



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Paul Andrews MLA

(Member for Southern River)

Address-in-Reply Debate

Legislative Assembly, Wednesday 2 May 2001

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Motion

MR ANDREWS (Southern River) [5.57 pm]: Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on being elected Speaker of this House. I hope you enjoy your time in the Chair. I acknowledge other new members of this House and congratulate them. I also thank those longer-serving members of the House who have welcomed us so warmly. I am sure that those sitting opposite today will ensure that that warm welcome is extended well into the future.

Recently those of us who are new to this House were put through an induction process. We were addressed by many long-serving and distinguished members of this House. They spoke about the various aspects of the function and processes of this Chamber. They constantly spoke about the honour and privilege that we have as members of Parliament. As I stand here tonight, my feeling is one of overwhelming elation at being in this place. I am honoured to be the member for Southern River. I am honoured that the people of Southern River have seen fit to have a Labor member of Parliament represent them. I do not recoil from being an emotional person, and I wished to place my feelings on record.

My electorate is one of the fastest-growing areas in the metropolitan area. It extends west to east from the Kwinana Freeway almost to the South Western Highway, and from Thomas Road in the south to the suburbs of Canning Vale, Jandakot, Gosnells and Maddington in the north. It covers an area of over 200 square kilometres. There are now 31 500 voters in my electorate. It is an electorate of great diversity. I look forward to working with the various local government authorities within it.

The City of Gosnells in the northern part of my electorate was originally established by European settlement in 1829 as a farming territory. I remember, as a boy travelling from Bunbury, that before we entered Perth we had to stop at Gosnells and clean ourselves up. It was the town people got to before they went to the city. Today in many parts of Gosnells people can still see some remaining farms, including a goat farm which exports produce to South East Asia.

The City of Armadale in the eastern part of my electorate incorporates the area around Forrestdale Lake, which is truly a marvellous part of the metropolitan area. Some days

when I look across those waters, I see absolute paradise. It is an internationally recognised heritage listed area, mainly because of its wildlife. One of my tasks as the member for Southern River will be to make sure that area is well protected. We recently had a bushfire in the area surrounding the lake. I take the opportunity to acknowledge the excellent work done by staff, students, parents and police and emergency services in the area around Forrestdale Primary School, which turned what could have been a total disaster into a very good result.

It showed they had done their planning and preparation, and that their implementation was perfect. Another area that indicates the diversity in my electorate is within the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale. It has a large number of equestrian activities, small hobby farms and so on. Of particular interest to me are the bridle paths, which I am pursuing with the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale.

The Town of Kwinana also forms part of my electorate and is very similar in nature to that of Serpentine-Jarrahdale. Extending further north is the City of Cockburn. The localities of Atwell and Jandakot are in my electorate. That part of my electorate is a hotspot of urban growth. Canning Vale, the part of my electorate under the auspices of the City of Canning, is another fast-growing hotspot of urban development. Around this area is the Jandakot mound which supplies some of the Perth's purest drinking water. One of my tasks is to make sure that is well protected under our legislation.

I would like to draw to the attention of the House some of what I value in my electorate. One of those is the welfare of families. It is very easy to stand here and talk about how we should look after families and so on. Every day in my electorate I see the stress that families are under. Often these families are single parent families, and that puts great pressure on the parent and on the children of those families. When I drive around the electorate, one of the things I do not see at six o'clock of an evening are fathers kicking the football around the front yard with their kids. They might be absent, or they could be working exceptionally long hours. One aspect of our society that we need to address is that fathers must take a greater role in the lives of their children. I include myself in that as well. Some of the happiest moments of my life have been spent outside the front of my house kicking the football around to my daughters and son. Many families in my electorate suffer through the lack of the presence of a male role model.

