

Hon Ayor Makur Chuot; Hon Brian Walker; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Alannah MacTiernan;
Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Wilson Tucker; Hon Jackie Jarvis

EDITH COWAN — ELECTION — 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Motion

HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT (North Metropolitan) [11.20 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Legislative Council notes and acknowledges —

- (a) the centenary of the election of the first woman, Edith Cowan, to any Australian Parliament; and
- (b) the significant progress on the status of women in the WA Parliament and in particular the Legislative Council since Edith Cowan's election and recognises the important journey ahead to achieve further equality.

One day after the 100th anniversary of the election of Edith Cowan, my dear friend Caitlin Collins was the 100th woman to be elected to this Parliament, which I was really proud of. Since 1921, 114 women have been elected to this Parliament. We should all be proud of this as well. A record 43 women were elected to the forty-first Parliament. Proudly, I can say that 39 of these women MPs are my colleagues in the great Australian Labor Party. Thirteen of those women are in this chamber, which I am also proud of. In 2021, I was the first South Sudanese woman to be sworn into this Parliament. That is something that everyone in this Parliament should be very proud of. On 19 August, the Legislative Council also welcomed my infant son, Achol. That moment was so emotional for me as a parent and also for the women who fought for that day to happen. My son was not considered to be a stranger in this chamber, which was a very emotional moment for many women. I am so proud of all those who fought for the day when all women and children were welcome to come to this chamber and our Parliament. Further progress has happened in this Parliament that we should also be proud of, and that was the opening of the new family room. That is another great initiative that recognises the demands on parents, and particularly those with younger families, who otherwise miss out on valuable time with their children during the long sitting days. It is a further acknowledgement of the value of mothers in this place at the table of politics. It was not this way a long time ago. We should be proud of the changes that have happened.

WA's first female Premier was Carmen Lawrence. She said —

“100 years seems like a very long time to achieve parity, but on the other hand, for the first 50 of those years, nothing much happened.

In 1894, for the first time in Australia, South Australian women gained the right to vote and to stand for election, but it took six decades for the election of a woman to be achieved there. We did not wait quite so long in Western Australia. Women gained the right to vote in 1899, but they could not stand for election until 1920. In 1921, Edith Cowan won the seat of West Perth. She was voted in by 46 votes and joined the Legislative Assembly, where she was jeered and ignored by male members. The Parliament did not welcome her like I was welcomed! She stood confidently because she knew what she was fighting for. The drive for her was to improve the lives of women and children through our Parliament.

Her other motivations came through her personal journey. The death of her mother in childbirth really motivated Edith Cowan. Another motivation that came along the way was when her stepmother was murdered by her father. These events affected Edith Cowan deeply. She understood women's suffering, what the power of representation meant to women and the importance of having choices to determine your own life.

In short, the personal became political for Edith Cowan and many other women who would thereafter strive to be heard for preselection, election and longevity in politics, but who would often fail not because they lacked merit, but, rather, because they lacked opportunities. Some, however, made it through the obstacles and contributed to lasting social progress.

The progress in the Western Australian Parliament started between 1921 and 1983—that is 62 years—when only eight women were elected to Parliament, with four in each house. This did not include minority women. For decades, Indigenous Australians, Asians, Africans and those from the Pacific Islands, except for New Zealand, were excluded from the democracy. Even though Indigenous Australians gained the right to vote in 1962, multiculturalism took off following the Second World War and women parliamentarians gained leadership roles in the 1980s, it would not be until the turn of the century that minority women began to appear in Parliament. In the 2000s, minority women began to take their rightful seats at the table, much through the efforts of the Australian Labor Party. I am proud of the Labor Party.

The following brief overview may give us an appreciation of how far we have come as women and as women from diverse backgrounds. To these firsts we are indebted. Elected in 1925, and following in her father's footsteps, May Holman was the first Australian female Labor politician. She was elected to the seat of Forrest and was the second woman after Edith Cowan to become a parliamentarian. May served for 10 years. Elected in 1954, Ruby Hutchison was the first female elected to the Legislative Council. She remained the only woman MLC

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throughout her 17-year term. In 1971, when Lyla Elliott was elected to the seat of North-East Metropolitan Region, she was the only woman member in the Legislative Council. Several women were elected to Parliaments around Australia during the 1980s.

