



**PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**



**Mrs Judy Hughes MLA**  
**(Member for Kingsley)**

**Address-in-Reply Debate**

**Legislative Assembly**

**Tuesday, 29 March 2005**



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### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

#### *Motion*

**MRS J. HUGHES (Kingsley)** [3.41 pm]: I move -

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

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 Speaker, I congratulate you on your re-election to the position of Speaker in this house. I am sure that your rulings and judgments will reflect the impartiality that is vital to the spirit of this chamber and the business we are all here to undertake. My congratulations go also to all my parliamentary colleagues, and to the Premier for the re-election of this government. I look forward to working with both sides of the house.

I have the great honour of being chosen today to be the first speaker of the thirty-seventh Parliament of Western Australia, so I also acknowledge the traditional owners upon whose ancestral lands we now stand.

I am honoured and privileged to represent the electorate of Kingsley. I thank the electors for the confidence they have placed in me. My commitment is to reciprocate this trust by doing the best job I can for our electorate, and to contribute towards the delivery of good government to the people of Western Australia.

Becoming a member of Parliament is not something I ever imagined would happen to me. I find it fascinating how circumstances and timing can influence our lives and move us in directions we least expect. I bring a range of experiences to my new role. As the recently elected member for Kingsley, I am first and foremost a daughter, a wife and a mother, which are roles that I cherish because of the meaningful and supportive relationships they give me. I have also been active in the community throughout my adult life. This began with playgroup associations and school parent and

citizens associations, and I established the Girrawheen community group about eight years ago just prior to the City of Wanneroo being suspended during the commissioners' appointment. In 1999, I was elected councillor to the then new City of Wanneroo Council. These are the roles that form the basis of my life experience, my values, my ideals and my expectations for the future.

My parents, Cornelius and Johanna Verhagen, migrated with their respective families to Australia from Holland in the early 1950s. Like many migrants, my parents worked hard to create a life of happiness and prosperity for themselves and their children here in Western Australia. They worked hard so they might see their children and their children's children thrive in everything that this great country of ours has to offer. Western Australia has a rich multicultural heritage of which I am very proud to be a part. I believe strongly in valuing the history and accomplishments of our ancestors, and I am inspired by the hopes and dreams of new citizens as they reach our shores and take the oath to become Australians. Cultural diversity is at the very heart of what it means to be Australian. It adds vibrancy and depth to our communities here where we live. Mutual respect and understanding of and to each other brings peace and hope to our daily lives. The experience I have gained over the past eight years working at the community level, first as a community activist and then as a community councillor with the City of Wanneroo, has proved to be invaluable. People invest themselves in their families, their lifestyle and their communities. People have pride in the places where they live, and they want to give their children a sense of belonging and hope for the future. They want their communities to be safe and well maintained, and to have good streetscapes, parks, schools and other community facilities. It has always been my belief that people respond positively or negatively to their environment: give them an old coat, and they will have no respect and no care will be taken to preserve it or to protect it; give them a new coat, and it will be cherished.

As a community activist and local government representative, my mission is to transform the attitudes and to bring new and exciting change to a community that had lost faith in the political process. This period in my life enabled me to focus on a wide range of issues, and to participate in many facets of community building. I refer to the New North program of urban renewal, planning and development in the northern corridor, and to work with youth councils to ensure that local young people had a voice and adequate recreational facilities and activities. I also served with the Mindarie Regional Council in developing a program for the future implementation of a secondary waste treatment plant. This was to help the region meet the government's No Waste By 2020 strategy, and to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. These pursuits have led me to this new and exciting chapter in my life.

My electorate of Kingsley falls within the boundaries of the City of Joondalup and, to a lesser degree, the City of Wanneroo. The City of Joondalup is presently undergoing an inquiry leaving the Kingsley electorate without democratically elected local representation. Elected representatives of local government play an important role in giving local people a voice on issues that concern them. Therefore, as the member for Kingsley, I am keen to see the re-establishment of an elected body as soon as is practicable. Through my experience, I believe the value of local government should not be underestimated. It is vital to forge good links and relationships with the elected body and the senior administration. Many important community and infrastructure projects are funded and implemented through a partnership by both tiers of government. In my electorate, such joint projects include the Kingsley Football Club upgrade, the Warwick Bowling Club extensions, road and traffic management and the provision of local community services to the aged and to families.

