

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Amendment to Motion

Resumed from 2 August after the following amendment had been moved by Hon George Cash -

That the following words be added to the motion -

but regret to inform Your Excellency that the Government has failed to adequately address a number of serious issues affecting Western Australia

HON ROBYN McSWEENEY (South West) [4.34 pm]: Last Thursday when I walked into the Chamber, I looked over at your side of the House, Mr President, and saw that some members were wearing pretty pink ribbons in their buttonholes. Nobody on my side was wearing them nor were any One Nation members. I thought we had missed out on making a donation. A pink ribbon is the symbol attached to donations to the Cancer Foundation to assist patients who have had breasts removed. I also wondered whether we had missed out on making a donation to the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children or the Save the Children Fund.

I have led a sheltered life, so I asked one of my colleagues the reason for the pink ribbons. I was told that they were being worn to mark the fact that 47 recommendations had been tabled in the lower House. Much to my amusement, I remembered that I was wearing a pink jumper. I want to inform the other side of the House that my jumper was randomly selected and I like the colour pink. I looked over and Hon Nick Griffiths had a pretty rose in his buttonhole. I gestured to Hon Kim Chance because he did not appear to be wearing one. I thought we both liked pink. Now I understand.

Much is being made of homosexuality and gay law reform. A brilliant letter, from a lady called Agatha Armstrong was recently published in *The West Australian*, and states -

I cannot believe that Electoral Affairs Minister Jim McGinty has pushed ahead with the move to lower the age of consent from 21 to 16 without public debate.

Are our young people being sold over the trade-off deal for more votes from the Greens (WA) and the gay and lesbian community?

What about the everyday, ordinary community? Did we get an opportunity to submit a 200-page report to get our views across? No. We are too busy caring for these 16 and 17-year-old children - taking them to high school, sporting fixtures, the dentist, school functions and their first ball. Some parents are taking them to hospitals, mental institutions and drug rehabilitation centres because these children cannot cope with the demands placed on them.

Has there been a study done in our schools to ask our young people what they think? Have we consulted those who work with young people, school principals for example?

These young people are a vulnerable minority who are being exploited at the hands of the politicians and the gay and lesbian community. How many of our young people will end up involved in this community because of abuse and distorted sexuality? What about those angry young people who will resort to crime and drugs because of the overwhelming exploitation of their lives? They too would not be allowed to grow up in a normal environment.

Please, I ask that this decision should have much more public input from those who are involved with these children's lives. I presume that most politicians' children are grown up or away at boarding school and most gay couples do not have children and would not understand the problems a 16-year-old would face during his or her developmental stage at high school. If they did they would know that our young people need to be protected and allowed to be adolescents. The challenges of adulthood come soon enough when they leave high school at 17.

That was an excellent letter. I worked in the child protection area and under the Child Welfare Act anyone under the age of 18 is a child. My aim, in everything I have done, is to protect children. I am concerned about these recommendations. I see three fathers sitting on the government frontbench. I wonder, when those ministers sit down with their kids, how they can let some of these recommendations go through. Those ministers are good, decent, family men, so it is hard for me to look at them and to understand why this is happening. It does not rest easy with me. I will leave it there.

The second part of my speech relates to the Kids Help Line in Western Australia. The Kids Help Line was started by Stanley Jaraj, who saw a need for an Australia-wide help line for children under 18 years of age. The Kids Help Line caller profiles show that during 2000, its counsellors responded to 3 987 counselling calls and 3 533 non-counselling calls from young people who said they lived in Western Australia. Given that 40 per cent of callers choose not to reveal their location, these figures are significant understatements. Western Australia