In Western Australia in 1986, Pamela Beggs and Kay Hallahan became the first women selected for cabinet postings. In 1990, Carmen Lawrence became Australia's first female Premier, serving from 1990 to 1993. Dr Lawrence said that the first thing she did as Premier was to change the sitting hours to make them more family friendly. That is something that is very important to me. She said that the first thing the next Premier did was to revert to those late nights. In 1996, Ljiljanna Ravlich was the first woman member of the Western Australian Parliament born in a non-English speaking country, being born in Split, Croatia. In 2001, Carol Martin became the first Indigenous woman member of the Western Australian Parliament when she was elected. In 2009, Helen Hui Bullock became the first Chinese-born woman elected. Notably, by 2013, Hon Alannah MacTiernan had served at the local, state and federal levels, which we should be proud of. In 2017, Hon Sue Ellery became the first woman to be the Leader of the House in Western Australia, something that we should be proud of.

In 2021, I became the first South Sudanese woman to be elected to a Parliament in Australia. I am proud of this moment, as a woman who grew up in between countries, was born in a refugee camp, and came to Australia on a humanitarian visa when I was only 15 years old. I did not speak much English, and I had no formal education, yet I am here. I am the "possibility" that the courageous women who came before dreamt about. They believed in fairness and opportunity in Australia and Western Australia, and in wider society. If you are a woman who wants to follow your passion and seek to change society for the better, my standing here tells you that you can, too—well, you can if you are a member of the Labor Party.

I turn now to the journey ahead to achieve equality. I arrived in this chamber as a result of the Labor Party's commitment to affirmative action. I will share these words from my dear mentor Janine Freeman, the former member for Mirrabooka —

When anyone questions the value of targets for women in Parliament, they will have to question the value of my contribution, as I am proudly the result of many women and supportive men ensuring that women like me stand in this place.

I will add that I have merit, as does Dr Anne Aly, the first Muslim woman to be elected to the federal Parliament, and the other women who have come before me. There have been a lot of changes. I am proud to say that as a result, in Western Australia some 25 years on, women have won 27 of the 53 Labor Party seats. That is 52 per cent. We now have the first woman Speaker of the WA Legislative Assembly, Hon Michelle Roberts, MLA. We also have the second woman to be President of the WA Legislative Council, Hon Alanna Clohesy, MLC. Women also occupy five out of the 14 cabinet positions.

As we know, equality is not simply having the "correct" percentage of women in Parliament. The quality of representation matters, too. Our Parliament needs to be more diverse among all the political parties, not just the Labor Party, so that it truly lives up to being a representative democracy. Our parliamentary discourse will then reflect the ideas and experiences of the full community.

Currently, the McGowan government is working at engaging even more women of diversity: women of colour, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women from the LGBTIQ+ community, women living with disability and neuro-diverse women, young women, senior women, and others. We want to see more women of diversity in this Parliament. We value their contributions in caucus, in cabinet, on committees, in electorate offices, in departments, and in corporate and commercial workplaces.

The McGowan government has progressed a number of initiatives to improve gender equality and empower women. I commend the McGowan government, and particularly Hon Simone McGurk, MLA, Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services for working on Western Australia's first long-term plan for gender equality, *Stronger together: WA's plan for gender equality*. That plan will provide the framework for coordinated action by government, businesses, organisations and individuals with the aim of advancing gender equality over the next 10 years. Women and girls in Western Australia deserve to live and work safely in a community in which diversity is embraced and access to rights, resources, opportunities and protections is not determined by gender. Equality with even greater diversity is the journey ahead for this Parliament. Thank you.

Members: Hear, hear!

HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [11.34 am]: I rise on behalf of Legalise Cannabis WA to thank the member very much indeed for bringing this motion and to support it. I have just a few words here, but first of all I will say that what we have in Hon Ayor Makur Chuot—I really have to learn how to say your name, because it is just respectful to say names properly, is it not?—is another leader. One hundred years ago, Edith Cowan set the pathway, if you like, and it is an ongoing pathway. I really love to see what is happening, because if we look across the chamber, not party sides, but in that half of the chamber we have two men and the rest are women. That is

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fantastic. Of course, if everyone were sitting down, it would perhaps be a little bit different, but that is a wonderful representation of what is happening in the Labor Party. I could say we are half and half here, but that is maybe just fate. Yes, I do do what I am told, do I not! The member also set the pathway by bringing her little child in. That was a beautiful moment, and I hope we can see more of that in the future. Progress is being made in all directions.

