



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr David Michael, MLA

(Member for Balcatta)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Thursday, 18 May 2017

Reprinted from Hansard

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta) [9.44 am]: I would like to firstly acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which this house stands and I pay my respects to their elders, both past and present. The name “Balcatta” was actually a local Aboriginal name for the northern part of Careniup Lake and wetlands, being derived from the words “bal”, meaning “his”, and “katta”, meaning “hill”. Can I also congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your well-deserved elevation. It is wonderful to see a fellow Claremont supporter in the chair!

I am so humbled by the support I received from my local community, and before I say another word, I would like to thank them and promise to fight for their interests always. That is what I have seen in the members of Parliament I have looked up to—people who, no matter what, will always stand up for their community. I am excited by this because my community is one that I have lived in all my life and one that I care deeply about.

ABOUT ME

My mum and dad, Leena and David Sr, moved into Lawley Street, Tuart Hill, in 1980. I still live in the old fibro house 37 years later. One of the reasons they moved there was so that I could go to school at the two great schools my dad went to. Although I went to kindy and primary school at Tuart Hill Primary School, Tuart Hill Senior High School became Tuart College, so I attended Servite College, which was also only a few streets away.

At 13 my mum migrated to Australia from Finland with her four brothers and sisters and her parents, Eino Petteri and Mirja Liisa Tiainen. They came here in 1969 under the Australian government’s Special Passage Assistance Programme, looking for work and a better life. After some time spent in Cabramatta and Launceston, they made their way to Perth. My grandfather grew up in a place called Sortavala, in Finland’s far east, surviving the Winter War and the Continuation War with the Soviet Union that raged around him and his family. After the Second World War, they had days to evacuate behind the newly negotiated Finnish–Soviet border. His family was resettled by the Finnish government and he met Mirja Liisa, who was from a small town, Lapua, in western Finland, before coming to Australia. I never learnt Finnish, and was never able to talk much to my Finnish grandparents. My mum, though, would always tell me how proud they were of me—being Labor voters—when I started getting involved in the Labor Party and fighting for an Australian republic.

My dad was born in Subiaco to my grandfather, Kevin Michael, and my nan, Valma. Kevin was from Manly in New South Wales and served in the Australian Army in Korea, Malaya and Borneo in the 1950s. Tragically, he lost his life to cancer before his thirtieth birthday, leaving my nan and her five young children. Nan came home to her parents, Hugh and Esther Winning, at the Winning family headquarters on Hooley Road in Midvale. Nan will often recount the experience of getting off the train at Midland Junction railway station, having just lost her husband, with few or no possessions and five children in tow.

A few years later, nan married Robert Augustin, my grandad—a lifelong hardworking carpet layer and Claremont supporter! Nan and grandad were wonderful grandparents to my cousins Gabi, Jesse, Kristian and me. Again, both were lifelong Labor voters, always willing help others in need, even when they did not have enough for themselves. I miss my grandparents,

especially my nan, Valma, who lived down the street from me until she passed away earlier this year, just months away from being able to vote for me.

Growing up, I can never remember going without, but I know that my family struggled. My dad worked in a textile warehouse and mum worked as a dressmaker. They were always there for me, and they still are. My whole family have always been quite close. Thank you all for your lifetime of love and support—dad, mum, uncles Kim, Tony, Martti, and Gerard, and aunties Did, Lisa and Mary. Thank you for all your work, especially over the last 12 months. I thank mum and dad for the sacrifices they made to give me the best start in life, supporting me at school, with sport and through university.

I joined the Australian Labor Party at the University of Western Australia O-Day in early 1998, spurred on by the third wave dispute, continued old-growth logging, and the Howard government's regressive policies, especially in education. Having studied economics, in 2002 I applied for a job with my two local MPs—Bob Kucera, the then member for Yokine, and Graham Giffard, then a member for North Metropolitan Region. I will always be indebted to these fine former members for giving me a start and for all that they have taught me, and for their support of my campaign.

