



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Ms Elizabeth Jane Kelsbie, MLA**  
**(Member for Warren–Blackwood)**

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Thursday, 6 May 2021

*Reprinted from Hansard*

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## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

### *Motion*

Resumed from 29 April on the following motion moved by Ms L. Dalton —

That the following Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's speech be agreed to —

To His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley, AC, Governor of the State of Western Australia.

May it please Your Excellency —

We, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of the State of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

**MS E.J. KELSBIE (Warren–Blackwood)** [3.22 pm]: Madam Speaker, may I offer my congratulations to you on becoming the first female Speaker in the Legislative Assembly. I look forward to working with you in the chamber.

I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Warren–Blackwood electorate, the Wardandi, Pibelmen Kaneang, Minang and Koreng Goreng peoples of the Noongar nation. I wish to acknowledge and show respect to the elders past, present and emerging and the continuing culture and contribution they make to life in this region.

I offer my gracious thanks and pay homage to Hon Terry Redman, who served the Warren–Blackwood electorate for 16 years. Terry is well respected by many across the region, and I wish him, his wife, Marie, and his staff well.

I am incredibly humbled to be standing here today. I am proud to be not only the first female elected to the seat of Warren–Blackwood, but also the person entrusted to bring Labor back to this seat after 32 years. As we celebrate 100 years since Edith Cowan was elected as the first female representative in the Western Australian Parliament—in fact, in any Australian Parliament—I stand here today surrounded by incredibly strong women, women who also put their hands up to represent and make a difference in their respective electorates. We stand here united, strong and proud and ready to serve our communities as part of the forty-first Parliament of Western Australia.

I am someone who believes in championing others, in finding the good, in taking the time to listen and to act upon requests for help, support or mentoring. I believe strongly in social equality. I am someone who tries to be a positive role model, to inspire others and to seek out and take up opportunities and believe that they can be achieved.

At Worklink WA, where I was CEO for over four years and where Rebecca Stephens, who is now the member for Albany, was my regional manager, we delivered government-funded careers training and employment services to communities across the Great Southern, Goldfields and Esperance regions. This included the jobs and skill centre services, participation and equity programs, traineeships and the employment services development program for young people who had disengaged from education. My role as CEO was to lead and guide the organisation, ensure innovation in service delivery, provide continuous improvement and rigorous governance and secure and broaden the funding model. My passion, however, sat and still sits with inspiring

the youth in our services, in seeing our young people's confidence grow, seeing their self-esteem blossom, seeing them start to believe they are worthy of the opportunities that come their way and seeing them proactively take up these opportunities.

This new chapter in my life is a case in point. I remember talking to our students, telling them that I had put my hand up for a new opportunity—I was going to run for Parliament for the seat of Warren–Blackwood. I explained there was apparently little chance that I would win the seat—you know the drill; a 12.8 per cent swing was needed to topple Terry and the Nats, Labor had not won that seat for over 30 years and Warren–Blackwood was reportedly and historically a very safe Nationals seat. I also explained that if I did not win the seat, I would not see it as a failure. The experience would provide me with lessons. I would at least learn about the process of campaigning. I would learn more about our amazing electorate. I would learn more about farming, regenerative farming and carbon farming. I would find out how to influence change and I would meet inspiring people. It was all about the opportunity and having a go.

Weeks later, I went back to work to resign from the job I loved. I sought out the kids, one of whom is here today. Breanna Cottrill, I remember going to tell you guys that I had won the seat and that I was going to become a member of Parliament. You beat me to it; you had already seen me on the telly! I say to you today and to other young people: you are worthy of opportunity; aim high; do not be afraid to fail because it is how we learn; believe in yourself and when you need to, seek out others who believe in you; never think you cannot and always believe that you can.

In my new role as the member for Warren–Blackwood, I commit to working hard to help identify opportunities for our youth and to seek out like-minded people and organisations to collaborate, innovate and to create opportunities across our region and further afield.

I look forward to delivering my Warren–Blackwood election commitments, including those to support young people. This includes \$50 000 for Blackwood Youth Action for its driver support program; \$60 000 for the community mental health action team, ComHAT, in Boyup Brook to create a youth zone; and \$40 000 to upgrade the Denmark Civic Centre so that kids will no longer have to stand in the rain or the dunny while they wait to go on stage.

