



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Ms Libby Mettam, MLA**  
(Member for Vasse)

**Legislative Assembly**

**Premier's Statement**

**Tuesday, 11 November 2014**

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## PREMIER'S STATEMENT

### *Consideration*

Resumed from 20 February on the following question —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse)** [5.32 pm]: Mr Speaker and fellow members, it is a great honour to be standing here today as the newly elected member for Vasse. I have a deep respect for what this chamber represents and for all the people who work within it. Together we share a commitment to representing the best interests of the Western Australian community. Although we may differ in our interpretations as to how we best serve those interests, it is only a positive that we are able to debate and discuss these issues in a public forum. I am particularly honoured to be sworn in on Remembrance Day. Remembrance Day is symbolic of the sacrifice made by those who came before us to ensure the democratic right of every person to have his or her voice heard. We must never forget the great privilege of all Australians to be able to choose their elected representatives. We in this chamber must never forget that the only reason we are here is to support the communities we represent.

It has been quite a journey to get to where I stand today. It harks back to 1951 when my mum, Jenny, and her parents arrived in Fremantle from England seeking a better life. Her parents, Eileen and Charles, took a chance and worked hard to raise four children. Eileen wrote about her time during those years and how battling loneliness she would cry tears into the kitchen sink. My grandmother Rebecca Hansen began a solo journey to Australia from Glasgow at the tender age of 19 years because she could see no future in Scotland. She travelled from London on a steamship to Western Australia, where she eventually met my grandfather Harry. Together they raised six children, including the youngest, my dad, Peter. For them the isolation was daunting—something shared by many people who have struggled to make a life in this great southern land. As the daughter of Peter and Jenny and sister to Jonny, I grew up in regional Western Australia—in Kalgoorlie, then in Geraldton. This very much shaped my view of life. I can distinctly remember my mother telling me when it came to leaving school that I did not have to move to the city to improve myself. But, in 1994, it was my belief that my only option was to leave regional WA to seek further education and look over the horizon. As the newly elected representative for the regional seat of Vasse, one of my driving ambitions is to foster development in our region to the point that leaving town is no longer the only option for our children.

Although I have always worked hard, there has been no greater supporter of my endeavours as a woman wanting to make a difference than my husband, Jonathan. We had our first daughter, Bianca, when I was 22 years of age and our second daughter, Sophia, 16 months later. Although this was a challenging time, in the best interests of our family unit, we made it work. At one point, when the girls were both under three years, I worked full time while Jonathan studied winemaking and cared for our girls. When he found a winemaking job, I was able to stay at home with the girls and continue with part-time employment. More recently, as my daughters have moved into their teenage years and Jonathan's winemaking career has continued to build, I have taken on several jobs at a time in order to set up a better future for our family. I feel fortunate that my efforts have not gone unrewarded, and I am exceptionally grateful

to the women of the past who paved the way and allowed this to happen. However, I am pleased to stand here today not because of a numerical requirement or a set of rules, but based on merit and those qualities that I believe I have developed through hard work and perseverance.

I feel there is a great sense of pride across the Vasse electorate. This area, which includes Busselton, Dunsborough, Cowaramup, Yallingup and Gracetown, captures some of the most beautiful parts of this nation, if not the world. My kids have been able to ride to school, play cops and robbers with the kids in the neighbourhood, and run and swim together on Yallingup and Quindalup Beaches before school. There are a great number of people in the electorate who have lived in the area their whole lives. This population is continually added to by people who have made the lifestyle choice to live in the Vasse community. It is an exciting time in the Vasse electorate. The population has grown by over four per cent per annum over the past 20 years—one of the highest sustained growth rates in regional WA. This significant growth is expected to continue, and the population is expected to increase by 58 per cent between now and 2026. The demographics of the region have changed significantly over time, with a larger proportion of the electorate now in the younger age bracket. The steps we take to manage this new phase of population growth in Vasse are critical. The popularity of my electorate as a lifestyle and tourist destination can see the region's population more than double in any single day of the holiday season. In addition, a growing number of fly in, fly out workers have chosen my electorate as the ideal place to live with their families. As the population continues to grow, so does pressure on the management of our public open space, sporting infrastructure and, in particular, health facilities, schools and police. In short, there is no time to stand still. All of these requirements need to be actively managed to ensure that the high quality of life enjoyed in the electorate is maintained, if not enhanced. This includes, I must say, a focus on mental health, and I applaud the growing acknowledgement of these issues in the public domain.

