



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr James (Jim) George Clarko, MLA

(Member for Karrinyup)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply: Fourth Day

Tuesday, 6 August 1974

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Motion

MR CLARKO (Karrinyup) [8.54 p.m.]: Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your appointment to your high office, and I wish you well in it. I would like also to congratulate the members of this House on being successful at the recent election. I look forward to debating with them because I understand that is what this House is about. I might therefore begin in a way which I presume is not provocative, by saying that I stand here as the representative of Karrinyup, which has the second most populous electorate in this House; and since in my electorate there would be more than two electors for every one elector in the electorate of the previous speaker, I would suggest to him that probably I gained more votes—over 8 000—than he has total voters in his entire electorate. I presume therefore that he at least will allow me to speak up with some confidence seeing that he based his argument on numbers of people.

It is a very proud moment for me to stand here as the representative of the people of the electorate of Karrinyup. I deliberately say “people” and not “electors” because I particularly wish to include both the young and the unnaturalised people in my electorate who are without a vote, but who still play a major role in community life. I am hopeful that in the future both of these groups will be further encouraged to participate in the affairs of our district.

It is, of course, the electors of Karrinyup that I must thank for my being here. It is my responsibility to serve them well; this I intend to do with all the energy and ability I possess.

James Clarke—I hasten to repeat: James Clarke—an American clergyman and writer asserted that “A politician thinks of the next election, a statesman of the next generation.” I see the essence of being a good politician as working and planning primarily for the good of the present generations whilst contemporaneously taking full cognisance of the probable needs and aspirations of future generations. Particularly do I believe that major community projects of a permanent nature should be funded by long-term loans, which would enable the people of tomorrow, who will also use these facilities, to share the cost, whilst also providing for the people of today more amenities than would otherwise be provided.

James Clarke defined what is a statesman. I will look closely during the coming months at the members of this Chamber to observe how statesmen act.

What I wish to discuss particularly tonight is the provision of community facilities in Karrinyup. I have spent some six years as a councillor in local government. Local authorities—much maligned by some in ignorance—have generally played the prime part in the provision of community amenities in my electorate, and no doubt this has happened generally throughout Australia. This has been the result of people giving their time, without any reward of a financial nature, who often receive in return a great deal of abuse, generally unfounded.

However, in recent years the number of amenities being sought by the public has greatly increased, due to limitations of finance local authorities have been struggling to match these demands. I aim to make Karrinyup a better place to live in. How can this be done? It has been cryptically stated that life is for living, and most people work hard at their occupations so as to gain an income which will increase their opportunity to enjoy their leisure time. We do not live to work but work to live.

Today the average person is occupationally engaged for fewer hours than ever before, excluding perhaps the self-employed person. The major exception I make to this is the housewife. I would hesitate to say that her duties are lessening. I regard the mother with her family as the cornerstone of our society, yet despite her full-time job as a housewife today more and more women are taking another full-time job in the work force, either by choice or by necessity.

These women’s burdens are enormous; yet amazingly they perform both roles successfully. It is the satisfaction that they are serving their families that enables all mothers and housewives to—in the words of a current television advertisement—“wear their fingers to the bone” for their loved ones.

How does a community provide a better environment for its citizens so that they can enjoy life more? My time in local government has brought home to me the urgent need both to upgrade the provision of community services and facilities in my older suburbs and to plan ahead for them in new subdivisions.

I am proud to watch the increase in the provision of community facilities which is currently under way in my electorate. I have been closely associated with some of them. I am also aware of many more improvements which still need to be done.

I would like to describe some of the facilities which are under way at present and then comment on the need to provide land for community facilities in the new areas not yet subdivided in Karrinyup. In particular I commend the Shire of Wanneroo—one of the most dynamic local governing authorities in Western Australia—for the performance it has shown in recent years.

Mr Nanovich: Hear, hear!