I worked for Bob—and Susan—Kucera for several years and I consider them family. I miss our little office with my then colleague Rosa, Vegemite on crackers, and the senior singalongs; and of course, Bob, the orange couch that we found during the 2005 campaign, but I will save that story for another day.

I was then fortunate enough to work for Hon Kate Doust. Kate is an intelligent, compassionate and hardworking member for her region, and a tireless advocate for workers in Western Australia. She would be an exceptional President of the other place, and I will be so proud for her should that occur. Thank you to Helen Bissett and Julian Hilton, whom I worked with in those four years, for continuing to support me and for your friendship.

Then there is the member for Willagee, Peter Tinley, who, like a few members in this place, is serving his community again after a long and distinguished a career in the Army. Mate, we have been through a bit together since the 2007 Stirling campaign. You have always got my back, and always put our party and our state first. It is an honour to be in this chamber with you. Thank you also to Deputy Mayor Peter Feasey for tolerating me in the electorate office and for his help and encouragement.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

I decided to run for Balcatta as I thought my area had been neglected by the state government. This was confirmed at so many doorsteps as I walked the length and breadth of the seat throughout the campaign. Tuart Hill and Joondanna have been the densest suburbs of Western Australia for several years now, with older homes like mine making way for villas, units and apartments. Unfortunately, poor planning decisions by the Western Australian Planning Commission continue to see these areas turn into low-rise, multi-unit, concrete jungles. I want to see improved standards for these types of developments and planning schemes that instead encourage higher densities around public transport routes, as well as greater provision of trees, green spaces and community gardens.

Over the road from Balcatta is Osborne Park, a local employment hub where the industrial area meets the Main Street retail area. This suburb is where the small business community of the Balcatta electorate was forged. Hard work on the market garden has turned into entrepreneurship and myriad small businesses. I will do my bit to make sure the Main Street businesses are supported and that Robinson Reserve is upgraded so that we will turn this area into a bustling, vibrant hub of activity and create further employment. What I love about Main Street and many other areas of the electorate is the olive trees on the verges and

median strips. At the cusp of winter we can catch local nonnas coming out to pick the produce for pickling.

My electorate also has Osborne Park Hospital. For over 50 years, the hospital has serviced people in and around the northern suburbs and electorates. The hospital is vital for many Balcatta residents and is well run by fantastic health professionals. However, it does need some government attention so that it can increase services, and to plan for the future. I will never shy away from fighting for this community asset.

While I am on the important issue of health, I am convinced, having doorknocked many thousands of people, that asbestos disease will not end with Wittenoom. We will have a second wave of asbestos disease from older homes, fences and buildings. This Parliament needs to do more to support medical research, strengthen compensation legislation and support groups like the Asbestos Diseases Society in Osborne Park, which, thanks to Rose Marie and Robert Vojakovic, continues to do incredible work.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: To the north of the electorate is Hamersley, a suburb with many ex-service personnel still living in former Defence Housing Australia homes. In me, the Hamersley community has its strongest ally in the fight to move the communication tower. I will not let the federal member off lightly. The tower has well and truly worn out its welcome. I will also support the great Hamersley Habitat Community Garden, and local schools. I am also advocating for a review of the bus routes that have been cancelled or reduced in the last four years.

In Balcatta and Stirling, which are two suburbs built upon the hard work of pioneers in the area, mostly new Australians working these former swamplands, there is now a need to upgrade local infrastructure to support the increasing population of these areas due to infill housing. I will fight to make sure these suburbs are looked after by upgrading Balcatta Senior High School and dealing with traffic congestion and dangerous intersections like the one at Boya Way–Erindale Road.

The south-western end of Stirling is also the location of the future Stirling city centre, which will bring together the existing residential areas and under-utilised private and government landholdings, along with better road and rail connections. This project will not only significantly reduce traffic congestion on Cedric Street and Karrinyup Road, but also be a new community in itself, with thousands of new residents living, working and recreating in and around a Metrohub at Stirling train station. This project has been well planned and once enjoyed bipartisan support, with input from the City of Stirling and several state departments. That support waned under the previous government but I am proud that WA Labor committed to this project during the recent campaign. I call on the federal government to follow suit, to help get a shovel in the ground and help create local jobs.