The seat of Kingsley contains some 27 500 electors and includes five suburbs - namely, Greenwood at the southern boundary, and Warwick, Kingsley and Woodvale, with Edgewater newly on board at our northern boundary. I welcome Edgewater. The electorate of Kingsley is the home to three railway stations, with the latest addition being Greenwood station, which was opened in February 2005. I am very proud to be part of a government that is committed to developing a world-class

public transport system in Perth. Increasing patronage on the MetroRail northern suburbs railway line has been such a success that the government has added two new stations to meet demand. Greenwood station is expected to have 2 600 passengers on weekdays, with services during the height of the morning peak period running as frequently as every two minutes. The journey time to the city from that station is only 16 minutes, and with 600 Park 'n' Ride bays, convenient set-down and pick-up facilities for vehicles and access for pedestrians and cyclists, this new station is proving to be a popular addition to our community. Car use in Perth is reduced through the provision of a top-class transport system. This is environmentally sound. I look forward to the near future when Kingsley residents will be able to travel as far south as Mandurah in an easy and relaxed manner.

The Kingsley electorate boasts the inclusion of the Yellagonga Regional Park at its eastern boundary. The "Chain of Diamonds", with Lake Goollelal and Lake Joondalup, form part of its lake system. Yellagonga is a 1 500-hectare park. It is a green haven in the northern suburbs, and is highly valued by the local residents. The wetlands are home to a wide variety of wildlife species and provide a summer refuge for migratory birds. The park contains walkways and cycleways as well as some important remnants of our early European settlement, such as Perry's Paddock, Cockman House and the old Luisini Winery. It is simply a great place to go to bushwalk, to birdwatch or to picnic. The Yellagonga Regional Park belongs to the entire population, and it has been set aside by the government to be protected for future generations. It is a place where families and individuals can enjoy the scenery and its surroundings. The park is an area cherished by my constituents and is dear to me personally. The Cities of Joondalup and Wanneroo and the Department of Conservation and Land Management have now implemented the Yellagonga Regional Park management plan, completed in 2003. However, at present some development proposals may be instrumental in transforming the landscape and a sense of place for the Kingsley electorate. It is my intention to work closely with the relevant ministers to ensure that the park becomes an icon for the northern suburbs. The needs of the community must be considered with any proposals for the area.

During the recent election campaign, the Kingsley electorate saw a number of community grassroots issues come under the spotlight. A group of dedicated residents created a political party to take part in our democratic process, to protect and restore faith in their ideals and to support a local family. I am proud to have been part of an election that attracted such dedicated candidates. I congratulate them and wish them well for the future. Through that group I came to understand the plight of a local family business and the distress of a close-knit family pulled apart by a decade-long struggle to save their home and business. I was lobbied vigorously by many people in the seat of Kingsley during the past eight months or so about the Zuvela family and their everyday fresh fruit and vegetable market business. These people have supported the Zuvela case with passion. This is the calibre of the Kingsley community, which I am very proud to represent in this place today and well into the future. Many people in the Kingsley community would like to see the Zuvela family business restored in the local area. I reaffirm my commitment to the Zuvela family to work with the government and the community to find an outcome acceptable to all parties. Discussions have taken place in the past few months and I am optimistic that some resolution can be found. I assure the community that all that can be done will be done. I set my task to ensuring that the community will be heard. I also take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Ms Alannah MacTiernan, and her staff for their interest in and attention to these matters over the unfolding course of events. I look forward to further discussions.

Kingsley faces other challenges over the coming years, two of which are housing affordability and the need for family-friendly work practices. The average price of a house in my electorate is around \$280 000 to \$300 000, making it hard for first home buyers and young families aspiring to own their own homes. The increase in housing prices is a national trend and an issue that is hitting the family budget hard. Many families have had to move from being a single-income family to one in

which both parents work just to pay the mortgage. Families are facing tough decisions, such as when they can afford to have children and how their children will be cared for. In many cases the choice to stay at home or go to work is removed altogether from the family's agenda. I believe this is a step backward for women and fathers who take on the major role of child care. I was lucky; my family worked hard to make ends meet on a single income so that I could care for my children at home. It was not easy, but we were able to have and make the choice ourselves. I am pleased to say that financial relief for first home buyers has been a priority of the Gallop government. The government's \$1 billion tax package announced last year included a 10 per cent cut in stamp duty on all property conveyances. Stamp duty for first home buyers of properties valued up to \$250 000 or land valued up to \$150 000 was also abolished. Western Australia now has one of the most generous stamp duty concessions for first home buyers in Australia. I am also pleased that our government will continue to address the important issue of housing affordability through planning, public housing, assistance with bonds for private rental and assistance with home loans into the future for the next generation of home buyers and their families.

I believe that family-friendly work practices are important, especially for the growing number of double-income families. Finding the right balance between working life and family life can be hard. Unfortunately, progress is often slow in addressing flexibility for families in the business and industry sectors. The government is leading by example and has already introduced paid parental leave and personal leave to care for sick children for all public sector employees. A review of working hours in Western Australia is under way and a review of ways to reduce WA's gender pay gap has been completed. I will watch the outcomes of both of those reviews with great interest.