I express particular concern about the welfare of boys. It is well recorded that boys tend to do more poorly at school than do girls. They also have a higher incidence of assault and suicide. That needs to be addressed. I also lament the decreasing number of male teachers in schools, particularly in primary schools. It is an area that needs to be addressed during the term of this Government. As a school teacher for 24 years I take a deep interest in education. It is one of the factors in my electorate that needs greater attention. I would like the students in my electorate to have the same sort of education that I was fortunate to have. I attended an independent Catholic school that in some ways was more like a prison. However, I had the good fortune to attend Bunbury Senior High School. I was greatly influenced by the teachers at that school, not because they taught me anything in particular, but because they were good, decent people who had confidence in me. I will always remember them. They are the sort of people we need in our schools today.

My electorate contains only one state high school. It has an excellent principal in Sue Rodway. I believe it has excellent staff and I am very impressed by the students. However, I am not impressed by its facilities. I hope that in the term of this Government the \$7 million that we have allocated will produce a school of renowned excellence that will give students at that school the opportunity to have something to hang their hats on, so that they can say, "Gosnells High School is an excellent school because . . .". The

“because” is up to the community. I would like it to be a model of how an ageing school can become a source of pride for the community. I also look forward to the establishment of the Canning Vale high school and other primary schools in my electorate.

I believe that the south-east corridor of the metropolitan area has been largely ignored over the past eight years. I believe that it has deteriorated considerably in the past five years in particular. The occupancy rate of shops within the centre of Gosnells is down to 40 per cent and falling. This means that the retail businesses in Gosnells are dwindling, and with them goes jobs. I look forward to the rejuvenation of the centre of Gosnells through the town revitalisation program, because it will have a significant effect on the lifestyle of the people in the city of Gosnells.

I refer to my original point about the importance of employment. I am of the belief that for this corridor and my electorate in particular to sustain employment, it needs the development of industry. As I have said, my electorate is not well serviced with retail outlets. The challenge for this Government is to facilitate industry that provides employment that is environmentally sustainable, located in the right place, monitored by the right authority and provided with an infrastructure that integrates this industry with the community. In particular, I look forward to the extension of the Tonkin Highway and the development of the Forrestdale industrial park.

In the lead-up to the election I asked one of my constituents, Mr Peter Kruup of Canning Vale, whom I had met through doorknocking, if he would prepare an audit of the bus services in my electorate. Mr Kruup is an experienced economist who spent four years on Westrail’s Urban Passenger and Advisory Council, and he is a senior marketing manager. His research found that some of the suburbs in my electorate have some of the poorest services in the metropolitan area, particularly weekend services, which are universally poor - areas such as Huntingdale and Gosnells, where weekend services are virtually negligible. His comment was -

While the overall level of services in the Southern River electorate was 58% of the benchmark, the residents in the electorate were poorly serviced during off peak periods, particularly in evenings and weekend time periods. During these times approximately only one third of the benchmark was achieved. In other words the residents of Southern River electorate had only a third of the services that could be reasonably expected during off peak periods.

Put simply, I want more public transport in my electorate.

Another point that concerns me is the level of crime throughout my electorate, particularly crimes against the most vulnerable - the older people, and also young people. I will not go into detail about the level of crime; suffice to say it needs to be addressed by employment, education and more police resources. I look forward to the drug summit in August.

I also believe that the payment of government bills within 30 days has had a significant effect on the businesses in my electorate. Last week I was contacted by two of my constituents who have a small firm that deals basically with government contracts. At one stage they were on the brink of walking away from their business. They told me a week ago that because of some of the changes that are being made, they will stay in business and are thinking of putting on another employee. I also state that I will defend the rights and responsibilities of unions to represent workers.

At this part of my speech I seek the indulgence of the Chamber to talk about some personal issues that I find very emotional. I do so, not to talk about myself, but to honour one person in particular and a large number of other people. I was not always the rather full-figured person that members see standing here today. I should at this point

acknowledge the contribution that Gaelic football has made to the Labor backbench. The member for Ballajura and I represented Western Australia in Gaelic football, as did the new member for Roleystone, who assures me that while I was fairly average, he was a star. He has threatened that he will show slides to this Chamber. I think we should avoid that!

