



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Mr Tony Dean MLA

(Member for Bunbury)

Address-in-Reply Debate

Legislative Assembly, Wednesday 23 May 200

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INTRODUCTION

MR DEAN (Bunbury) [1.04 pm]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As have so many members before me, I offer my congratulations to you. Obviously I extend my sincere thanks to the people of Bunbury who have seen fit to place their trust in me as their elected representative over the next four years. The voters of Bunbury are an educated and discerning group. They know about politics and have been at the cutting edge of politics for the past 50 years as a marginal electorate. They know how to get results. They know about performance management and sometimes they are unforgiving.

In looking for inspiration for this inaugural speech I did my research via *Hansard* and picked up on an overwhelming theme of members' aspirations for their electorates. They set out in detail the ills of their electorates and how they would cure them by adjustment to economic and social policy. I do not wish to go down that path. I have a clear vision for Bunbury based on intervention at a local level. By fulfilling that vision, Bunbury will be further boosted as the premium capital country city.

First, I am tertiary trained in macro and micro economics having gone through the rigours of economics and agricultural economics at the University of Western Australia. Having done so I subscribe to the Schumacher theory that "small is beautiful". Lasting reform will come easily only if attacked at the local level.

Bunbury is a microcosm of Western Australia, but unlike other small towns it has produced some remarkable politicians over the past 100 years. It can lay claim to three Premiers. I refer to Forrest, Newton-Moore and Mitchell. Newton-Moore and Forrest were also members for Bunbury. One thing not remembered is that Newton-Moore spent 14 years in the House of Commons. As the fourteenth member for Bunbury I shall remind our Government what the people of Bunbury have come to expect from their Labor representatives. Moving from Bunbury as a whole to individuals, there exists an endless list - a bit like John Bowler's list - of those whom I must thank. Over the past seven years those people have guided my progress from city councillor to local member.

THANK YOU

First, my wife Kathleen, who is in the Speaker's gallery, and who has suffered a lot for my dreams over the past 26 years from my early days at Narrogin, where I was membership officer for the Australian Labor Party, to the high and exalted position I occupy here today. Being in the Labor Party in Narrogin in post-Whitlam years was a pretty thankless task. Through it all, she never lost faith in my ability to reach my aspiration to sit in this place. She believes greatly, as does every dedicated teacher, that everyone should be given the chance to achieve his or her dreams. This has been my dream.

I also acknowledge my children, who are not here today because they choose to be studying. Well done, suckholes! When we left each of the schools to which we were posted my wife was pregnant. We stopped shifting when we got to Cunderdin and the pregnancies stopped at the same time. There must have been a cause and effect there somewhere. Thank you, children, in your absence for being understanding, particularly over the past eight years while I have pursued my dreams.

My second personal and heartfelt thanks go to a now unemployed person, Bob Thomas, former MLC, whom I regard as a friend, mentor and confidante. After I lost preselection for the seat of Bunbury in 1996 it was Bob who convinced me it was the best thing that could have happened, although I could not see it at the time. He said I would be seen as a survivor for 2001. I think his favourite saying at the time was "Keep your powder dry".

During the federal election of 1998, while running an invincible race against the richest man in federal politics, he and I devised the strategy and the lines to win the seat of Bunbury in 2001. Labor won that seat 18 months ago. From that point we continued to campaign and we shall continue to campaign for the next four years. Thank you, Bob. Without your influence, neither I nor the member for Albany would be here today.

ERN AND JUDY

Without doubt, the major political giant of Bunbury in the past 30 years has been Ern Manea, a politician of such stature and skill that he has remained aloof from the party political process. I had the pleasure to serve three years as a councillor with Ern Manea when he was Mayor of Bunbury. He is a remarkable man with an intellect as big as his ambitions for the seat of Bunbury. We meet very few men of this character during our lifetime. I am eternally grateful that he has been part of my life. Secondly, I acknowledge Judy Jones, the current Deputy Mayor, another councillor of whom I must make special mention. Her recall of people and circumstances of postwar Bunbury matches that of Dr Manea.

ELECTION RESULT

Moving directly to my election result, I must express my sincere gratitude to Lois Anderson, Greg White and Roy Scaife, who were my combined campaign managers. Two of them are in the audience today. Their tireless work is now deeply appreciated. I also thank Eileen O'Sullivan for her work throughout the transition phase between 1997 and 1999.