The only comment I have to make is not a criticism at all, but to add a name to the list the member gave, and that is Elizabeth Clapham. She was elected to local government in Cottesloe a few months before Edith Cowan came into this Parliament. She was the first woman. She led the way and she lies now in an unmarked grave in Karrakatta. They took away her headstone because she was not seen as fit to be represented as a leader, much like Edith Cowan. That is something I regret. I would like everyone who has led the way to be recognised as a leader and honourably remembered in history as it goes down, because she was technically the first, although Edith Cowan is the leading light, of course. I thank the member for her contribution.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Are you saying her headstone was actually taken away?

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: It was taken away, because Karrakatta is removing headstones. It is hoping to reorganise the cemetery. The same is true of the veterans who have given their lives for our country. That is one example. I would like very much for that to be different. Maybe we could support the re-erection of that headstone to give a memorial to a leading light for feminism, and women leading our society, as indeed they always have done. They are the mothers; they are the ones who give life; they are the ones who educate us; and they are, in fact, the leaders. Thank you.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin): I give the call to Hon Donna Faragher.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: That's very unorthodox!

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Excuse me. Honourable member, I gave the call to the person who rose. There was some delay in that. I have given the call to Hon Donna Faragher. Thank you.

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan) [11.37 am]: Thank you, Acting President. I note that I was the one who actually stood up. Anyway, I will keep my comments short to enable others to speak as well. Having said that, I think it is disappointing to not allow a member of the Liberal Party to speak on a motion with regard to women, minister.

Hon Dan Caddy interjected.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: You need to be quiet, as well.

I acknowledge the motion that has been moved. I had thought that this was going to be a positive motion, but that is not what I have just seen. I, too, wish to recognise that this year does indeed mark the centenary of the election of the first woman to any Australian Parliament, that woman being Edith Cowan. I think that we as Western Australians should be very proud of that achievement. I certainly agree with the mover of the motion, and, indeed, the second part of the motion, that there has been significant progress on the status of women in the Western Australian Parliament of all political persuasions since Edith Cowan's first election to the Legislative Assembly back on 12 March 1921.

When we think about how far we have come today compared with what Edith Cowan would have faced when she first entered this place back in 1921, the differences are clear and stark. I acknowledge the education office for the play that it put on to mark the centenary of Edith Cowan. I thought it was excellent for not only members of Parliament but also members of the community to be able to see. Indeed, many of the women who have entered this place have brought with them a depth of experience, interests and talent. We also have members with a diversity of backgrounds and ages, which is important. As a Parliament, although we can reflect on those members who are here now, as has already been mentioned, this motion perhaps lends itself to reflect on women who have served with distinction and who have also been trailblazers, if I can put it that way, in their own right, long before any one of us sat in this place.

I was away sick yesterday, so I saw the motion only this morning. As soon as I saw it, I asked the Parliamentary Library for an update on its publication, *Women MPs in the Parliament of Western Australia: Firsts*. The library releases that document regularly. It goes for pages, which is something that we should acknowledge. We have heard about what some female members of Parliament have achieved. For example, Florence Cardell-Oliver became Australia's first female cabinet minister on 7 October 1949 when she became the Minister for Health, Supply and Shipping. Dr Elizabeth Constable was the first female Independent member to become a cabinet member. When Cheryl Edwardes, the member for Kingsley, was appointed as the Attorney General back in 1983, she became the first woman to hold the position in Western Australia and Australia. Of course, Hon Kate Doust was the first woman elected as President of the Legislative Council of Western Australia back in 2017, and she did an outstanding job. Hon Sue Ellery was the first woman to hold the position of Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the House in this place. That is a great achievement.

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We also have other achievers, both in this house and outside. I want to recognise the late Jaye Radisich, who was at university at the same time as me. She became the youngest woman to have entered the Western Australian Parliament, at the age of 24. Louise Pratt, a former member of this house, was the youngest woman MLC to have been elected, at the age of 29. I think she pipped me at the post because I also entered this place at the age of 29. I, too, am in the record books as being the youngest Liberal woman to have entered either this house or the other place when I was elected in 2005. Equally, I remain the youngest female member in WA's political history to have entered state cabinet just two weeks after turning 33, when I became the Minister for the Environment; Youth.