Migrants built much of the Balcatta electorate. They endured racism, poor services and marginal land. They worked hard and prospered. The Italian, Macedonian and Croatian communities built their own prosperity from market gardens to building and construction and now small business. This has continued in more recent decades, with many Vietnamese, Chinese and Indian migrants building a life in our local area.

There are two pillars of the Balcatta electorate, the Italian community and the Macedonian community. I want to place on record my gratitude to the Italian community and the Tuscany, Sicilian and Vasto community cultural clubs. Thank you to the club committees who have kept these clubs running, hosting events and keeping their culture alive with the younger generation. Balcatta FC started life with an Italian foundation as the Balcatta Etna Soccer

Club. With their home ground at Grindleford Reserve, this club has successful senior teams and competes in the National Premier League. It has hundreds and hundreds of local children on the field each week. This is a testament to it being a well-run family club, with an active committee headed by Peter Carlino and a committed network of sponsors, normally rounded up by the ever-present Pat Luca.

The Macedonian community keep their culture and traditions alive with the Macedonian Community of WA, which is in North Perth, but also at Macedonia Park, Balcatta, and the Macedonian Cultural Centre “Ilinden”, which is next to Grindleford Reserve. These clubs, along with the Stirling Lions senior and junior football club, have been for decades the centre of our local Macedonian community. They were built up literally brick by brick by stalwarts such as Paul Temov, Jordan Bulakovski and local legend Vic Radis. Listening to and learning from Vic is a rite of passage for a Labor member for Balcatta, and it is from Vic that I have learnt the history of the Macedonian community and where that community has been let down too often by Australian governments. To the community, I pledge my support to always fight for the recognition of the self-determined name of your homeland, the Republic of Macedonia. Australia should join over 130 other countries to do so. I am proud to have done what I could in my capacity as a councillor for the City of Stirling and candidate to support these local cultural clubs, along with the Chung Wah Cultural Centre and the Stirling Adriatic Club. As the local member, I will do my best to continue this work.

It has also been my pleasure to work with the Osborne Park RSL, the Osborne Park Bowling Club, the Tuart Hill Swimming Club and, of course, the Osborne Park Agricultural Society, and I pay tribute to their members and volunteers for the work they do in our community. I believe in strong local communities, communities that look out for each other and share in each other’s success. I believe in strong local clubs and organisations.

I am a life member of the Tuart Hill Cricket Club. Since my first game at 14, I have played 251 games. Given these words will last in *Hansard* forever, I must mention a notable and historic day for the club at Yuluma Reserve, Innaloo, in 2004, where I took a legendary seven for seven!

[Applause.]

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: I am certain that if it was not for my time and experience as club secretary, president and more recently treasurer, I would not be standing in this place today. It was at this club that I saw firsthand the value of volunteers at community organisations—people like David Griffiths, Tammy and Graeme Doyle, Neil Rankin, Phil Davies, Andy Stimpson and many more who have helped keep the club running since 1948. Over the past decade, I have seen many local sporting and cultural clubs experience a decline in membership and a crisis in volunteering. The world is changing—fast. Generally, people are not joining clubs in the numbers they have in the past, and when they do, the time they spend at their club and their capacity to volunteer are also declining. The benefit to our communities of well run, strong and vibrant clubs is so important. To lose our clubs would be devastating on the physical and mental health of so many in our community, many of whom are already being isolated and marginalised by the modern age. To this end, peak bodies and all tiers of government must do more to foster strong clubs, whether it is Cricket Australia and the WACA, ensuring more resources flow to community cricket or simply local government, reducing regulations, fees and barriers to local clubs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

It was actually my time as an office bearer at my cricket club, and with the support of my mates, that led me to run, in May 2005, for the City of Stirling’s Osborne ward. I ran so that I could fix up the parkland, the clubrooms and the community hall at Grenville Reserve in