When I was 30 years of age, I had two children with another one on the way. I was working full time. I led a very active sporting life. I was a member of the West Australian Marathon Club, and I competed in the first Rottnest Island triathlon. I ran every Sunday morning, played hockey and, as I said, kicked the football around with the member for Ballajura.

When I was 31 years, my times for the various 10-kilometre runs that I used to do began to increase dramatically, and when I reached the stage of being able to run 10 kilometres in an hour, I thought I should see a doctor, which I did. To cut a long story short, I was diagnosed with nephritis, which most members would know is a disease of the kidneys.

Within a short time, I went from being someone who was very fit, healthy and on top of the world to someone who could barely crawl out of bed each day. At that time I was told that in seven to 10 years my kidneys would fail completely and I would need to go on dialysis. In fact, it was four and a half years. I went into hospital in 1991 and had a fistula constructed in my wrist, into which two needles were placed, and blood was pumped in and out of the machine - we all know what dialysis is. A form of dialysis about which members may not know is peritoneal dialysis. I had a tube inserted in my side, into and out of which I pumped two or four litres of fluid - I think in the end it was four litres - four times a day. This took about 40 minutes each time, and I spent most of the day getting onto and off this machine. I continued to work part time, but it was a great struggle.

As time went on, the only way to describe how I felt was that it was like the worst hangover a person could possibly have - I am sure no member of this House knows that feeling. Each morning was a difficult time, because when I woke up I immediately threw up all over the place. That was my starting routine for the day. I also began to be unable to think properly in many ways. My sight started to diminish, and basically I was just about finished - I was very ill.

In September 1992, I went to Albany for a holiday with my family. When I was there I could not get out of bed. As I said, I was very ill. Driving home, I asked my wife if she thought I would still be around at Christmas. She said, "Of course you will." I said, "What about new year?" She went quiet, so I knew at that stage that my days were numbered. I went back to the hospital and said to the nurses, "I've had enough. I really don't want to live any more. That will do me." At that time I was ready to pass away. Today I heard stories about Ray Young. I visited my friends and made arrangements about various matters. It was embarrassing when I got much better and had to go back to see them!

I tell this story only because I have never been able to tell anyone the extent of the debt I owe that person who, in giving up life, enabled me to have a transplant. Part of my reason for speaking today - as I said, I have never been able to do it before - is to acknowledge those people who make the decision to be organ donors and those families who honour that decision.

I had a transplant in October 1992. I was in hospital only one week. My nephrologist is in the gallery today, and I thank him and the staff at the hospital. After three days I got out of bed and looked in the mirror. I immediately turned around because I thought someone else was standing behind me. I did not recognise the person I saw in that mirror. From that time, apart from putting on about 30 kilograms - the parliamentary dining room probably will not help - I have had excellent health. Three years ago I participated in the

swim to Rottnest Island. I have been engaged in politics since 1993. During the election campaign I never missed a single day. I rarely missed work leading up to the election. I enjoy excellent health. One reason for speaking today is to highlight the need for organ transplants. I think I am the only member of Parliament in Australia who is lucky, and unlucky, enough to have gone through that.

The facts about organ donation in Australia are appalling. The rate of organ donation is one of the lowest in the western world. In most years, the rate of organ donation in Western Australia is the lowest. In 1999, there were only 13 cadaveric donors in Western Australia.

That means that the organs came from people who had passed away. In 2000, the total number of donors was 22. In 1999, the rate was 1.21 donations per thousand deaths, and in 2000 the rate was 1.52 donations per thousand deaths. The average donation rate is decreasing, not improving, yet the success rates for transplants are increasing dramatically. For example, the success rate of a kidney transplant after one year is 88 per cent, and 13 to 14 years later, 50 per cent of kidney transplants are still working well. Similar rates apply to liver transplants. For heart transplants, after one year the success rate is usually between 60 and 70 per cent.