Do I believe that more can and should be done to increase female participation? Of course I do. Certainly, there have been changes, some significant, since I first entered this place back in 2005. When I look at my term so far, I would like to think that all members, irrespective of whether they are male or female, will look back on their time in this place and what they have achieved. I entered this place, engaged, at the age of 29 as Hon Donna Taylor and I will leave as Hon Donna Faragher. I have had the privilege of being a minister on two occasions—Minister for the Environment; Youth, and Minister for Planning; Disability Services. I have been a parliamentary secretary, I have served on various committees and I have had the privilege, most importantly, of being a member of the East Metropolitan Region for 16 years. All the while, I have had two beautiful children—Clare and Harry, in 2010 and 2013 respectively. I am pleased to see over that period of time the number of women of all different ages entering Parliament at all different periods of their lives, some who have already had children, some who may have children at some point and those who have children while they are here. I think that is a very good thing.

In talking to this motion today, my strong view is that Parliament is the best it can be when its membership is diverse. That diversity of members relates to not only their gender, but also their background, interests, age and experience. I recognise very much the role of women and the advancements that we have seen over many years. I would like to think that I, along with all female members in this place, am a part of that.

In conclusion, given that the motion reflects particularly on Edith Cowan, I want to refer to a book that many members would know that was written by David Black and Harry Phillips, *Making a Difference — A Frontier of Firsts: Women in the Western Australia Parliament 1921–2012*. I recommend that members read this large book. It provides an opportunity for members of Parliament and the general community to read about female members of Parliament and not only their general background, but also, in their words, what they have undertaken and why they wanted to enter this place. I will quote from the part of the book about the first four women in Parliament. It states —

Despite the delay in the opportunity for women to sit in the Western Australian Parliament, the breakthrough of Edith Cowan in 1921 to be elected the Legislative Assembly for the West Perth seat attracted nationwide attention and helped cultivate Western Australia's reputation as a pioneer of women's parliamentary representation. Benefiting from the multiple endorsement strategy of the then Nationalist (formerly Liberal) Party, under the preference (alternative) voting system, the weekly *Western Mail* described Cowan as 'the spokesperson of a school of thought which has an undeniable right to representation in the legislature [with a] record of honorary social services'. Nevertheless, the authoritative *Melbourne Age* considered —

This one is interesting —

a 'Parliament composed wholly or mainly of women politicians is not a prospect to be regarded with enthusiasm'. Cowan had primarily sought election because she held the view that the domestic and social legislation of the state had not been given enough attention in the post-war reconstruction period. Women, in her view, could 'make a difference' to help alleviate this problem.

She was right.

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [11.47 am]: I rise to support the motion that the Legislative Council notes the centenary of the election of the first woman, Edith Cowan, to any Australian Parliament, and that the Legislative Council acknowledges the significant progress on the status of women in the Western Australian Parliament, in particular the Legislative Council, since Edith Cowan's election, and recognises the important journey ahead to achieve further equality.

Shortly after I was elected to the Legislative Council, but before I was sworn in, we attended some training in Perth, a lot of which, I have to confess, sounded a bit like gobbledegook. It was information overload and until one is actually on the ground and participating in these things, not a lot of it makes a great deal of sense. At the end of participating in one of these training sessions, I decided to reward myself with an ice cream, which is one of life's little pleasures. I went to one of my favourite ice cream shops in Perth and I sat down. It was filled with young people and sitting alongside me were two young women who were engrossed in their conversation. I must confess that I am quite fond of listening in on people's conversations. I do not know if that is something that I should confess to, but I find my fellow human beings fascinating. I am always interested in what interests them and what they are talking about. I was sitting and listening to these young people. I work with young people so I am always really

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interested to know what drives them and interests them. These young ladies sitting next to me were also enjoying their ice cream and talking about their important journey ahead, their careers, their subject choices and where they might be heading in the future. These young women were talking about how they would love to enter politics, the different parties and the things that they would like to achieve if they were in politics. I have to confess it was the most delicious ice cream that I have ever consumed. I was sitting there listening to these young women talking about politics as though it is a genuinely unfettered opportunity for them. It never even crossed their minds that there would be some sort of roadblock or something standing in their way to prevent this being a choice for them. That is the legacy of the 100 years since Edith Cowan was elected. All the women who have come before us and those who continue to stand up and put their names and themselves forward as candidates, elected or not, who go through that process and say, “I want to be a leader in my community”, paves the way for young people like those who were sitting beside me in the ice cream shop enjoying a conversation about the journey ahead for them.