Tuart Hill. I was fortunate enough to win that election and became the youngest councillor elected to the city at the age of 25. I served nearly 12 years as a councillor, including two as deputy mayor. In the early days I was taught the ropes by then CEO Lindsay Delahaunty, the city's current freeman, and by committed and hardworking officers like Trevor Holland and, more recently, CEO Stuart Jardine. In my time at the city, I am proud of what we embarked on. The city has retrofitted suburbs with footpaths where there were none, it has undertaken the mass planting of street trees as our green canopy was disappearing, and it has implemented a modern recycling system as well as more accessible, quality community facilities, including at Grenville Reserve. I have had the honour to serve my local community with a mostly fantastic bunch of community-minded councillors of all political colours, especially in the Osborne ward where, for the past decade or so, Mayor Giovanni Italiano and his partner, Anne, have given me an incredible amount of friendship and support. To Giovanni and Anne, the council and officers—thank you.

Local government can make an enormous difference to the lives of everyday Western Australians. Having said this, local government is not perfect and does not get everything right. To achieve sustainability in local government, we need reform—reform that is led by the community and involves the sector in a genuine way.

[Member's time extended.]

AN AUSTRALIAN REPUBLIC

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: I would also like to mention three bigger issues that I have always found important to me: an Australian republic; animal welfare; and the labour movement. I was the state secretary of the Australian Republican Movement in 1999 and the sadness of the referendum result and of that particular deception of the Australian people has never left me. I have always found it unacceptable that Australia's head of state lives in another country, and that this current arrangement devalues and demeans our nation on the world stage. I believe that even the idea of a constitutional monarchy based not on merit or achievement but on the archaic, old-world notion of birthright does not suit any country, especially not a modern Australia built on equality, mateship and egalitarianism. I believe in a great Australian republic, with a head of state that is one of us. It is my hope that this is achieved for our state and country whilst I am not only alive, but also while I am a member of this place.

ANIMAL WELFARE

My mum and my family have always been animal lovers. I was always taught to respect animals, treat them well and to fight cruelty whenever I can. Animal welfare has gone backwards in this state over the past eight years, despite the efforts of some members from both sides of this house. We still have too many cases of animal cruelty. In 2016 in the electorate of Balcatta the RSPCA investigated nearly 100 cases of animal cruelty. That is too many. We have too many weak, self-regulated standards in industry, racing and intensive farming. Western Australia needs a new, strong animal welfare strategy and we must continue to support organisations such as the Dogs' Refuge Home, the Cat Haven and especially the RSPCA, rather than the disgraceful attack launched on that well-respected organisation by the former government in recent years. One industry continues to fail the animal welfare expectations of the community. It is an industry that excels in the inhumane treatment of animals and one that increasingly wants to export Western Australian jobs overseas. Live export is a sunset industry that deserves shutting down. For the sake of animal welfare and local jobs, we must transition from the live export trade to domestic processing for local consumption and the chilled and frozen meat trade.

LABOUR MOVEMENT

I mentioned my great-grandfather Hugh Winning. Hugh was born in Glasgow, arriving in Fremantle with his family, who became orchardists in Bedforddale. Hugh enlisted with his brothers in the Great War and served on the Western Front. After the war, as well as meeting Esther, my great-grandmother, and having 14 children, he became a guard on the WA government railways where he remained for the rest of his working life. Hugh was a trade unionist and, for a time in the 1940s, secretary of the Midland Junction branch of the Communist Party—according to his Australian Security Intelligence Organisation record anyway!—but was mainly a Labor man, getting his family to help on campaigns and telling one and all to always put the Liberals last. One of my most cherished possessions is his branch delegate certificate from the West Australian Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees' Union of Workers. Like Hugh, I believe in trade unions. I believe they have had, and continue to have, an overwhelming, positive impact on Western Australian society, our economy and the standard of living of everyday people. Through their advocacy and action around workplace safety, trade unions have saved so many workers from injury and death, and continue to do so. They also fight for those who need it most, like low-paid retail and hospitality workers, who are having their penalty rates cut, or truck drivers, who endure low rates of pay, long, unsafe hours and sometimes poor truck maintenance. I thank the union movement for its enduring efforts in protecting workers in this state.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would also like to personally thank Tim Dawson at the Transport Workers' Union of Australia; Peter O'Keeffe and Ben Harris at the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association of WA; as well as the Australian Workers' Union; United Voice; the Maritime Union of Australia; the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union; and the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union. Thank you to the Electrical Trades Union and Australian Services Union for their Use Your Power campaign and thank you to Meredith Hammat, Owen Whittle and UnionsWA for always fighting the good fight.