The City of Busselton has put itself on the map as the events capital of Western Australia. This represents an exciting time in our region as all businesses in this area are underpinned by the tourism sector, including our small businesses and major retailers. The expansion of the Busselton Regional Airport is vital to help to bring interstate and international visitors to this region. I realise a business case has already been put together to cater for larger aircraft. This offers significant opportunities for business and growth and potentially the creation of hundreds of new jobs. Air travel is not the only potential driver of economic development in my region. Later this month Busselton will welcome the first of a series of cruise ships—over 3 800 passengers and crew from the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship will be disembarking at Geographe Bay in Busselton for the first time. This will be followed by an additional six cruise ships for the 2014–15 financial year, and a further seven the year after.

This region has also seen growth in emerging markets such as the creative industries sector, in part because it is a great place to live. There are also opportunities for this to be a better place to do business. This is why improved communications infrastructure is vital in allowing us to grasp the opportunities for further growth. That is one of the reasons that I have campaigned hard for better mobile phone network coverage in the electorate. This is not just a nice-to-have; it is critical for economic development and business success in creating more jobs.

The exponential demand and potential of the Asian market and the opportunity it represents to the region is well documented. This expansion has had a direct effect on the current and future demands for our region's produce. This includes for our premium wine and food industries, and there are obviously a lot of opportunities available to the local tourism sector from this incredible growth market as well. We have recently witnessed an immense growth in demand for meat products via the V and V Walsh deal with China and also seen a \$500 million investment in Harvey Beef from Andrew Forrest. Like tourism, our region's agricultural sector is poised to benefit enormously from the development of these markets. I am committed to ensuring that opportunity is grabbed with both hands.

I have had the valuable experience of being involved in the CinéfestOZ Film Festival, headquartered in Busselton with screenings and events across the region. This year, for the first time, the region hosted Australia's richest film prize. This is the film industry's answer to the Archibald Prize. It is awarded within a program of film events attracting over 18 000 attendances. This festival illustrates some of the great strengths this electorate has to offer. Since CinéfestOZ began as a festival, some five films have been developed as a consequence and another 10 are in the pipeline. This is all because of the conversations that take place when there is that vital, critical mass of people together at a destination film festival event.

As a mother of two teenage daughters I have a great interest in and passion for education. There is a healthy mix of different schools across the electorate. I am a very strong believer in the importance of a quality education and giving every child in my electorate the chance to realise their talents and opportunities as they grow into adulthood. Also, I have a deep respect for the positive values and leadership delivered in schools. I support and welcome the chaplaincy program, as well as the strong leadership and flexibility provided by the independent public schools initiative that is empowering local communities. I also believe providing the capacity for our students to engage in sport is vital for a healthy community. Growth in the region necessarily needs to be supported by education into the future. I believe we need to plan for additional higher education choices as I do not accept our youth should have to leave the region to further their education.

The Geographe catchment has one of the highest rates of urbanisation and is also home to a Ramsar-certified wetland, making it a challenging, but hugely important issue to manage. It has been an intricate part of the agriculture and recreational values of the region. The future management and improvement of the Vasse–Wonnerup wetlands and the Geographe catchment is a priority. The recent independent review into the current and future management of Geographe catchment by Professor Barry Hart identified strong and unambiguous management of the waterways and wetlands as a priority. Recently, the state government made a decision in response to these findings, which is a positive step forward for the community. As agricultural development continues, and with a warming climate, we will put increasing pressure on water, and so it is important these wetlands are actively managed well into the future. A necessary part of the renewed focus on water assets must include more flexible approaches to reusing water on our sports fields and public open space.