Parliament at its very core is underpinned by the notion of representation. We are a representative democracy. It is beholden on all parties that to be part of that democracy they ensure that the candidates they put forward are truly representative. Women belong in all places where decisions are made, to paraphrase and slightly misquote the very famous Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who passed away last year. They belong in local shires and councils, state and federal governments, at executive levels, at CEO levels and across all industries. This is particularly important in Western Australia where Workplace Gender Equality Agency data recently identified that WA still has the most significant gender pay gap, although that gap has closed slightly, with men out-earning women by about \$23 000 a year. Getting women into high-paying industries like mining is key to achieving that goal. Having women in leadership to help facilitate and create understanding of that information and data is also really important.

I would like to note that WA Labor has been proactive in achieving genuine representation and helping to address some of those issues. As a result of the election of the forty-first Parliament of Western Australia, the Parliament is now made up of 45 per cent women. Fifty-two per cent of the WA Labor caucus are women and 60 per cent of the members of the Legislative Council are women. The mover of our motion, Hon Ayor Makur Chuot, is the first South Sudanese woman to be elected to the Legislative Council. Hon Rosie Sahanna is the first Aboriginal woman to be elected as a member of the Legislative Council. Hon Klara Andric is the first Serbian woman elected to Parliament. The Parliament has achieved comprehensive representation of cultures, backgrounds, values, beliefs, professions and life experiences—all accepted, included and equally valued. That is democracy in action. That is genuine representation. It is a great achievement that WA Labor has laid bare and set the standard for, which leads me to the WA Liberals’ achievement in working towards parity. I would like to dedicate the same amount of time and attention that it has to achieving gender equality. I am done.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [11.53 am]: I really compliment Hon Ayor Makur Chuot for introducing this important motion to the chamber. I think all of us across the chamber want to celebrate the great achievement of Edith Cowan for making that important step forward to ensure that this Parliament started to look something like the community it represented. As we celebrate the arrival of Hon Ayor Makur Chuot into this Parliament, this Parliament takes another step forward to more closely represent the composition of our community. I think this is critically important. If we are to keep democracy alive, the Parliament, the body that represents the people, must reflect that community in its values and social diversity.

It is particularly fitting and appropriate that Hon Ayor Makur Chuot’s contribution today marks another woman. When I first came to this place, I think I was the twenty-sixth woman in Parliament in Western Australia—I may have reflected on this before—and there were four women and 30 men. That was a very, very interesting environment to operate in, particularly being a younger woman facing the attitude of some of the unreconstructed gentlemen in the chamber at the time. I should get myself that little book from which members have quoted of all the first women here. I was the first woman to be thrown out of this Parliament because I took on a gentleman I referred to as the “tumbleweed from Carnarvon” who could not come to terms with the fact that there were going to be women in Parliament and they were not going to be talking just about what they had predetermined as women’s issues.

I think about that, but I look at the travails that Edith Cowan had to sustain. I acknowledge Hon Donna Faragher talking about the play *Edith*. I agree with her that it was a fantastic thing to have that play presented in the Legislative Assembly chamber. We got a little flavour of the quality of some of the males that Edith Cowan shared that chamber with. I was looking through *Hansard* this morning. Edith Cowan was not just a place keeper. She went in there and introduced legislation. She successfully moved a private member’s bill to remove women’s disqualification for entry into the legal profession and other professions. She actually made a very significant change. We can read the debate when she introduced the Women’s Legal Status Bill to see what was going on when she was arguing the case for women to be allowed to be lawyers and doctors and to enter every other profession. Mr Latham said —

Surely you do not want generally to bring women down to the level of men?

Edith Cowan answered —

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No, I want to raise men to the level of women.

As she was talking about how important it was that women be able to do all these things, Mr Davies said —

Do you think it fair that a married woman should hold an hotel license?

Oh, god—shock-horror! “Yes,” said Edith—absolutely. As she was setting out the women who had achieved amazing things, Hon W.C. Angwin said —

Generally those women who possess the greatest qualifications have never been mothers.

Edith Cowan replied that that was not necessarily true and she pointed to women around the world who were able to engage reproductively, as well as take senior positions in professions. Interestingly, it was a sign of how different the times were. It is important to recognise that this was coming out of World War I and there was a massive dislocation. We lost 65 000 men, I think it was, of what one would call a marriageable age, and that was very significant in the population at the time.