Mr CLARKO: It is due, indeed, to the quality and drive of its leaders and its ex-leaders, both elected and appointed, that these facilities have been brought to fruition. In saying that, I include the provision of the new Sorrento–Dun Craig Library and Information Centre, the adjacent part-completed hall-gymnasium, and the embryo Sorrento Sporting Association. This, in time—I hope it will be soon—will develop with the help of the shire and others into a first-class sporting complex at the junction of Warwick Road and Marmion Avenue.

I hold the belief that sportsmen's clubs will become the social centres not only for our new suburbs, but also for the old. On our north metropolitan coast dedicated citizens and sportsmen showed the way some 20 years ago—despite many obstacles—in founding the Scarborough Sportsmen's Club, and today its clubhouse is the envy of all on the coast.

More recently the residents at North Beach, including myself, have been associated with the establishment of the North Beach and Districts Sportsmen's Club. This club joined together sports clubs covering bowls, tennis, Australian rules football, rugby, and cricket. Most importantly, this club includes citizens who are not participants in sports, but who join the club in order to belong to an enjoyable community organisation. I hope this group will expand rapidly in our club, for in any suburb there are numerous people who move into new homes who are keen to meet more than just their immediate neighbours in their street—they are people who have something to offer the community or who even need to take something from it in some way.

However, unless they become associated with some large community club, then five or 10 years will slip by before they gain that tremendous feeling of being a real part of their community. I firmly believe that community involvement and pride in one's district adds immeasurably to one's enjoyment of life. District sportsmen's clubs can fill this need and enhance local community pleasure, involvement, and self-development.

Sportmen's clubs and the like can bring together not only people with both similar and dissimilar sporting interests, but also can bring together people of differing ages and backgrounds and thus integrate all cross-sections of our community.

So in 1974 we find a dedicated group of people at Sorrento seeking to provide a community centre which will be of inestimable value for the people of Sorrento and Dun Craig. I wish them well and offer them any assistance in this project that they may want from me.

I hope the day is near when the Innaloo Sportmen's Club can also open its doors. Despite tremendous difficulties, the committee of the club has persevered with this project and surely deserves every assistance now. A committee has been setup just over my electoral boundary in Warwick which is intended to serve the people of Hamersley, whilst in Amelia Heights and the surrounding areas the Balcatta Civic Association is also close to obtaining a home of its own.

Let us not forget also that a first-class sporting complex has been provided by the Yugoslav community through its own energies and efforts in Balcatta. It is known as the Yugoslav Club. I congratulate the members of this organisation for the magnificent club they have and for the great work they do in our community for those who have been a long time in our State or who are recent arrivals, especially those who have not yet gained complete fluency in English,

So it can be appreciated that throughout my whole electorate responsible citizens have provided, or are in the process of doing so, community centres for their local neighbourhood which will help make Karrinyup a better place to live in, and I believe that local government should help as much as possible in the formation of these clubs, not necessarily with cash grants, but with the provision of land and, where necessary, guarantees for their loans when it is obvious that they will become viable propositions.

To conclude my comments on district sportsmen's clubs I stress that I see them not as just another tavern, but principally as a community meeting place where a wide range of people of various occupations, interests, and ages meet, in their increasing leisure time, to talk, listen, enjoy, act, and, at the same time, with their neighbours, help each other in friendly surroundings, both for their own individual good and for that of their districts.

Electorates such as mine also have a need for community halls. This is particularly true of the new areas where usually there are no alternative places suitable for meetings such as church halls, RSL clubs, and the like—such as those that often exist in older suburbs—that can substitute as a community meeting place. After some delay it is pleasing to report that a district hall is to be built in Hamersley by the City of Stirling, it will cost over \$100 000. It is due to be opened at the end of October, subject to weather conditions, shortage of materials, and God willing. It will include, apart from a main hall, a number of separate meeting or committee rooms which will be available to local organisations for club purposes. The land was generously donated by the Rural and Industries Bank.

The need to obtain such a gift of land points to a current problem that applies in developing residential areas such as those in my electorate; namely, the provision of land for civic community buildings.

The law requires that 10 per cent of a total area to be subdivided shall be reserved for public open space, but only in some large comprehensive subdivisions have developers been required to set aside land for civic purposes. Whitfords was one of these.