An issue that comes up time and again when I doorknock in my electorate is the need for the area to attract a local general practitioner. Many GPs are opting to leave their small local practices to join large medical centres. Not only have doctors moved away from Kingsley, but also new patients are finding it increasingly difficult to get on the books of other practices due to a lack of doctors in the locality and the sheer weight of need. Even residents who have established themselves with a doctor are being forced to wait long periods for their appointments. Let me assure constituents that I will investigate what can be done to attract a local GP back to our community.

In the meantime, fortunately, my electorate can access bulk-billed GP services for children and concession cardholders at the after-hours GP clinic located at the Joondalup Health Campus. My constituents will also benefit from the redevelopment and expansion of the Joondalup Health Campus. Hospital bed numbers will be increased from 235 to 325 - an increase of 90 beds. The emergency department will be able to cater for 50 000 patients a year, operating theatres will be doubled from six to 12 in the next three years and a new \$1.7 million dental clinic will be built on site. By 2020 Joondalup Health Campus will be a tertiary hospital. Members of my electorate will have access to better hospital services closer to where they live and, with the increasing demand and rapid growth in the northern corridor, this will lay down a good, solid foundation for health initiatives well into the future.

Education and training is another primary concern for the people of my electorate. As a mother of three teenage children aged between 14 and 19, it is a concern which I share and about which I am passionate. Education is the key that unlocks the door of opportunity for young people, giving them the skills they need to shape their futures. I believe that as community leaders and legislators, it is our responsibility to ensure that the education and training system is of the highest possible standard and is accessible, relevant and fair. The need for accessible training opportunities in light of the ever-changing face of the modern workplace, coupled with a constant need for retraining, is paramount to achieving a fluid, progressive and skilled work force. Children spend a considerable amount of waking time at school; therefore, it is vital that they be provided with the very best learning environment. I commend the government's commitment to addressing this issue by allocating an extra \$64 million to fix every school maintenance issue on the books. I also commend

the government for giving teachers the opportunity to teach to the best of their ability, specifically by providing schools with adequate tools and resources and by giving teachers the support they need to help those students who are encountering difficulties in the classroom, sometimes to the point at which their behaviour becomes disruptive. I also understand that funding for the highly successful school chaplaincy service is to be doubled; this is highly commendable.

I am very pleased to have been a part of the government's recent decision to allocate \$300 000 to Woodvale Senior High School to assist in the development of a state-of-the-art music facility. I take this opportunity to congratulate the staff and the school community for their dedication and hard work in raising the amount they need to get this facility in place. As a parent, I understand the cost to families to send their children to school or to place them in training. The costs can be high. The non-means tested \$200 that will be provided to parents whose children are still in high school, and the \$400 that will be provided to parents whose children are enrolled in full-time training, will offer welcome relief for many families. Welcome relief will be provided also by the introduction of the 50c fares for students who travel to school on public transport, regardless of how many zones through which they travel. That impacts on my family quite heavily.

During my recent discussions with local youth councils, a key concern raised was the need for young people to be provided with adequate information and advice about career choices and pathways. Young people are acutely aware also of the need to be adequately skilled if they are to find work in today's complex and changing labour market. For these reasons, I welcome the government's commitment to keeping our young people connected with either education or training, by partnering with industry to create extra apprenticeships and traineeships to re-engage people in the 15 to 24-year-old age group who are currently unemployed and unskilled, by creating the flexibility so that young people can start apprenticeships while they are still at school.

In conclusion, I will thank a very special group of people who played a significant role in my campaign, and without whose help I would not be standing here today. I will mention the three Grahams, who kept the faith and acted as my mentors throughout the entire process. I thank Graham Edwards for his experience and solid advice; Graham Giffard for his sincerity and earthiness, which kept me grounded and focused; and Graham Pearson, whom I could not have done without.

I thank also my fundraising and campaign teams. I thank the girls, Diana, Kathy, Helen and Fiona, and also Jim and Gordon. I would like them to know that I am eternally grateful for their time and encouragement. Our success was truly a team effort. I acknowledge also those people who have supported me at fundraising evenings, and those who generously donated and pledged their support to do what most people thought was impossible. Thank you.

I acknowledge my father, Mr Cor Verhagen, who was unable to share this experience with us today in the flesh, and my precious mother, who is always there for me. You have been the best parents and role models that a child could wish for. Your love and sense of what is right will always support and strengthen me, whatever I face in the future.

Finally, I send my love to my family. My gorgeous husband Colin, my children Alex-Ann, Emma and young Col, who were more than patient and understanding, and who held the fort at home and worked by my side and contributed to the successes that we as a family now enjoy. Without them none of this would be worthwhile. It is for my family and all others who enjoy the same blessing that I pledge my commitment to serve the people in the electorate of Kingsley, the regions and the state of Western Australia. Thank you.

[Applause.]

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