Presumably in an attempt to persuade these gentlemen onside, one of the comments that Edith made was —

We must have wider avenues of employment for our women because the men are not marrying.

Obviously, they were confronted by a demographic challenge. Once again, Hon W.C. Angwin made a great contribution to the debate when he said —

Some of them say that is due to women taking their jobs.

When one reads the debates, they can see Mr Davies’ concern that married women were teaching. Edith Cowan pointed out that the only married women who were allowed to teach were widows.

What I would like to reflect on—I think it is relevant in this debate—is the disproportionate distribution of women across this chamber. It is pretty obvious that there are a lot more women on this side of the house than there are on the other side. I want to make this point because it is very important to the culture of politics. We have been hearing about the sandwich makers and a range of other challenges that the more conservative side of politics is having with women in both the federal and state Parliaments. It is my view that we can put all the rules in the world in place to regulate behaviour, but the only thing that will make a change is the numbers. Having talked to the women who were the pioneers of representing the Labor Party in Parliament in the early 1980s, no party was immune. When there is a disproportionate number of men to women, the culture will not be normal; it will be a boarding school culture. The only way we can change that is by getting women into Parliament. The Labor Party recognised that that needed to happen. It recognised that if it wanted to provide proper representation of the community, it needed more women in Parliament. We introduced a quota system. That system was not anti-merit; in fact, it sought to break down the barriers of merit being seen as synonymous with maleness. It enabled the merit of a greater group of people to be considered. At one level, it is in our interests as a party to see the Liberal Party remain in this position, but it is in the interests of democracy for us to change.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin): Member, I ask you to resume your seat. Your time has expired. The question is that the motion be agreed to. I give the call to Hon Lorna Harper.

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [12.03 pm]: Thank you, Mr Acting President.

It is with honour that I stand here today to support this motion as one of the 114 women who has been elected to the Western Australian Parliament. I have not worked out what number I am, but I figure I am somewhere between 100 and 114. I have not worked out whether I am the first Scottish-born female member of Parliament. I know that there has been a Scottish-born male member of Parliament. I will leave that research to someone who enjoys research more than I do.

I would like to talk about another proud Labor woman and another first. Yesterday when I mentioned to a colleague that I was going to speak about this person, the response was, “Who?” and I thought, “Right!” I would like to talk about Ruby Hutchison. Ruby was the first woman to be elected to this chamber. She was a proud Labor woman, which is not surprising given that she was the first woman elected to this chamber. Ruby was born in 1892 in Victoria and moved to WA with her family when she was four years old. As my colleague Hon Ayor Makur Chuot stated, women did not get the vote until 1899, and then actually in about 1900; but women could not stand for election until 1920. Obviously, this stirred something in Ruby because in 1908, at the age of 16, she joined the Labor Party. When members think about it, that was quite astounding in 1908: a woman, aged 16, joining the Labor Party was quite an achievement.

Ruby married in 1909 at the age of 17 and divorced in 1928. We do not normally hear about somebody divorcing in 1928. In 1928, she was a sole parent with seven children. I repeat: seven children! My hat goes off to her. I do not think there was any child support back then, so in order to ensure that she could feed, clothe and house her

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children, she would take in boarders, and she would do dressmaking. She did what she needed to do during that time to look after her family, but her interest in politics was always there. Ruby wanted to ensure that other women would not be put in the same position that she was in. It was during this time that she started to believe that she could enter politics.

Ruby's determination grew and grew, and once her children reached adulthood, she remarried—husband number two—in 1938. With grown-up children, she had more free time. As quite a few members in here will attest to, once our children grow up we seem to have a little more free time. The parity between motherhood and what you do in the house and what your partner does in the house still has not quite changed—no offence to gentlemen in the room who are fathers, but that is from experience. Ruby went on to attend business school and summer school at the University of Western Australia, studying public administration, psychology and public speaking. I think that two of those subjects would have come in very handy in this chamber.

Ruby first stood as an ALP candidate in 1950 but was unsuccessful. She stood again in 1953, and again she was unsuccessful. She won her seat on 8 May 1954 and entered Parliament a fortnight later as the first woman member of this chamber and only the fourth woman to be elected to the WA Parliament. Just like the very famous Robert the Bruce, she obviously felt that if at first you do not succeed, try, try again; as Scots like to be in every part of history! In her inaugural speech on 17 June 1954, Ruby said —

As the first woman to raise her voice in the deliberations of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, I feel keenly my position and my responsibility to the women of this State and those who will, in general, follow my footsteps. I shall endeavour to live up to the standards of truth and integrity that they would expect of me.

