to work, I needed to gain employment on the bottom rungs of the labour market. For my first three years, I worked in restaurants, as a cleaner and as a factory hand. These are the jobs available to new migrants. Australia can be a country of hard work and low pay, while migrants come to terms with the customs and culture of their new country; but it is also a country of boundless opportunity, and one in which superficial barriers in the path of a new arrival can be readily overcome if one is possessed of the determination to do so.

I had little support in my new country, aside from a handful of friends in the Chinese community. My factory work introduced me to an unexpected source of support—the trade union movement, and through it, the Australian Labor Party. I joined the Food Preservers’ Union and saw firsthand the benefits which a migrant workforce could gain through solidarity and collective negotiation. I met the union secretary, and he saw in me some potential overlooked by management—we married! Thereafter, I devoted myself to full-time study for a period. I obtained a TAFE diploma and then enrolled in a commerce course at Curtin University, graduating with distinction, having joined the vice-chancellor’s list for the top one per cent of students. Following my graduation, I enrolled in a master’s course, completing so much of it as to earn a postgraduate diploma, while also qualifying as a certified practising accountant.

As a CPA, the world of professional employment was open to me. The factory hand had once again become an accountant. This experience demonstrated to me again—although such further proof was not needed—that the road to personal and professional advancement lies through education. While this is true for migrants, it is no less true for working people generally. If, in a competitive world, better quality employment opportunities await those whose skills are improved through education, then we need to make the very best educational opportunities freely available to our people. Western Australia can make no better investment in the future of our people, of our industries and of our state, than in the ready availability of a world-class education system.

By this time, I had exhausted my enthusiasm for study, and was working full time as an accountant in public practice. I enjoyed public practice, and it gave me in return a close understanding of a wide range of Western Australian businesses; of those business characteristics which tend towards success, and those which tend towards failure; and of the sound business practice on which can be based a successful enterprise—or, perhaps, a successful state.

Notwithstanding my fondness for public practice, I sought to broaden my horizons through experience in the corporate world. Western Australia is a mining state, so I sought employment in the mining industry. By 2007 I was working as an accountant on a fly in, fly out basis on the Nifty copper mine in the state's north west. I enjoyed the work, the camaraderie of the mess and the sense of being part of an enterprise struggling against physically oppressive conditions to build the future of the state. I would be there still, save for two things. Firstly, my husband suffered a severe heart attack on 5 September last year, and I flew to Perth that day to nurse him back to health. Secondly, on 6 September, the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region decided that I was going to have a career change in any event. Since then I have continued to work in the mining industry, but in a Perth-based position rather than on-site.

On the home front things developed unexpectedly. Both my husband and I are committed family people, but we were not destined to have a family of our own. Nevertheless, the Bullock household is a home to a changing guard of relatives across three generations. There is a lot of love in the Bullock home. The principal beneficiary is one little five-year-old boy, my nephew Ethan, who himself has reserves of affection for everyone which seem to be boundless, and who shares the joy that he finds in life with all of us. With a large family at home, life is not always going to go smoothly. Nevertheless, it is my experience, both as a child and now, that nothing is as precious as family.

Mr President, here is a migrant's story. It is a story of a girl born in circumstances of political oppression who developed a determination to experience a new life and new opportunities in a new country and who has, so far, pursued that ambition so as to find herself here among those privileged to govern this great state. It is an honour which is scarcely comprehensible to me.

It is also a life's experience which has led me towards an interest in a number of policy areas. For the remainder of my time today, I wish to touch briefly on six of them—the mining industry, trade and China, education, multiculturalism, the trade union movement and the family.

First, the mining industry: Having worked in the mining industry, I understand that it forms the basis of the prosperity of this state. It provides well-paid employment to workers. It provides revenue to the government to fund the provision of services. It is a major consumer of the products and services fuelling the economy of the state. I would like to be remembered at the end of my time here as a great supporter of the industry and supporter of its development. On behalf of the people of Western Australia, we need to maximise this development and to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, the wealth generated by the mining industry is turned to the benefit of the people of the state. Those who would oppose the development of the mining industry bear a heavy onus. They need to demonstrate that the failure to develop a particular resource stands to offer a greater benefit to the people than its development. In most cases it is difficult to imagine.

I can see a great and prosperous future for the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region. Those people, who work hard in an overwhelmingly harsh environment, deserve their fair share of the prosperity generated through mining—as do all Western Australians. The government of this state needs to work effectively to keep those benefits here to deploy the fruits of nature's bounty wisely.

Secondly, trade and China: The twenty-first century has been widely heralded as the Asian century. Western Australia is well positioned to take full advantage of the prosperity attainable through strong trade links with Asia. Within Asia, it is China which has attracted the attention of the world in terms of its vigorous capacity for growth. Without in any way diminishing the importance of Japan as an Australian trading partner, it is the rise of China which has the capacity to drive enormous expansion within the Mining and Pastoral Region in the decades to come.