I support the fundamental principle that hard work, self-discipline and sacrifice can lead to success and good outcomes. There are no shortcuts. I am committed to the Vasse electorate and I am prepared to stand up and defend those values. I support those in the community who work hard to raise a family, provide services and create employment opportunities. Central to any economy is not the government, but the employers, the innovators and the entrepreneurs. The role of government in this space is to create the right conditions to enable individuals to seize opportunities and to flourish, while at the same time supporting those who are vulnerable and unable to adequately support themselves. As a community we need to decide whether we want to solve issues with regulation or responsibility. In the field of agriculture we already have farmers taking responsibility for their water and waste usage to allow for cleaner waterways and better environmental management. However, they are also burdened by compliance. I have spoken to farmers who now require multiple licences and face excessive administration to be able to work their land. The administrative burden unfairly targets smaller businesses that do not have the capacity to devote staff to address the hurdles they need to jump to comply. One owner of a local pub in the electorate has had complaints about why counter meals are so expensive. She explains that it is only after charging \$23 that she is able to begin to make any return on that meal. There is the winery restaurant in Yallingup that shuts its doors on New Year's Day when the region's numbers have more than doubled, because it cannot afford to pay for staff. Excessive penalty rates are shutting the doors on business.

One of the great things about being involved in the community is the great mix of people across various age groups. Whilst there is a growth in the number of families moving to the Vasse electorate, across Australia we are facing a growth in the number of people in the older age bracket. I believe that over the last few decades, whilst there has been a necessary emphasis on the growing child, I feel this has at times come at the cost of our older citizens. There needs to be a shift in how we value some of our wisest people. Much of this needs to take place in the workplace and in the home and the community as well. I am aware that this comes naturally in other cultures such as in Japan, Korea and China. Western cultures are traditionally focussed on youth and this has often been put down to the high value we place on the individual and employment.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Vasse, you are entitled to only 20 minutes; do you want an extension?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes, please.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms L. METTAM:** It is about investing in people who, due to generational changes in technology, take a bit longer to learn. I am pleased that my dad, who struggled a bit with retirement when he first moved to the region, was given the opportunity to work part time at a local winery. He went from working as a biochemist in Perth to working in a lab in a winery in Margaret River. To have this opportunity to change careers and learn something new at 62 is not only desirable but, in many ways, necessary. What people do not know, they can learn and I believe giving people the opportunity to continue to learn is vital for a vibrant economy and community.

I am also conscious of the rich Indigenous heritage of the Vasse electorate. I am honoured today to acknowledge the first Australians who called the south west of Western Australia their home long before the arrival of Europeans. I acknowledge that many in their community now struggle. Part of my role as the member for Vasse is to listen to their concerns and do what I can to respond and to celebrate the very rich heritage of our Indigenous families and their children.

Representing Vasse carries an important legacy. I would like to pay special tribute to Troy Buswell, not only for his outstanding contributions as the local member for Vasse, but also for his significant contributions to the state. I would also like to acknowledge former Liberal members Stuart Bovell and Barry Blaikie who represented Vasse and who, in their day, were exemplary representatives of the electorate.

As many of you would understand, it takes a great deal of support to get to this point of representing an electorate in Parliament. I would like to express my great thanks to Barry House, who I have been employed by for the last 10 years and who has taught me the value of having an open-door approach to his electorate. I would also like to thank some of the outstanding members of the Liberal Party. At a local level I would like to thank Brian Middleton, Leonie Maslin, Lindsay Colless, Keith Rose, Garth Hammond, Kevin Smith and David Ryan, the Vasse campaign committee and the associated branches of Busselton, Dunsborough, Yallingup and Margaret River and the Forrest division. I would also like to thank Liberal Party state director, Ben Morton; state president, Norman Moore; the Premier, Colin Barnett; and the ministers and members of Parliament who supported me during the election campaign.

Thank you to my family—my Mum, Jenny, and Dad, Peter, and brother, Jonny. Thank you to my friends and supporters. It is with deep love and gratitude that I would also like to thank my husband, Jonathan, and daughters, Bianca and Sophia — without your love and support I simply would not be able to stand here today. In closing, I acknowledge that I am greatly blessed to be able to represent the people of Vasse.

A lot of people have asked me why I would want to enter the political realm, a place where we have to have a thick skin to survive the slings and arrows that often pass for political debate. My answer is simple. I am here today because I believe I can make a difference and the only inspiration I need is to look at my own children. I want to make the world a better place. Do I promise to get it right all the time? Of course not. I, like all of you here today, am a human being with all the frailties that humanity represents. But what I do have is a deep, deep desire to not shirk this challenge but to step up to the plate and fight with all my might for the people I have been elected to represent.

The Vasse electorate is already a fantastic place to live in. My pledge today is to use my energy, experience and drive to make it even better.

[Applause.]

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