



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Barry Urban, MLA

(Member for Darling Range)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Wednesday, 17 May 2017

Reprinted from Hansard

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 16 May on the following motion moved by Ms J.J. Shaw —

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

To Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson, 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.

MR B. URBAN (Darling Range) [1.11 pm]: I thank Madam Acting Speaker (Ms S.E. Winton) for the opportunity to address members of the Legislative Assembly on my first occasion rising in this great chamber as the member for Darling Range. Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Whadjuk people from the Noongar nation. I wish to pay my respect to their elders, past, present and future. It is a great privilege and honour to have been elected by the people of Darling Range and I will do my best to represent their interests here in Parliament.

I wish to pay tribute to the Darling Range campaign team. Those people include my campaign directors, Matt Keogh, the federal member for Burt, and Dr Tony Buti, the member for Armadale; my campaign manager, Callan Tree; my field organiser, Harrisan Burrows; and my special helpers from the east, Ethan Stein, John McManus and Lucy Collier.

With the assistance of many local volunteers from our community, and rank and file members from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the Maritime Union of Australia, the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, the Australian Services Union, the Electrical Trades Union, the Transport Workers' Union, the Australian Workers' Union, and United Voice, we engaged in an energetic and professional campaign, talking to thousands of Darling Range residents. We listened to their concerns and aspirations. I come to this place motivated and committed to address my community's concerns and seeking to realise its aspirations.

I was fortunate to receive outstanding assistance and support from many of my parliamentary colleagues, including the Premier, who, as the Leader of the Labor Party, visited Darling Range many times before and during the election campaign. Like me, the Premier is committed to improving the lives of my constituents and the lives of all Western Australians. I must make special mention of Matthew Swinbourn, a newly elected upper house member for East Metropolitan Region. Without doubt, he was a confidante and a great boost to my personal morale on days when it was tough. He was with me every single step of the way during the campaign. I thank you, Matt, and I very much look forward to working with you as we seek to improve the lives of people in my electorate.

I am truly grateful for the friendship and support I have had along the way from Phil Eva, who is not here today, Dave Elliott, Mark Keeler, Wayne Eadon, Ron Mellowship, Yazi, of course, John Kirkpatrick and Chelle Rich. You were there when I needed you the most.

The community of Darling Range, like the rest of the state, have given the McGowan Labor government a clear mandate to stop the privatisation of Western Power. On this front, our campaign on this issue was well supported by Wayne Wood and his Australian Services Union team, and Les McLaughlan and his Electrical Trades Union team. Thank you for such a great campaign and for your strong personal support.

My brother John was not able to be here today as he lives in the UK. My brother amazes me in so many ways. I am going to cry now, so just accept it! We were in the best regiment and battery together, which I will go into later. We grew up with love, hatred, hard times and good times, and we have remained best friends. We are so close to each other, and even though distance separates us we keep in regular contact through Skype, along with my niece Larissa and her son Ryan. My brother works long hours in the south east of England as an installations manager for a central heating company. When he has downtime, he spends lots of time raising money for the British cancer foundation. He has emerged as one of the major events organisers for fun runs, Relay for Life and Tough Mudder events. He has been known to wear pink with pride. He wears tutus quite regularly and attacks competitors with water pistols. All this he does to raise awareness for one of the biggest causes of death in our communities. The big C has taken many of our friends and family members far too early. Our great friend Doug Fagg, only in his mid-40s, is fighting this illness. Every day I think of him, Donna and the family, and he will always be in my prayers.

This next bit is going to be hard. Finally, thank you to my family, Rosemary or “Ye Olde Bat”, Lachlan, Nathan, Jack, our adopted daughter Tanya and all my family members in the UK, Australia and Canada. Some are watching this on the internet. I am supposed to be rough and tough, aren't I? Right! Thank you to my wife, Jen, who has supported me through all my craziness over the years. We do all the mad things together. We ride motorbikes and put on wetsuits to dive in the most amazing locations in Australia and around the world. We both love travelling and meeting people from different customs and cultures. I cannot understand why she refuses to join me parachuting or BASE-jumping! She just will not do it. She has supported me through my time as a councillor at the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale and has single-handedly kept our family together. I can never thank her enough.

Today is a day I will never forget. I have just crossed over into my eighteenth year of living in Australia. It has been an eventful journey. Let me go back a little over 48 years. I was born in a coalmining village called Ashington in Northumberland. My father was a coalminer and my mother was an auxiliary nurse in a local mental hospital. My brother and I had a mixed and varied upbringing. Like many other families, we not well-off. My parents saved all year to take us on a holiday and often took out personal loans to pay for our trips. Our upbringing was like most kids in the north east of England; it was a mixture of mischief and adventure. My love for judo and rugby started in Ashington, where I represented the local area in both sports. I am forever grateful to people like Ronnie “Chuckie” Morris and Davy Garrett—may he rest in peace—who introduced discipline and compassion to many kids who entered the dojo. Even if we were not in a financial position to pay the fees, we were always welcome and made to feel welcome.