As a member of Parliament of Chinese origin, I believe that I am uniquely placed to assist in the development of Western Australia's relationship with this key trading partner. With a solid background in business in the mining industry and with my Chinese heritage, I believe that I can add real value to Western Australia's business relationship with China, while being cautious as to the nature of Chinese investment in this country, which is qualitatively different from the investment of other overseas businesses or sovereign wealth funds. While feeding the world's demand for resources should secure a firm foundation for the Western Australian economy for decades to come, the wealth generated by the mining industry needs to be turned to greater effect than making Western Australia a hole in the ground. Western Australia needs a broader plan to guarantee its future prosperity. We need to be encouraging downstream processing and developing our manufacturing industries. This cannot include, in the long term, those industries in which the low labour costs of populous nations, such as China and India, give them a competitive advantage which can only be countered through the protective mechanisms of trade barriers. Rather, we need to invest in capital-intensive, high skill, high wage industries of the future, as well as in those industries, the maintenance of which are determined as being critical to the national interest. Success in these fields will demand a highly skilled workforce and a dramatically increased emphasis on education. Aspiring to prosperity through the development of skill-based industries is clearly doomed to failure without a

full commitment by government to build a workforce which values, which is keen to acquire and which acquires those skills. A government that talks a big game in terms of high-skilled industries but does not back it up with world-class training is not only deluding itself but, worse, deluding its people.

Thirdly, education: Education is the means by which working people and their children may improve their material lot. The provision of quality, free education to the people of the state is one of the most important duties of the state government, and one on which it should be judged. In that regard, there needs to be an emphasis on the quality of outcomes. A government that provides the mere opportunity of time served in an inadequate education system is not nearly good enough. Western Australian children need to be schooled in the basics of literacy and numeracy, and have a thorough understanding of the history of western civilisation and their place in it, as well as the philosophical foundations upon which that civilisation is built. Vocational education needs to rigorously prepare people for the world of work and provide them with the tools, both practical and theoretical, to not merely take their place in the workforce but to make Australian industry internationally competitive. These objectives are only achievable through the setting of high standards, and transparent and objective assessments.

Beyond those educational services provided by the government, Western Australians deserve choice. A vibrant private education sector can provide benchmarks against which the success of public education can be assessed. Private education can provide a further educational dimension that would be inappropriate within a secular system. There is a real and growing demand for this further dimension within the Western Australian community. This is particularly, but not exclusively, true of parents who seek an overtly Christian education for their children. Parents deserve this right and this choice. Government funding of private education is a recognition of the right of the child to enjoy state educational support. The state also benefits through a lower cost to the government, rather than education in the public education system, given the voluntary additional costs borne directly by parents.

The government can also support parental choice in another important way free of cost; that is, by ensuring that the law in no way impairs the right of private educational institutions to hire only those people who promote and embody the standards promoted by the institution. If parents are attracted to an institution by virtue of the principles it espouses, then such an institution needs to be free to hire staff who live up to those principles. As long as the principles themselves are not unlawful, there should be no impediment to the institution requiring adherence to them by staff. To the extent that the application of such criteria requires discrimination, such discrimination shall not be unlawful. This principle is relevant to education, but also relevant to the private health services and to other services in which dedicated people, acting in accordance with sincerely held beliefs, are called to offer services to the public.

Fourthly, multiculturalism: Leaving aside our Indigenous population, Australia is a nation of migrants. For most of the last 221 years, these migrants came principally from the United Kingdom, and, in doing so, established Australia's character; its Constitution and laws; its parliamentary democracy; its freedom of speech and religion; and its tolerance and equality. In short, they established the dominant Australian culture.

I did not leave China in order to embrace my Chineseness; I left China to embrace Australia, to embrace its culture and values, and to become an Australian citizen. I am proud to have done so. I am even more proud of the fact that Australians have embraced me back and delivered me to this place just 18 years after my arrival.

That said, I view the Australian culture as dynamic and evolving, not forever frozen in the image of a poem by Banjo Patterson or Henry Lawson. That Australian culture stands to be further enriched by absorbing into itself the best of what our new Australians bring with them offers us only a better future, and in no way detracts from the worth of the values upon which our nation was founded. These benefits are merely those that flow from integration, and it is integration that must form the basis of any meaningful multiculturalism—a multiculturalism which enriches rather than challenges the dominant culture.

In his thought-provoking book, *Beyond Right and Left*, lapsed communist David McKnight, postulated two models of multiculturalism—a hybridising model, and a mosaic model. The mosaic model, he argued, represents a celebration of separation which rejects shared values and encourages seeing individuals as being representatives of a group. This is a fertile ground for racism. Hybridisation celebrates the mixing of cultures from which new syntheses emerge. Mr McKnight argued that politically exploiting ethnic groupings has inherent attractions for political parties. My experience as a migrant leads me to promote, both to our state and to our migrant population, a vision of multiculturalism of value to both, and which has as its foundation the concept of integration. Australia will benefit most from its migrant population, and our migrants will benefit most from their new country, if each embraces the other. A multiculturalism which sets itself against social cohesion deserves to fail, but a multiculturalism which has as its objective social cohesion can only succeed.