Today, between 120 and 150 people are on the kidney transplant waiting list. Many of them will die simply because not enough kidneys are available. There were four of us when I was in the ward: John Bridgewood, whom I bring to the attention of the member for Wagin, two others and me. Those two others, who were 24 and 19 years of age, died, and John and I are still alive. At Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, children are dying every day because not enough organs are available. Each year, the cost to the community of keeping someone on dialysis, for example, is \$84 000. The average waiting time for someone who is lucky enough to receive a transplant is three years.

We must increase the awareness of the benefits of transplantation. Occasionally that will be seen in the newspaper. It is a wonderful thing that organ donors have done for people like me. If people become more aware of the benefits of transplantation, the rate of refusal by relatives will decrease. We should also support intensive care units, because it costs intensive care units both money and staff time to make relatives aware of the organ donation process. Therefore, extra support must be given to intensive care units.

Because Western Australia is such a large State, another problem is that retrieving donations from country areas is almost impossible.

Surgeons currently work on a volunteer roster basis so that when a body becomes available, the organs can be taken. However, it takes too long for these surgeons to get to and from country areas. There simply are not enough surgeons to retrieve those organs. We need to set up a system by which we can accept the donations of people in the country.

There is also an argument for centralising transplantation expertise under a single professional unit. One of the things that deters people from wishing to donate their organs after death is that they fear that their bodies will not be treated with respect. We as a Government must ensure that hospitals treat people's bodies with respect. We have just observed Anzac Day, which is a celebration of the highest honour that we can give to people who have laid down their lives for their country. We need to acknowledge the contribution that donors and their families make to saving lives. I intend to use my position in this Parliament to honour those people. I am sorry for being self-indulgent in this matter, but it is difficult not to be.

I will continue to be self-indulgent by thanking the many people who have helped out during my campaign. Members of the Southern River and Armadale sub-branches of the

Australian Labor Party, like Tony and Joy Dench, Erica Gamble, Ron and Betty Pearce, and Phil Kelly, worked day in and day out, and at the end of this time turned around and thanked me for letting them help me. Those members who are here today all know that we should be the ones who thank them for everything that they have done for us. I also thank my long-suffering friends, some of whom are sitting in the gallery today - long-suffering because they have to go to yet another quiz night or fundraiser, or drop yet another pamphlet, and most of the time they put on a cheerful face when they do it.

There are many people in this Chamber whom I wish to acknowledge. One of them is the member for Armadale. I respect her appetite for hard work, her sheer intellect and her compassion for people, and most of all the way she serves her electorate. I also thank a former member of this House, Mr Graham Burkett, for his tireless support and enthusiasm. He gives me endless advice, but only when I ask for it. He has taught me the meaning of community service and helping people. I also thank Lyn Jager, who is a wonderful person embodying all the values the Australian Labor Party stands for. I would also like to bring to the attention of the House Jane Gerick, the federal member for Canning, who is also going through a period of illness at this moment, suffering from leukemia. I have been her friend for 15 years, and I respect her greatly and most of all I admire her courage. She is making a remarkable recovery and is looking forward eagerly to the next federal election.

Kay Hallahan was my campaign director, and one journalist continues to refer to her, quite rightly, as "Special K". She has so many qualities that I would aspire to that I just cannot mention them all. The present member for Armadale said in her maiden speech that she thought Kay was wonderful, charming, kind, capable, dedicated and open-minded, with a wicked sense of humour and a love of life that is infectious. The first time I met Kay Hallahan I was overwhelmed by her. I still am, and she has encouraged me right from that first time.

In many ways, it is a selfish pursuit to be a member of this House, and I wish to acknowledge the sacrifices that my family have made to get me here today. I think of the financial sacrifices they have made, and the extra work that my wife and children do around the house when I am not there. Usually, conveniently, I have been able to get out of mowing the lawn at every possible chance. I thank my children, Lara, Rebecca and Peter, for what they have given up in the past six years. Most of all, I thank my wife, Gim, without whose support and willingness to make those sacrifices I just would not be here today. She has supported me, not only because I am her husband, but also because of her own beliefs in the Australian Labor Party. I cannot thank Gim enough. She is my wife, my love, my partner in life and my comrade. Thank you.

[Applause.]