accounts for almost 10 per cent of Australia's five to 18-year-old client group. During 2000, children and young people in Western Australia represented 7.3 per cent of all counselling calls nationally. Help Line's caller profile and information on what these children called about will give members an overview of the situation in Western Australia and the reasons that under-18-year-olds telephone the service. In the five to nine-year-old age group, eight per cent of calls came from Western Australia, between the ages of 10 and 14, 54 per cent of calls came from Western Australia, and between the ages of 15 to 18, 38 per cent of calls came from Western Australia. Children in the tender age group of 10 to 14 years made over half of the calls. Counsellors recorded the young person's nationality for 22 per cent of calls. While 79 per cent of the Western Australian callers were of Anglo Australian background, a significant number - 11 per cent - were Aboriginal. Thirty-eight per cent of calls were about interpersonal relationships. Almost 21 per cent of calls from Western Australia related to family relationship issues, which was 10 per cent greater than the national figure. Of the 819 young people who phoned about their family, 12 per cent were worried about a family member and 27 per cent talked about occasional family conflict or disruption; and a further 41 per cent of callers were concerned about frequent or major family conflicts or disruption, with 20 per cent of callers experiencing family breakdown, separation or divorce. The proportion of calls about relationships with friends has fluctuated over the years. In 2000, these calls amounted to 18 per cent, which is above the national average.

Over the past three years, the rate of calls from WA concerning bullying has increased. Bullying in schools is an important issue. I have not seen anything eventuate from Labor Party policy on bullying, but I would like to see something. Bullying now accounts for 6.9 per cent of calls; 94 per cent of callers have been bullied at least once, with the 42 per cent of these experiencing episodic incidents of bullying. Just over three-quarters of calls on bullying were made by children in the 10 to 14 age group; and 12 per cent were about intimate relationships and pregnancy. In my area of child abuse - I say "my area" because I worked in that field for many years in the south west - the proportion of calls about child abuse from Western Australia has steadily decreased over the past four years. That is a good thing. It reduced from 8.1 per cent in 1997 to 4.8 per cent in 2000. Almost 84 per cent of child abuse calls received in 2000 concerned physical or sexual abuse. Seventy-four per cent of callers who phoned about physical abuse stated they were victims of occasional or regular abuse. A further four per cent reported they were at risk of injury or harm at the time of their call. Children younger than 15 years of age made 71 per cent of the calls concerning physical abuse, whereas the figure for sexual abuse is 84 per cent. That is far too high. The majority of children and young people - 82 per cent - who phoned about sexual abuse stated that they had been sexually abused at least once, with six per cent reporting the abuse occurred on a regular basis. For 89 per cent of these callers, the abuse was not current, but issues resulting from the abuse were unresolved.

In the regional breakdown, more than two-thirds of callers were from metropolitan Western Australia. A further 13 per cent of young people were located in rural towns, while 19 per cent were identified as living in remote locations. Unfortunately, I do not have a breakdown of figures across the Perth metropolitan area. The Kids Help Line is a necessary instrument. If nobody else is at home, at least the kids can reach a counsellor on the other end of the phone. What is great about the Kids Help Line is that there is always somebody at the end of the phone to listen to these kids.

I will now talk a little about my area in the south west. The Labor Party has stopped logging in this area. If the Labor Party cannot feel the pain of the 95 families who do not have a job any more they should not be sitting on the government benches. I can see that only a couple of members opposite are listening. This letter was written soon after the Labor Party was elected. It is addressed to the Minister for the Environment, Dr Edwards. It reads

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I am deeply concerned about the future of my family over your decision to abruptly close logging in mature forests.

I am at present, a faller, and have been one all my adult life, during which time I have raised my family and purchased first a house and now a business in Northcliffe.

My wife and I own a Bed and Breakfast, five bedroom complex about five kms out of Northcliffe. The object of purchasing this was to provide me and my family with an income on retirement and a home for my family.

At present I have a son in Agricultural College and my wife and eldest son are working full time at the mill in Pemberton to sustain the repayments on the B & B, because, let me assure you, the flood of tourists promised after the R.F.A. backflip are a long time in coming, and without the income from the falling job, there is no hope of meeting the repayments to retain the B & B.