As the first Chinese-born member of this house, I understand the opportunity which I have and the obligation which I have to be a role model for integration. By my example, I can demonstrate to those who are among the

newest and most obviously different of our migrant population just how open and accepting Australian society is to new arrivals who make a strong commitment to their new country. I will do my best to reach out to our growing communities of Asian origin to encourage their involvement in every aspect of our society. Western Australia can only benefit from that involvement.

Fifthly, the trade union movement: On arriving in Western Australia, I worked long hours for low wages in an un-unionised segment of the hospitality industry. It was only when I moved to work with hundreds of other mainly migrant workers in the poultry industry that I first came into contact with the work of the trade union movement. At Steggles, we enjoyed among the highest base rates in the poultry industry in Australia. There was an emphasis on health and safety, regular meal and rest breaks, overtime pay for work outside ordinary working hours, superannuation and the usual wide array of working conditions which workers in unionised places, and through them most workers, take for granted.

The vital role of the trade union movement was understood by the Australian people when they totally rejected the WorkChoices system of individual contracts of employment and recognised the inherent unfairness of a system which leaves the individual worker alone and unassisted to deal with an employer offering employment on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Australians just know that this is unfair. By rejecting this system, and the government and the Prime Minister who proposed it, Australians demonstrated their heartfelt belief in the value of collective negotiations.

It is the trade union movement that provides workers with the means of a collective approach to industrial negotiations. The trade union movement is the manifestation of Australians' commitment to a fair go. It is also the bedrock of democracy among Australian institutions. The work of trade unions continues to be relevant to the day-to-day lives of working Australians and their families and, through their democratic structures, provides the means for working people to play an active role in the governance of an institution established for the sole purpose of being of service to them.

Coming from China, my observation of the work of the trade union movement has been a real eye-opener. There is no free trade union movement in China. To me, a free trade union movement is a hallmark of democracy. It is a litmus of a free society—a symbol of liberty and justice. We should be proud of the Australian trade union movement. We should not be apathetic to its future. We should act to safeguard and positively promote it. We should ensure that workers are genuinely free to join and be active in their unions, and provide unions with organising rights, rights of entry, rights of inspection and access to conciliation and arbitration to assist in the resolution of industrial disputes. Trade unions are not just a part of Australia's proud history; they are a vital part of our future, and part of our commitment to freedom, democracy and justice.

Finally, family: Nothing is more precious to the Chinese than family. We understand the nuclear family; we understand the extended family. We understand that family matters most. It is in the family that the next generation is born and nurtured. It is the family which inculcates values and produces quality citizens. Problems in society—problems with which governments strive to deal but often fail to resolve—are symptoms of problems within families. Building strong families results in building a better society. To do so we need to get the basics right. Respect for families means respect for life. Respect for families means respect for marriage. The concepts associated with family life do not come much more fundamental than that, yet we live in a society in which the family is so threatened that even these fundamental concepts are not universally agreed. The family may be a resilient institution, but it is not indestructible. It is under threat from the cult of the individual from selfishness, greed and materialism replacing compassion, generosity and service. The family will always find a defender in me. As we review the social impact of legislation that comes before us, I will always be arguing for those measures that improve the role and lot of families and against those who would weaken them.

In closing, Mr President, there are a number of people to whom I need to express my gratitude for the support which they have offered to me during my campaign for Labor preselection and subsequently. I have enjoyed the benefit of the support of a number of significant trade unions. In particular, I wish to thank Jim McGivern from the powerful Transport Workers Union and Tim Daly and Stephen Price from the Australian Workers' Union. They supported my candidacy from the outset, and their support was unwavering. Kevin Reynolds from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union waxed and waned in his support but came good when it counted. I also wish to thank former Premier Alan Carpenter, and Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union secretary, Dave Kelly. It is true that they were initially ambivalent with respect to my candidacy but, once convinced, never looked back. Knowing that I had won their support was of great encouragement to me.

Among the members of Parliament, Hon Kate Doust and Hon Ed Dermer have been solid supporters and good friends. In the lower house, the then party secretary Bill Johnston and “Mr Mindarie”, John Quigley, have been of constant assistance to me. Since my election, MLAs from the Mining and Pastoral Region, Tom Stephens and Vince Catania, have been not only welcoming, but also have offered me every assistance in coming to terms

with my new responsibilities in the region. In addition, I was buoyed by the charm and encouragement of former Fremantle MLA and Labor leader Jim McGinty, who went out of his way to make me feel comfortable.

Finally, I need to thank my husband of 15 years, Joe Bullock. He was vehemently opposed to my desire to enter Parliament and tried his best to dissuade me. When I convinced him that this was something that I really wanted to do, he put his full support behind me. No-one could ask for a better advocate than Joe Bullock. He just never stops and never gives in. Shop assistants have enjoyed the benefit of his work on their behalf for over 30 years—80 hours a week, 51 weeks a year. Union members may not realise what a treasure they have in Joe but I do. While I am proud of what I have been able to make of the opportunities afforded to me by my new country, I could not have done it without him.

Mr President, that is my maiden speech. It is something that I have been dreading for eight months. Now that it is done, I am ready to get on with my new job of representing the interests of the people of the Mining and Pastoral Region.

[Applause.]

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Norman Moore (Leader of the House)**.