For too long has this House been silent for want of a woman's voice but now one might as well, like the historical figure, King Canute, attempt to hold back the rolling waves as try to keep women from their rightful place in the Legislature and public affairs of this State. I hope I shall not be long without female company here.

If only she knew! She also said —

Science and the recent war have thrust woman forward from the kitchen, where she was supposed to belong, and she has now taken her rightful place in society. A great many women have played a worthy part in history. I hope to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before, and play my part in the future.

I do not think that when Ruby stood up and said that she would have actually thought she would be the only woman serving in this chamber for the whole time she was here. In her 17 years' service in this chamber, she was the only female. After her speech, the Chief Secretary, Hon G. Fraser-West said —

A page has been written into history today; a lady has spoken in the Legislative Council. To us mere males that is quite a shock. Therefore, in order to give us an opportunity to recuperate, I move —

That the House do now adjourn.

I suggest that the men would have needed a little quiet corner, a cup of tea and a sandwich just to calm themselves down.

Ruby championed a lot of causes and she won a lot of things, including the right of women to sit on juries. I will be honest; I have never been called up for jury duty. I am not putting it out there that I want to be, but I am just saying I never have been. To think that it was not that long ago that women could not sit on juries is quite astounding to me.

She also had very strong feelings about the Legislative Council electoral system, and this led her to repeated clashes with the Presiding Officers. I apologise to Hon Alannah MacTiernan; she was not the first woman to be thrown out of this chamber. Ruby was the first woman. I quote again from one of Ruby's speeches —

I have attended every one of these naturalisation ceremonies ... a card explaining how to vote for the Legislative Council election is never handed out.

...

Those people are not informed of the unfair and undemocratic franchise of this House.

At that time, not everyone was eligible to vote for this house. The President said —

I will not allow the honourable member to continue to charge this House with being undemocratic. It is a reflection upon the House.

Ruby said —

Hon Ayor Makur Chuot; Hon Brian Walker; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Alannah MacTiernan;
Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Wilson Tucker; Hon Jackie Jarvis

I do not know what one would call it, Mr. President, when people are not given a vote for this House. It is a loaded franchise and men have fought against it down through the centuries. However, not much progress has been made because it is still undemocratic.

...

I am not trying to create a situation; I am fighting for the rights of the people—for them to be able to say what they believe in; and this is the policy of the party to which I belong.

...

I want to say this: In my conscience and in my opinion I have not said anything that I should not have the right to say to a democratic person.

...

What I am saying is true; the franchise for this House is an insult to the people.

...

The Government has been grateful to *The West Australian* for coming to its rescue on many occasions, but it has not done very much to implement adult franchise for this House ...

She also said —

... such comments make one ashamed to belong to this Upper House.

She was asked to withdraw and she stated —

If I have to say that I withdraw the remark that I consider this House is not democratic, and the franchise is not democratic, I cannot do so, because I believe it is undemocratic.

Rosie stood and wanted changes not only in this house but for women. Another first, very quickly, Rosie was also —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Ruby.

Hon LORNA HARPER: Ruby! Sorry; I looked at Hon Rosie Sahanna. Ruby was married a third time, and Ruby's husband also served in this house; husband and wife served together. Ruby was described as rebellious and passionate. She spoke against the exploitation of workers, companies and industries. She was passionate for mental health and consumerism. I hope that as a woman I can be even half the woman Ruby was.

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [12.13 pm]: I rise to make a few brief comments and support this fantastic motion. I thank Hon Ayor Makur Chuot for moving the motion. I am glad to see members of the chamber talking about women's rights and equality. I agree with comments that it would be great to see more of the member's baby boy in this chamber, and I hope he feels welcome in this place. He is adorable and when he is here he lifts the mood of a sometimes combative chamber. I am also glad to see the current emphasis on updating current bills with gender-neutral terms. I can speak to personal experience; on the back of the Me Too movement, the tech industry really felt the shockwaves and updated a lot of the terminology to be less gender-specific and removed racial connotations. A few examples include removing the words "blacklist" and "whitelist" and using "deny list" and "allow list", and replacing "master" and "slave" with "primary" and "secondary" et cetera. I am glad to see that Parliament is making inroads to update our lexicon to be more inclusive.