I would like to say thank you to my mates who endured fundraisers and events, and who regularly attended Wildcats games in my red T-shirts without me! Thank you to all the friends and supporters who donated time and money to our campaign to win back the seat of Balcatta for Labor. I had the best bunch of volunteers as part of the Balcatta community action network, who braved hot days doorknocking or my messy house phoning into the night. I will always be indebted to you. Thank you to our super callers, Mary and Pauline, who made well over 700 calls each in the last few weeks of the campaign. Thank you to Henry, David, Nathan, Tim, Matthew and Michael, who doorknocked almost every weekend in the lead-up to election day. Thank you to Georgia Tree and the members of Young Labor. A big thankyou goes to the mighty Balcatta branch stalwarts Kath, Wally and Anne, Lida, Ken, Rosie, Chum, Matt, Dan and Anne-Marie. You are all Labor legends! We had a merry band of volunteers helping out at events, driving trailers around and fixing my signs and posters. Thank you to Leo, Tony, Kim, Don and Steve. As well as Bob Kucera and Graham Giffard, thank you for the wise counsel and support of former members of Parliament, including John Kobelke, who was so sorely missed in the electorate over the past four years, Nick Catania, Jann McFarlane and Graham Edwards. I hope I can continue your legacy in this area.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Patrick Gorman, Guy Houston, Jo Gaines and the team at WA Labor central headquarters, the now Premier, Mark McGowan, the members for Girrawheen, Mirrabooka and Cannington, Margaret Quirk, Janine Freeman and Bill Johnston, as well as Minister Alannah MacTiernan.

I am also lucky to know some hardworking federal MPs: Madeleine King, Josh Wilson, Matt Keogh, Tim Hammond and Senator Glenn Sterle, who were always generous with advice, their time and support. I would also like to particularly single out Fiona Sterle, the “senatoress” and my former work colleague, for always believing in me.

Thank you to my campaign team, including Andrew, Mel, Frank, Lisa and, straight from Copenhagen, Dan, and also one of my best mates, the recently engaged Chris Davis, for flying from Hong Kong for election day. To my campaign manager, Andrew O’Donnell, and field organiser, Magenta Wilders, thank you so much for the time and effort you put into my campaign, especially given I am normally a campaign manager or director myself and not used to taking orders on where to doorknock or how the material should look! I am so lucky to have you both in my electorate office.

To my twin government Whip and my campaign director, Hon Martin Pritchard, MLC, and his wife, Gina, you were so incredibly generous with your time, support and friendship. I do not know how I will ever repay you both, but know I will always work hard in this place and in the Balcatta electorate.

Now I know she has been mentioned by nearly everyone on this side of the house this week, but for me it is different. Firstly, as a campaigner and then candidate, can I say the sheer hard work and determination that Lenda Oshalem has given to the party has been second to none. Bringing the Community Action Network to WA has transformed the way we campaign forever, and for the better. Thanking her for her role as assistant state secretary of Labor though is obviously not enough for me. I need to thank her for being my best friend and the love of my life. Thank you for your support in the ups and downs of politics and life. Thank you for sticking by my side along with two very, very lucky stray cats—our old grey rug, Jack, and little Maxie—and the rest of the neighbourhood’s drop-in strays and ibis. Lenda, thank you again for everything and I love you.

[Applause.]