When I was a kid, north east communities centred on the local coalmines. Kids left school to work down the pit in many varied roles. This started to change in the 1980s under the Thatcher government. The Tories attacked the heart of the union and the working class and the communities. Workers' rights, workers' conditions and wages were all under attack, even though productivity was at its highest. This was a direct assault on my community.

The 1984 miners' strike consolidated our community behind the National Union of Mineworkers. Throughout the year-long strike, my family saw others struggle financially, and my family endured that too. Houses were being repossessed and families were falling apart. The Thatcher government broke the once-proud mining communities of the north east of England. Some of them have never recovered. Families were torn apart as men stepped over the picket lines against the will of their brothers and sisters to save their families from further humiliation. Some men killed themselves, as they thought life would be better for their families if they were not there. Others ended up with criminal records, as they were committing offences in order to put food on the table for their families. My family survived on food parcels from strangers and handouts from friends and family. The strike concluded in early 1985 with promises of better working conditions, better workers' rights and fairer wages. These promises were broken by the Thatcher government and pits were closed at alarming rates. In 1986 the last mine in my area was closed and the community as I knew it no longer exists.

Where I come from, there were not a lot of opportunities available. With the closure of the mines, it was pretty much the dole or commencing a career in petty crime, with some ending up being placed at Her Majesty's pleasure at Durham or Acklington prisons, although there was another option—the military. My brother joined the Army in 1983 while I was still in high school. I had a great time at Hirst High School. I was an average student, gaining average qualifications. We were not supposed to amount to much. However, we were fortunate to have some great teachers, and three in particular encouraged us to break the mould and achieve the best we could. Brian Hannaford, Sheila Harrison and Lynn Mills became mentors for so many kids and made a real difference in my life. At school I forged friendships that have stood the test of time: Don and Doug Kindley; and, of course, my second parents, Dot and Les; Steve Pirt; and Kevin Horwood. Our friendship has been over 40 years long.

On 17 June 1985, I left school and 10 days later I was on the train to the Junior Leaders Regiment Royal Artillery. Later I became a member of the 3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, the mighty J (Sidi Rezegh) Battery. This is where I learned the true meaning of mateship. We worked hard and played even harder. We backed each other and we supported each other through many situations. My regimental colleagues remain loyal friends to this day and I remain loyal to them: Rob "Jock" Donoghue, Sheds, Jimmy Hilton, Taff Laff, Scouse Burton, and, of course, my brother, John, and many, many more. I apologise for not naming you, but I will probably need an extension sometime anyway. I stand in this chamber proudly wearing my regimental tie in respect to you all. Thank you to Jerry Herbert, RHA (Rtd), and Alec "Jock" Downie for your wisdom and advice.

In 1989 my police life commenced, again with a huge sense of pride. I spent time with the Hertfordshire Constabulary, West Midlands Police and Western Australia Police, almost 24 years in total. In the police force I met some the most important mentors in my life such as Thomas Kennedy—PC 607—and his wife Anne, Ian Langdon, Ian Herbert and Mick McCarthy who, it later transpired, came to Western Australia Police and now we cannot get rid of the big Irishman. The police force supported me twice through university, for which I will be eternally grateful. I have stated to my police and lawyer mates in the United Kingdom that I will somehow introduce the words "penguin" and "iceberg" into my speech, so I will see what I can do.

In late 1998, following a period investigating atrocities that humans do to each other in the Balkans, I left the British police to get a clear understanding of my personal journey. My life and outlook on life changed. I travelled the world and caught up with a long-term friend in Rockingham, Willy Buglass, who is also known as Boogie. He has supported me through so

much and I have achieved so much in life with his support and that of his wife, Lesley, including their introduction to my beautiful wife.

It is with reflection and a sense of balance that I see the suffering people endure on a daily basis. I have spent much of my adult life defending and fighting for people who cannot fight for themselves. As a police officer I have defended and supported victims of crime, victims of assaults and victims of domestic-related incidents and their families. I will continue to defend vulnerable people in our community.

Police officers face many issues on a daily basis. We expect a lot from them. We expect our men and women in blue to run towards danger when everyone else runs away. They see more tragedy, loss and life-changing moments than the average person in our community. It should be a no-brainer that we look after our police officers and their mental wellbeing, and that we support them financially if they can no longer work due to a psychological injury. The health and wellbeing of our police officers should be an absolute priority. Although there are no official statistics, we know that in the past three years three Western Australian police officers have tragically taken their life. Three is simply too many. One is too many. Sadly, it was in February this year that a senior constable took her life leaving behind a young son. Police officers on the frontline still say there is a lack of accountability for the unsupportive and often dismissive attitude of the agency following trauma-related incidents and work-acquired medical issues, particularly those of a psychological nature. They agree that the approach to mental health training and awareness is ad hoc and that a pervasive police culture sees illnesses and injuries, particularly those of a psychological nature, as a weakness. This combined with a perceived lack of support from management or the hierarchy exacerbates the propensity for officers to suffer in silence. Our police officers should feel valued and supported for the work that they do in our community and not like a burden on our community.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr B. URBAN: Police officers should not be medically retired through the same process as officers who have been accused of misconduct or corruption. The Western Australian Labor government has committed to change the medical retirement process to ensure that officers can leave WA Police with dignity and respect. The WA Police Union has campaigned for a workers' compensation-style scheme for medically retired officers and the WA Labor government has undertaken to sit down and talk with key stakeholders about providing financial compensation for officers who gave their all to support our community. Policing is a difficult and dangerous job. A career-ending illness or injury can occur anywhere and at any time, even when they are not on duty. Police officers are the only workers who are agents of the Crown. As such, police officers are never off duty, due to their oath of office and common law responsibility to uphold the law. If police officers are injured but still able to work, the current system is very good. However, if an officer is deemed medically unfit, it can leave them and their family destitute. It not only affects the officer, but also has a profound impact on their immediate family. This can mean many things: losing the family home, bankruptcy, a breakdown of family relationships, loss of self-worth, depression or worse. A scheme to rectify this is a priority for this government and I want to help right the wrongs to keep medically retired officers off the scrap heap and give them the respect that they deserve. "Crab man" Ryan Marron, I have your back.