The policy of the Town Planning Board regarding public open space to be provided on the subdivision of land is that it should not be used for community halls, kindergartens, infant health centres, autumn centres, scout halls, sporting clubs, Youth centres, or, for what we may describe in today's terms, community recreation centres. These are facilities which the modern person seeks, needs, and, in fact, demands.

Whilst one understands the board's desire to preserve areas for recreation, it has led to active sports such as football being relatively well provided for, whilst the provision of land for specific community buildings has been dependent upon the generosity of developers. Fortunately, in my area these developers have been most generous in providing free land for buildings of this type, particularly for kindergartens.

It is anticipated that in the near future the undeveloped area—known to some as West Hamersley—which is the land west of Everingham Street and between North Beach Road and Beach Road—that is, within the locality of Waterman—is to be subdivided. I am concerned lest this area and, of course, the other unsubdivided areas in my electorate, in Marmion, Hamersley, Duncraig, Hillarys, and Padbury, will not have land set aside for civic community purposes and that the Town Planning Board will not allow the facilities to be located in the 10 per cent of the area allotted for public open space. Some members may have passed this area if they have travelled to the Karrinyup Golf Club.

In May, 1971, the Land Housing Consultative Committee recommended that up to 2½ per cent of a subdivision be used as sites for local community purposes, leaving the remaining 7½ per cent for recreational use, available for sporting activities, although, increasingly, local authorities are setting aside areas for passive, rather than active, recreational uses.

The current policy of the Town Planning Board has been, I understand, to submit any application for subdivision to the Metropolitan Water Board, the Public Health Department, and the relevant local authority for comment. These comments, together with reports from their own officers, are then considered by the Town Planning Board. However, I understand that it has been the practice of the board to approve the subdivision, subject to certain conditions, including the setting aside of 10 per cent of the area for public open space, leaving the local authority to negotiate later with the developer for the acquisition of sites for kindergartens, halls, or other buildings which the community may desire to acquire.

Further, I understand the board does not support—as I have already stated—the location of community buildings on the 10 per cent of land set aside for public open space. I earnestly hope that this policy will be urgently reviewed for the benefit of our metropolitan residents and others in Western Australia.

A much larger community facility is also under way in my electorate; that is, the Karrinyup Cultural Centre. I have been associated with the planning of this centre for some years. The land for this centre, which was donated by the developer free of cost, is located on the north side of the Karrinyup shopping centre, and the first stage is the provision of a library which will be the central library for the City of Stirling. The cost is over \$290 000 and it will be officially opened in September. The area on which the centre is situated comprises some 3½ acres.

The planning includes a cultural hall, with committee rooms for local organisations, suitable for showing films by, say, a local film group. There will also be a stage which will permit various theatrical performances both by local amateur groups as well as by major professional bodies. A Wurlitzer organ has been donated for inclusion in the centre. Nearly \$200 000 remains in a City of Stirling trust fund for this purpose, but unfortunately building costs have escalated so much in recent months that we now find we are \$80 000 short. This is despite the fact that the local authority did put aside approximately \$100 000 a year during each of the last five years and at the time this would have well and truly financed what we planned to do and much more.

In fact, a youth centre has been excluded from the main cultural centre because of the present Federal Government, or whoever else is causing inflation in Australia. I understand, from a talk I heard on economics on a television programme the other day by an American economist, that inflation in the United States is imported, British inflation is imported, West German inflation is imported, so presumably inflation is coming from somewhere out in space! Perhaps we should let it run.

The cultural centre is planned to serve not just adjacent suburbs but also the immediate region with its population of 80 000 residents. We have asked both the State and Federal Governments for assistance in this matter. We see it as a special regional facility and I earnestly hope we receive support for this project.

I would now like to move from the provision of community facilities—to improve our suburban living—to comment on an area which, I believe, should be treated very carefully. I refer to our beaches.

I was born in Cottesloe—which probably will not give me any advantage with you, Mr Speaker, but I am very proud of that fact. I lived for most of my early life in Cottesloe, but in recent years, from the time that I married, I have lived at Trigg, right alongside the beach. Like many Western Australians, I am a beachgoer, although perhaps not as active as I might once have been.