Now I am sure that I am not the only person who did not imagine that I would be standing here today delivering my inaugural speech. I was endorsed six weeks out from the election, I had a shoestring budget and I had a campaign team of two: Jackie Jarvis, soon to be Hon Jackie Jarvis and member for the South West Region of the Legislative Council, aka my campaign manager, and me, aka the potential member. I had support from Hon Alannah MacTiernan, for which I am extremely grateful, and I had encouragement from my colleague Rebecca Stephens. In the midst of campaigning, my great friends Raneë Wilson, George Mumford and the ever-inspiring Vanessa Fyfe and I tackled the Rottnest Channel Swim. It was my fourth go and our third as a team. We were never going to break any records, but it was not about that. As with most things in my life, it was about having a go, pushing myself to achieve, getting out of my comfort zone and, most importantly, supporting the team. Jackie, thank you for seeing in me the values of a potential Labor candidate and for cajoling me to take the opportunity, for your incredible support, your industry knowledge and your hospitality and, of course, to your husband Matt for producing an excellent chardonnay that helped keep us hydrated as we pondered our next move on the campaign trail. I thank you for being my campaign manager and my mentor and for allowing me to believe that I could give it a crack against all the odds. I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together for Warren–Blackwood.

To Minister Hon Alannah MacTiernan, your knowledge of and energy and passion for regional development, agriculture, innovation and farming is inspiring. Your energy is never ending. Never did I imagine, a few days after being endorsed, that I would be on a road trip into the electorate with Alannah, Ben Johnson and Darcey Duncan and talking to producers and seasonal workers, and visiting farms and small businesses.

Bec, I am lucky enough to call you my friend, my colleague once again and my housemate as we embark on this journey into politics. You, my friend, are inspiring, community-spirited and driven for all the right reasons. I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together for the people in the Great Southern, where our electorates meet.

Being invited to run is a big deal. I phoned my dad to seek his advice. He confirmed what I had already told myself: opportunities like this do not come around very often, if at all. He said, “You know I’ve always been a Liberal.” I rolled my eyes. He then told me that for the first time in his life he was going to vote Labor, and I smiled. It turns out that he and many others across the state had decided to let the McGowan government know that they were appreciative of the hard work and leadership shown to keep our state safe and strong. I thank you, Premier, and I thank your team. My dad said, “I think you’d be great. You’re empathetic, professional, you care about people and you always strive to make a difference. Go for it.”

So I grabbed the opportunity with both hands. I got out there and met as many people and community organisations as I could in six weeks. I listened, I did not shy away from more controversial issues and I talked to those in our community who wanted to be part of the change. I am stoked to say that the people of Warren–Blackwood stood up. They spoke up and they spoke up loudly, saying that they were ready for change. I stand here today proud beyond words and ready to serve. To those who did not vote for me this time around, I say to you that I will work just as hard, if not harder, to impress upon you over the next four years that I am a worthy recipient of your next vote. For those who did vote for me, I thank you with all my heart for putting your trust in me to represent you in the McGowan government to deliver for Warren–Blackwood. I will work hard to ensure a prosperous and innovative Warren–Blackwood where our kids are afforded the same opportunities as others; where we have access to child care locally; where investment in mental health services, education and training are a priority; where we look to balance economic growth with environmental security; and where we invest in farming in an electorate where different voices are heard, respected and represented. I will fight for our region. I will be your strong voice at the table in Parliament and I will work hard to represent all areas of our community and make sure that our specific needs are heard and, where possible, are met.

I will work with and listen to our community. I will find ways to work collaboratively across the different sectors of our electorate and embrace new technologies and new ways of working when needed to enable innovation and creativity while also respectfully honouring traditional practices. In between, I will return to the fold of my second family, Denmark Surf Life Saving Club Australia, and to my fellow ocean beach swimmers. I, like Stuart Aubrey, member for Scarborough, and Rebecca Stephens, member for Albany, am an active volunteer in the surf lifesaving movement. I am a surf lifesaver, a protection officer and a community representative in our emergency response team. I love all things surfing. I love our family-friendly club. I love the inclusivity of people of all ages and all abilities. I love the intergenerational aspects of our training, our competitions and our social events. I love that we are socially responsible, forward thinking and embracing of all people, and that we have fun. I served on the committee of the club for seven years, four as president—the first female in the club’s 60-year history. I stepped down at the end of the last season. Now, as the local member, I will become the first female patron of the club that I adore. Under my leadership, we nearly doubled our membership base to record numbers and strengthened our member retention, especially with our youth. We won club of the year in 2018 and were finalists in 2019.