For the past three years I have worked in the area of youth justice in the south west metro area under the management of Claire Heffernan, De-arnne Rayner and Stephannie McPherson. Youth justice officers across the state have the enormous responsibility of trying to assist young offenders by helping them integrate into the community and hopefully break the cycle of reoffending. I am not forgetting you Renee, so do not stress. Looking at the issues youth in

the Peel region face on a daily basis there are five recurring themes: trouble within family; friends who are engaged in criminal behaviour; disengagement from school; disconnection from the community; and personal issues including drug and alcohol use, cognitive disorders and mental health issues.

Methamphetamine and alpha-PVP—a synthetic drug known as the zombie drug—are the worst drugs to hit our communities. These drugs are being used by children as young as 11 years old on a daily basis. These drugs are destroying families in many ways. Offences committed by these offenders are not just stealing or damage related but also assaults and domestic violence. Many young people are exposed to drug and alcohol use in the home and they feel encouraged to use drugs themselves. A lack of money and the absence of basic needs such as food, clothing and housing are commonly identified as reasons for young people getting into trouble. Many young people described stealing as a means of getting money for things that they need.

Many not-for-profit agencies are working with young people in the Peel region—Peel Youth Services, the Peel Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, the Peel Youth Medical Service, Shelter WA, Fairbridge Village, the Palmerston Association and SMYL Community Services, to name but a few. These agencies work tirelessly to support those in our community who need support. As a government we must do better in supporting government agencies and not-for-profit organisations towards achieving better outcomes for those youth who are at risk. Whilst a member of this chamber I will be advocating for this section of our community that needs a voice here.

I want to acknowledge the 24 000 Western Australians living with epilepsy and the challenges that they face every day. Epilepsy is the most common brain disorder in the world and yet sufferers often feel vulnerable, frustrated and isolated. They can face many limits to their independence, restricted opportunities, discrimination, stigmatism and impacts on their health and wellbeing. Epilepsy WA continues to provide them with support to achieve a better outcome and a better quality of life and to raise community awareness about this condition. I am sure members agree that people with epilepsy deserve consideration by us, both the government and the community, to be given a fair go and to feel well supported.

The electorate of Darling Range is a special place. The community pulls together in so many ways, whether it is the heritage society in both Jarrahdale and Pickering Brook, the many community groups or the wonderful bush volunteer fire services. Our community is strong and committed to the hills and foothills. As people are aware, my wife and I, and our eldest son, Lachlan, are active members of the Jarrahdale brigade. Like all brigades in this state we are indebted to many people in our community who volunteer in whatever capacity they can.

WA Labor has made a number of key commitments: the extension of the train line from Armadale to Byford, the transfer of land to the Serpentine–Jarrahdale shire for the regional sports facility in Whitby and the many grant allocations to numerous community groups. I will work hard to ensure that my community benefits from future infrastructure projects and job opportunities.

Finally, as members can see, there are many things in my life that I cherish. It is true that, like the member for Armadale, my family are Dockers supporters. Western Force is my rugby team, alongside Newcastle Falcons, and I am an avid Newcastle United Football Club supporter. At the end of the 2015–16 season Newcastle were relegated from the Premier League to the Champions League. This season they stood proud behind their manager, Rafa Benitez, and thousands of fanatical Geordies to win the Champions League ahead of Brighton on the final day. Next season the “Toon Army” will represent the north east of England in football’s top division as both Sunderland and Middlesbrough have been relegated.

With my electorate officers I look forward to kicking some strategic goals for the people of Darling Range. I will do my best to ensure that the people of Darling Range—my constituents, my community—are strongly represented in this place. I am committed to doing this. This is why I stood as a Labor candidate for Darling Range in 2013 and again in 2017. I was unsuccessful in 2013 and I note the contribution made by the former member for Darling Range, Tony Simpson. Fortunately, 2017 was my day and here I am, the proud local member for Darling Range in the Legislative Assembly—with a Geordie accent. I will work so hard not to disappoint my electorate and to improve the quality of life for our community. Thank you.

[Applause.]