My family are Group Settlers who came to Northcliffe in the 1920's and raised a large family here. The difficulties of the Group Settlers are well documented but my Grandparents were able to raise eight children, retain their property, feed and educate their large family, by having the timber industry to

provide jobs for the sons and put bread and butter on the table so that they could work like dogs for the remaining hours.

The Timber Industry has been very good to Northcliffe. It is my firm belief that it is a strong, sustainable industry, much maligned in the press and the misinformation spread by the Greens has been out of order.

I invite you and any of your colleagues to come down to Northcliffe and see for yourself. This same invitation has been extended to hundreds of high profile persons with little working knowledge of the forest, but they never have the good manners or the good sense to respond.

You are making huge decisions which directly impact on my family and myself based on a great deal of misinformation. There are many people who know timber and its qualities and their opinions are neither sought or developed and most certainly not published in the state wide media.

There are many tourist operators in the same position as myself. It is full-time jobs that support such operators. Tourism is part-time and needs a full pay packet to support it. I cannot see this changing in the future.

If members sitting on the other side of the House cannot feel this man's pain, they should not be sitting there.

I want to quote something else. It is a little rude, Mr President, but I think you will allow me to read it, because this more than anything shows what these timber workers are feeling at the moment. It states -

A little plan for a shafted man

Loggers, Workers, Foresters, I'm sorry to be crude,
But it seems despite the RFA, You've been well and trully screwed.
I'd hate to see you sitting 'round, crying in your beer, so
I've come up with some little plans that may bring you some cheer.

First, get yourself onto the dole and check out every rort,
Then get your partner pregnant to gain some child support.
Benefits and health care cards are probably worth a try,
Get into the system mate, and bleed the barstards dry!.

Grow a head of dreadlocks, and never have a shave,
Give up showers and bathing, think of the dough you will save!
Dress yourself from Vinnies, and buy some bongo drums,
Then sit down on your backside until the dole cheque comes!.

Get yourself a Kombie, take the family, dog and all,
Chain it firmly to a pole in the Hay Street Mall.
Since the city's found it's conscience, They're sure to let you stay,
But give Mick or Liz a call if there's a problem on the way!.

Or come back to the South, my son, and live a life of ease,
We all know there's a lot more in the forest than the trees.
So, go into the Old Growth, and pick a crop of stash,
Smoke a bit, and keep a bit and sell the rest for cash!.

Go down the beach and surf, or cast a line or two,
But better make it quick, 'cos there's more in store for you!
I've seen the Greenies plan, and I know their list of wishes,
Now they've saved the forest, they're after old growth fishes!!.

So Workers, Millers, Foresters, things look pretty black,
It's hard to keep your chin up with those knives stuck in your back.
It shows we should be carefull when making our selection,
I'll be voting "trustworthy" at the next election.

We know good forest management helps the forest thrive,
It's what you know and what you do that helps it to survive.
I wonder if the Greenies will be pleased with what they've got,
As they sit there in the old growth and watch it slowly rot!!.

That refers to my constituents in the south west, and they are not very happy at the moment.

I have looked through the analysis of public submissions to the Regional Forest Agreement on the social and economic issues. It seems that many of the things that were said in those submissions are coming through loud and clear. When Judy Edwards released her policy on the national park at Walpole, I wondered about the wildflower industry. Did she give any thought to the 600 wildflower pickers who go into the national park and whose livelihood relies on picking flowers for marketing? I have heard that the Shire of Manjimup first learnt about the locking up of the national park at Walpole when the Press released the news. There was no consultation - nothing. I thought that the first thing the Labor Party would do was speak to the Shire of Manjimup, which encompasses Walpole, Northcliffe, Pemberton and Manjimup. The summary of comment in the analysis of public submissions states -

Resource security will provide job security for timber workers . . . Tourism can't compensate for timber job losses . . . Vast areas of plantation would be needed to replace native forest timber jobs with plantation jobs . . . Concerned about flow-on effects of timber job losses . . . Concerned that ex-mill gate socio-economic impact study has not yet been released . . . Greater economic benefits will flow from multi-use of forests . . .