Imagine being a member of the Warren–Blackwood Labor branch. There is no doubt that it has been pretty hard to keep the momentum going for the past 32 years, but despite our electorate being tagged as a very safe Nationals WA seat, here we are. The enormity of the win is not lost on me. I must acknowledge and commend the members of the branch for their commitment to the Labor Party and for believing that one day we would be victorious. Imagine being a member of the branch now!

As an elected Labor member in a Labor government, I look forward to seeing our branch grow and to seeing young people, people from diverse backgrounds and people who have not been involved in politics before, join us to build and strengthen our branch, to be a forward-thinking space where people's voices can be heard.

To the volunteers who not only believed in me as a candidate, but also believed that I could win—there were a few—I say thank you. As someone who truly believes that we need to nurture our planet, investigate sustainability and invest in a greener future, I am excited to be part of a government that sees the bigger picture, works within an evidence-based framework and not only looks at the impact on the bottom line, but also really invests in the people factor. I am proud to be part of a government that respects and honours our planet and that is innovative in its investment and future planning.

Since being elected, I have been asked more than once about how I will cope travelling across the vast electorate. Many of you will have visited parts of my region and you will already know that it is some of the most beautiful country in Australia. It is where the forest meets the sea, where we produce award-winning wine that is exported to the far corners of the globe, where we are known for our diverse agriculture, agritourism and ecotourism, and where we can proudly say that we are home to some of the most amazing forests and spectacular coastline.

To my mum, Judy Riley, who is sadly no longer with us, she would be so proud of me today. From her I learnt to work hard, enjoy life, take chances and be a good person. To my dad, Richard Riley, I have always admired your entrepreneurial spirit and from you I learnt to seek out and take opportunities, to take chances and embrace change.

To my sister, Emma Willcox, you are the family's quiet achiever—brave, courageous, family focused, spiritually aware and up for an adventure. I will forever be proud of you, your determination and your tenacious spirit.

To my kids, you are what inspires me the most every single day. My hope was for you to grow into strong, independent women.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms E.J. KELSBIE:** Your strong moral compass, sense of loyalty and support make me proud. Amy, you are a star. As a single mum of three-year-old twins—the “tiny terrors”—you continuously amaze me. Your no-nonsense attitude to the everyday challenges of life are tantamount to your strength of character and determination. You are a feisty wee beast and I love you. Phoebe, you are a gem. You always strive to achieve, you give everything you do 110 per cent, no challenge is too big or too small for you and you always try to do the right thing. You are a strong leader, you have an inner strength and I love you. To my stepdaughter, Megan, you, my dear, are fabulous. Never be afraid to follow your dreams or make them up as you go along. You can create your own path. I love you.

And to my partner, thank you for your patience, support and love, and thank you for coming on this journey with me. Importantly, thank you for pouring the wine, cooking the dinner and taking my dog, Maisie Mouse, for sleepovers and for listening to me witter on about every new thing I learnt. Love ya!

I have had a great and varied career working in communications and stakeholder management, volunteering locally and understanding the value of community connectedness, supporting and empowering people to reach their goals. I have been an arts and entertainment editor in London and worked for the WA Country Health Service as a statewide regional telehealth manager. I have been a barmaid and a bottle shop attendant. I have flipped burgers at a beach kiosk. I also worked at the British Broadcasting Corporation as an interactive producer across health, parenting, science, education, entertainment and lifestyle sites, and was then head of production talent for BBC's Multiplatform Production. Most recently, I was the CEO at Worklink WA.

I think all the positions I have held during my career have led me here. You could say that I have been training all my life to serve the people of Warren–Blackwood. I used to walk up to the BBC building at White City feeling incredibly proud and often wondering how a woman from Perth with no formal qualifications had snagged a job at such a prestigious organisation. I thought I would feel the same walking up the steps to Parliament House, but I have not. I feel I belong here, and I will work hard over the next four years to prove it. As someone with no formal qualifications but with over 35 years of on-the-job training, I am proud to be part of a government that understands, invests in and promotes accessible training and education.

I liken my passion for ocean swimming and the rough and tumble of Ocean Beach with politics, where some days the sun is shining and the water is crystal clear and bright blue, while on other days, it is grey and rough and there are stingers out there. I liken it to politics and what I may experience here. But as we say in my swimming group, just keep swimming. I intend to do that—not only keep swimming but roll with the ebbs and flows and ride the waves of success, too, as they happen. The thing I will leave members with is that I do not rock the boat until the boat actually needs rocking. Thank you.

[Applause.]

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