In relation to the motion, I can happily confirm that I studied at Edith Cowan University. Although more can be done, it is great to see that prominent trailblazing women are being honoured and remembered in our society.

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West) [12.14 pm]: Thank you, Acting President. I note that I have only a few minutes. I want to acknowledge all the women who have been mentioned before. I have Hon Donna Faragher in my notes as a trailblazer amongst Liberal women. I want to make special mention of Hon Cheryl Davenport, who served in this place from the late 1980s until 2001. I do not know Cheryl, but she was kind enough to send me a card recently, so I thought I would take the opportunity to read the card. Hon Stephen Pratt will notice that I have spilt coffee on it; he will not be surprised! I am sure Cheryl will not mind if I read this card to members today. It says —

Dear Jackie

Congratulations on your courageous speech on the return of Barnaby Joyce to the Leader of the National Party.

I can attest to how difficult it is to raise morality issues as a woman MP.

In 1998, I was the Labor MP who achieved Abortion Law Reform in the WA Legislative Council as a Back Bench MP in opposition—it was a mammoth 4 months before the legislation was proclaimed.

It is so fantastic that there are now so many women in the WA Parliament—there were only 2 of us —

Hon Ayor Makur Chuot; Hon Brian Walker; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Sandra Carr; Hon Alannah MacTiernan;
Hon Lorna Harper; Hon Wilson Tucker; Hon Jackie Jarvis

By that, she means Labor MPs —

in the Council but I had wonderful support from 2 Green women, a Democrat plus some terrific Labor ♀ and a couple of Liberal blokes.

Go well, and keep up the great work ...

Cheryl Davenport also played a significant role in increasing the representation of women in this place, together with Joan Kirner, a late former Victorian Premier. They were instrumental in starting an organisation called EMILY's List. For those members who are not familiar with EMILY's List, EMILY is an acronym that stands for Early Money is Like Yeast—it rises. The idea behind EMILY's List is that if we can support women looking to enter politics early or if we can provide them with financial support to run their campaigns, it will make a significant difference to the number of women in Parliament. EMILY's list was founded in Australia in 1996, as I said, with Joan Kirner and Cheryl Davenport leading the way. I am sure lots of women in this place have benefited from that.

I also want to make mention of the fact that the Labor Party has had affirmative action targets since 1994. That is also why we have 60 per cent of the women in this place representing WA Labor. My only advice to members across the way is that affirmative action works and gives a diversity of views, if those members want diversity in their party. I note that there has been a recent review into the Liberal Party and that a recommendation is that the party have a target of 40 per cent women. I was somewhat dismayed to see the comment in the Liberal Party's own internal review about that potentially taking up to two election terms. Potentially, what are we looking at? Will it be 2030 before we look across at the opposition benches and see perhaps 40 per cent women there? I have three daughters, two of whom are in the workforce and one is still in school. I am dismayed that in this day and age, not every organisation has a target to have equal numbers of men and women represented in their workforce.

I have lots of notes, which I will not go through because I notice that we are running out of time. My only final comment is that I was loath to discuss WhatsApp groups. I do not want to take a holier-than-thou attitude and pretend that I have never made a comment or told a joke in poor taste or perhaps sent a text message that I might have regretted, but I guess the comment I found most disappointing was the media report about "sandwich makers". We can all make jokes and laugh about it, but I felt specifically for the Liberal women I know in my electorate. I have spent 15-odd years at polling booths at every election, quite often being the only Labor person there handing out how-to-vote cards. In country towns, as Hon Darren West will know, we become friendly with the other people we see working at polling booths. Over those 15 years I have met lots of hardworking women in the Liberal Party who hand out how-to-vote cards at every election. These are women I know from my community, like the retired clinical nurse manager from Margaret River Hospital who was in charge of the nursing staff there when my children were born, or my daughter's now-retired year 2 primary school teacher. These women are there day in, day out, for two and a half weeks at early polling booths in Margaret River, handing out how-to-vote cards. I can only imagine how dismayed they must feel that a bunch of 40 to 50-year-old blokes have a group chat, joking about them being sandwich makers. I have heard opposition members call my side juvenile and childish, but is there anything more childish than a bunch of adult men making jokes like that?

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.