As a child I swam at Cottesloe and at North Cottesloe beaches. We used to walk down the street to the beach—the whole family—and I used to wear one of those woollen bathing costumes right up to my neck, I am sure such a costume would be banned these days! We used to share the clean white beach.

I am not a person who has travelled but I understand that our clean white beaches are the envy of most countries throughout the world. We were able to lie on the beautiful clean sand and swim in the medium-sized surf at Cottesloe. The surf there is not as good as the surf at Trigg!

In those days there were kiosks nearby which provided food and drink. However, today there is a movement in some quarters by people who want to develop our beaches fully. They want to construct vast numbers of shops, and play piped music—with advertisements—to the people on our beaches. There are also those who want to build amusement parks adjacent to our beaches. Some people also believe that the high-priced land in the vicinity of our beaches could be used for high-rise flats. Let me say that I am opposed to all that type of development.

Perhaps my viewpoint is oversimplified but I believe our beaches should be left in as natural a state as possible, and particularly do I believe that the motorcar should not visually predominate on our landscape. Instead, motorcars should be hidden as much as possible from the general view by careful planning, even if it means that some beachgoers will have to walk a little further to their cars.

A number of gentlemen recently approached me with a plan showing how car parking could be provided and covered with a grapevine type of trellis. I do not know whether grapevines would grow on our beaches but the plan did seem to be attractive and would be an improvement on the acres of cars which we see at the present time.

Of course, we also need more shade trees at our popular beaches. The City of Stirling is currently experimenting with suitable trees and to the best of my knowledge to date the only trees which are suitable are the Norfolk Island pine, a Queensland sheoak, and the New Zealand Christmas tree. They, alone, have proved to be capable of standing up to the very high winds and salt on our exposed western coast. They will provide both shade and a better aesthetic appearance to our coast than is the case at present.

I particularly want to criticise the lolly stick appearance of our beaches where the electric light poles stand up in great ugliness, “No Parking” signs stand high, and many other posts stand erect. The landscape has the appearance of an overcrowded crib board. Various public buildings are located here and there which, perhaps with the exception of those at nearby City Beach, are devoid of any beauty of line.

I hope our beaches can be beautified where they have previously been scarred by man. Where minimal facilities cannot be hidden they should be planned to fit in with the landscape, or camouflaged in some way. In truth, the most beautiful beach I have ever seen was one where there was no trace of man.

I urge that the construction of buildings between the coastal highway and the beach front be kept to the barest minimum, irrespective of whether or not the buildings are for the use of Government departments. I am proud to say I was associated with the rejection of a proposed CSIRO laboratory at Watermans Bay—a \$300 000 building which was planned for the area. Additionally, in association with the City of Stirling, a letter was written to the Minister requesting him not to extend the existing State marine laboratory at Watermans Bay. I would add that we received a reply stating that when the money was available it was intended to extend the laboratory.

I hope the new Minister will listen to the pleas of those of us who live on the coast and not approve the extension because I do not think that such a laboratory should be situated in that area. My plea was not just on behalf of those people who desired a view of the ocean.

I am sure that there are many people like myself who have a love for our beaches and who do not wish to see buildings constructed between the coastal road and the ocean unless they are of the greatest and direst necessity.

Our beaches are a priceless asset and I hope that in future years local authorities, and State Government departments, will take a greater interest in the views of conservation groups and knowledgeable citizens who are interested in the development of our coastline.

I support the member for Toodyay who has indicated in this House that he will attempt to arrange for a land swap so that the housing areas located in the nodes adjacent to the beachfront at Whitfords can be relocated in an area which is not between the coastal highway and the beach.

It has always been a fundamental personal pleasure for me to live by, look at, and bathe in the Indian Ocean. I live where I do today because I choose to do so. The beach must be retained as near as possible in its natural state so that all my fellow Western Australians can share and enjoy it, particularly the people in the Karrinyup electorate who deserve to live in a community which will enable them—whether they are young or old—to live a happy and fulfilling life.