What forests and what multi-use? They have all been locked up. It continues -

Forest reservations should be considered by shire not by forest type to take into account concerns about community viability . . . Concern for the viability of Manjimup.

That gets back to the fact that there has been no consultation. The Labor Party must not like consultation with shire councils. On the subject of the concern for the viability of Manjimup, seven small businesses are now teetering on the brink of closure. That is apart from the breadwinners of 95 families who are out of a job and the 100 more who are expected to be out of a job. Therefore, those people were not far wrong when those comments were made in May 1999. The summary of comment also states -

A reduction in timber industry employment would result in school closures and restricted curriculums in those remaining open.

The technical and further education college in Manjimup, which services the whole area, has already been downgraded. It continues -

Concerned about the potential impact of sawlog and woodchip quota reductions or mill closures on the viability of small businesses.

One of my friends owns a small mill, which he keeps viable at 5 400 cubic metres. He has been told that he will probably be allocated 1 200 cubic metres if he is lucky. He is not very happy because his mill has been open for 70 years, and he has employed at least 10 or 12 people in the town of Yornup. It continues -

Timber towns are dependent on the timber industry hence fear the flow on effects of further job losses such as the closure of schools, police stations, banks and small businesses, and a decline in property values.

These issues are all very real to these people. When a decision is made, it is fair enough to say that the forests will be locked up. The Labor Party obviously thinks that is fair enough. I do not think the minister was present when I said previously that if members opposite cannot feel the pain of these people, they do not deserve to be sitting on the front bench or in Parliament. Those people are hurting badly. I have grown up with at least half of them. They come to me and ask me what they should do. What answer should I give them? I do not know what they should do. It makes me feel as miserable as they feel. Something needs to be done quickly in that area. I have heard Hon Kim Chance say that things take a long time, and I understand that. However, I want him to feel what they are feeling.

Hon Kim Chance: Sure.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I do not think Hon Kim Chance was in the Chamber when I read "A little plan for a shafted man", but I will pass it over to him because I want him to read it. It is very good.

Hon Kim Chance: Thank you.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: It seems that I am into the social issues today. However, that is where my passion lies. I saw an article in the *Sunday Times* headed "Pokie ban hits the jackpot". I will deal with some of the social effects of gambling. I do not want poker machines brought into Western Australia, and I hope that the Labor Party does not. I know that it says it does not; however, I keep reading bits and pieces about its wanting to let them into the State.

Hon Kim Chance: Are you aware that the Premier made a clear statement today?

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Yes, I am aware of that, and I was pleased to hear that. However, I point out that the Productivity Commission found that Australians lost \$11 billion as a result of gambling in the past financial year. Eighty per cent of the adult population participated in some form of gambling. Gambling expenditure per capita is estimated at \$400 per annum, which is significantly higher than in the United States at \$170, or in Hong Kong at \$370. It seems that Australians will bet on anything. There are more than 170 000 gaming machines in the country to service a population of 19 million. This is triple the number in Europe, which has a population of 520 million; about 14 times the number in Asia, with a population of 3.6 billion; and twice that of South America, with a population of 339 million. Government income from taxation on gambling profits has almost doubled in the past decade from \$2 billion to \$3.8 billion. One gets an even better indication of the dramatic rise by considering the growth in revenue from electronic gaming machines. In 1987, the revenue was \$377 million. In 1991-92, it had grown to \$430 million, an increase of 13 per cent. By 1999, it had grown to \$1 786 million, an increase of some 400 per cent.

Another aspect of this report dealt with the consequences of compulsive or problem gambling. Around 2.3 per cent of the population - 330 000 people - have significant problems resulting from gambling, with 140 000 experiencing severe problems. The report explained that although 2.3 per cent of the overall population are problem gamblers, 15 per cent or regular non-lottery gamblers can be classified as such; thus, one in six regular gamblers is to some degree compulsive. They account for \$3 billion in losses annually or around one-third of the gambling industry's market. On average they lose \$12 000 each a year compared with \$625 for other gamblers.

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