



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



**Mrs Monica Holmes, MLA
(Member for Southern River)**

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Thursday, 13 March 1997

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

MRS HOLMES (Southern River) [11.20 am]: It is a privilege for me to address the House today as the first member for the new seat of Southern River. In my inaugural remarks I must congratulate the new and re-elected members in this place and give thanks to my campaign team, who all worked long and hard with me to win the seat. Particular thanks go to the Gosnells-Southern River branch, my campaign committee, my campaign director, David Brewster, and my husband, Graham, whose forbearance and patience never wavered. To both of these wonderful people I owe my eternal gratitude.

To become a representative of the people has been my long term ambition and it is an honour I do not take lightly. My determination is to work with and for the community and to do whatever I can to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to have and enjoy a good quality of life. This determination is the motivation behind my maiden speech. Maiden speech this may be, but maiden I am not! I would rather be regarded as a canny mother hen. As a canny mother hen, and broody on behalf of my electorate, I hope to ensure that more golden eggs are laid south of the river than has been the case in recent years. Scratching around the backyards of Southern River and adjacent areas, listening to my constituents, I have become aware that the community perceives that most of the chicken feed has gone to the northern suburbs and they feel that they are at the bottom of the pecking order.

Since I realise I cannot continue with this metaphor without dropping myself into the chicken manure, I will now get down to the nitty gritty. The south west and south east urban corridors are divided by the rural heartland of Southern River. As members know, this is in the main made up of the Jandakot underground water protection area. As such, it has presented difficulties to planners over the years because it lacks cohesion. Notwithstanding this, the people of the area have much in common and it is my aim to bring the entire region together for a concerted attack on the major challenge that faces the community. That major challenge is employment. For example, Department of Social Security January statistics indicate that the number of job seekers receiving the Newstart allowance in the south metropolitan region was 5 098 higher than in the north metropolitan region. In percentage that means that 28.6 per cent more people are in this category south of the river than in the north. This is an undesirable situation.

With the support of federal politicians and state colleagues in this and the other place I am determined to inspire the south metropolitan community to tackle this problem, which members all appreciate is a blight on the hopes and aspirations of our youth and mature unemployed. If we are a democracy in the truest sense of the word, the community must also take its place as a strong and competent entity that can initiate progress and reform, rather than place total reliance on government to do things for it. In this regard, our job as parliamentarians is not only to legislate, but also to lead.

As elected representatives not only are we here to listen to the needs of our community and to resolve problems faced by those who do not have the knowledge to slash through the jungle of bureaucracy, but also we must encourage local organisations, such as the Chambers of Commerce, and local authorities to make the outstanding contribution to development that is within their capacity to achieve. We have already seen the benefits that have been achieved at a local government level through the various regional groups, and it is my intention to give them whatever help I can. At the same time, I intend to enlist their support, as well as that of the Chambers of Commerce and other industry and employer groups, in a bid to bring work not only to my electorate, but also to other suburbs in the south metropolitan area.

There is no doubt that coalition initiatives have been instrumental in putting Western Australia in a strong position on the job front. However, there are still areas which the advantages of economic growth have not yet reached. As the Premier has always rightly stated, the main focus for employment must be economic growth, gained by attracting increasing levels of business investment. Therefore, the business and industrial community must be given the encouragement and the confidence to create the jobs which are still in short supply in the southern metropolitan area. I call on my parliamentary colleagues with an interest in achieving a significant increase in regional employment to join forces with me in formulating a growth strategy that will benefit all our electors. Through a sound strategy, combined with determination, goodwill, energy and influence, it should be possible for us to make an impact on employment in the southern metropolitan area, based on increased economic growth.

Let me start the ball rolling by asking the question: What can be done? One answer lies in the fact that too often we look at large scale solutions when the better approach may be to tackle issues such as employment at a local and regional level. In this way problems can more easily be seen and broken down. This in turn allows us to deal with issues we identify as of primary importance, such as how to attract the business investment needed to provide employment opportunities.

Another answer must be the provision of incentives for investment, which should include the identification and removal of all unnecessary bureaucracy that stands in the way of economic growth. We must also ensure that we provide adequate transport facilities that meet the need. For example, we plan transport links to the central business district when movement within the region has at least an equal priority. In addition, while there is no doubt that the introduction of the rapid transport bus route in the south west corridor will provide a short term solution for the coastal belt, it is equally imperative that we improve transport facilities in the south east corridor. We must ensure that everyone in the region is provided with transport alternatives to enable them to reach job opportunities, not only in the CBD but also in nearby industrial precincts.

I am fully aware that money does not grow on trees, but it is imperative that we do all we can to provide the infrastructure necessary to achieve this goal. I urge the Government to do everything possible to bring forward the implementation of the proposed freight and passenger rail link south of the river. This will assist greatly both business and the tourism industry by providing opportunities, gained through increased accessibility. It will also supply the community with much needed access to greater freedom of mobility. This in turn will assist the environment, through a decrease in vehicular use.

In order to attract industry local government must be encouraged to consider providing a differential rating of industrial zones, as well as ensuring that the full range of essential services are provided to existing and proposed industrial land. This will enable manufacturing and other businesses to be established at a viable cost, and ensure they do not have to face an enormous financial impost when they wish to expand their operations in the future.

Another avenue I will pursue, with assistance from the Minister for Local Government and the Treasurer, is that a close look be taken at the possibility of introducing municipal bonds. This proposal is based upon the United States model, which gives the community the opportunity to invest in its own future and, at the same time, receive interest income, which in the United States is generally exempt from federal and state taxation. The establishment of municipal bonds would enable both the State Government and local authorities more readily to initiate developments as well as being able to finance infrastructure repairs or improvements. It is a proposal worthy of examination. Not only would it give people a chance to receive a financial benefit by investing in their own community, they would also be investing in the flow-on benefit of employment opportunities for them and their children.

It is imperative that during this term of office we are seen to take action to redress the imbalance that is currently perceived by the community south of the river. This perception is not unfounded. I well remember an example of that when I was doorknocking in the 1993 election campaign. I doorknocked an elderly lady in Gosnells and she told me that she was really excited when she received an invitation from the then Premier to attend the official opening of the northern suburbs railway. Unfortunately, however, she told me that she was unable to attend because she had no vehicle of her own and there was no public transport available in the area to get her there.

To this end we must lay the foundations through the budget process to ensure that the needs of the communities south of the river are given first priority. This action alone would assist employment by stimulating business confidence and attracting investment and tourism to an area that has the potential to play an important part in the future of Western Australia.

While the electors of Southern River have my sincere thanks for providing me with success at the polls, they can rest assured that it is my aim and determination to do everything I can to ensure that they too achieve success. They are proud to live in an area that has the potential to become a major success story in the greater success story of Western Australia. They have shown me their confidence, not only in electing me as a local representative but also in re-electing the coalition Government to lead them to the turn of the century. Now it is our turn to seize the opportunity to reward them for their faith by providing southern metropolitan communities with the opportunities for success they so rightly deserve.

[Applause.]