As other elected members have given a brief description of their pre-parliamentary lives and the influences that have propelled them to where they are today, I offer the following thumbnail sketch. I, like the majority of members here today, am classified as a baby boomer, but I have my doubts about the member next to me; she is probably from the X or the Y generation.

Ms Radisich: I am the baby of the House.

Mr DEAN: Baby boomers have been handed a great mantle of freedom and liberty. Born, bred and educated in Nannup, I am the son of a successful small businessman and compassionate mother. During World War II, my father spent some time in northern Italy as a member of a partisan group.

That experience had a lifelong influence on not only him, but also his three children. That influence even went to the point that my older sister was named Fenesia, after one of his female partisan friends. When he came back to Australia he could speak an Italian dialect fluently, and was immersed in the food - if not the culture and the religion - of that region.

Nannup as a mill town was often the first stop for migrant workers. It was quite common for a special bond to develop between the migrant mill labourers and my father, based on a common linguistic background. My childhood was ideal, and we lived off the riches of the Blackwood River valley. I never wanted for anything. I obtained a very sound education at Nannup Junior High School and finally moved to the University of Western Australia. It was not until some 25 years later, when I came across a comment from Neil Kinnock, that great British Labour leader - who posed the question: why was he the first person in 10 000 generations of his family to attend university? - that the enormity of what I had done finally dawned on me. This achievement only helped reinforce my belief in the Australian Labor Party and the socialist ideals it stands for.

My father, having spent some time as a prisoner of war, knew well the value of life and individual liberty. I value those ideals and they will form part of my guiding force over the next four years. As with a lot of other people in this place today, I am also a product of the Whitlam years; not only did Gough save me from conscription, but also he gave me a free education. I know, for example, that the fees and charges at the University of Western Australia in 1972, pre-Gough, were 40 per cent of my father's taxable income for that year.

I have arrived in this place following a series of complex coincidences. I describe myself as a conservative social democrat, and the current Labor Party is a large enough family in which my beliefs can rest securely. I have faith in the Labor Party to guide us through the challenging times ahead.

VISION FOR BUNBURY

I now move directly to the vision for Bunbury. It is a bit of a cliché, but members should see Bunbury now. On 15 December 1982, Phil and David Smith released the Bunbury 2000 plan, and we heard today that Julian Grill was part of that plan. It was a far-sighted document, the consequences of which are still being felt today. One central piece of that document was the urban revitalisation of Bunbury, including the railway stations, the oil storage tanks and the No 1 sewage treatment plant. That final chapter will be commenced when \$100 million is spent over the next 12 months on two hotels and a village square in the northern end of the town. The establishment of a five-star hotel will further enhance Bunbury's reputation as a tourist destination.

BUNBURY 2020

The Bunbury 2020 plan is now superimposed on the Bunbury 2000 plan. Under this agenda a Labor Government will actively encourage private enterprise to locate and grow in the south west. It will protect Bunbury's unique environment and improve the lifestyle of the community. It will put in place a program inspired and developed in consultation with the local people of Bunbury. The previous Labor Government did the hard work for the physical infrastructure in the Bunbury 2000 program. However, the Bunbury 2020 program is centred on social and lifestyle issues, and I will now focus on a few of those projects.

I refer, firstly, to the appointment of a Minister for Peel and the South West. I congratulate Hon Jim McGinty on taking up that position. It is leadership at cabinet level for which the south west has been crying out for the past eight years. A wealth of goodwill is felt for the minister at the moment because the people now feel valued and understood. Secondly, one of Dr Manea's and Bunbury 2000's finest achievements - the establishment of the Edith Cowan University - will continue to

grow under a Labor Government. The Government will establish a chair of regional development at ECU. Over the next five years regional development will not only be practical, but also will have a true empirical base.

Another significant development during the Bunbury 2000 program was the provision of a regular, reliable, Perth-style bus system. I am happy to say that a good man by the name of Dave Adams has been providing this service throughout the south west over the past decade, through South West Coach Lines and Bunbury City Transit. It has been a welcome addition to our cosmopolitan outlook. However, this needs to be reviewed, and to that end another election commitment has already been honoured - two weeks ago. Estill and Associates Pty Ltd, consulting engineers, ran a workshop a fortnight ago which focused on the transport vision as outlined in the Bunbury 2030 and Bunbury 2020 programs. In the near future, I hope to have the outcomes of that seminar to present to Hon Jim McGinty for implementation.

More examples are contained in our vision for Bunbury 2020, but I cannot leave without expanding on three of my pet projects: They are the new electronic library, a regional social museum and a call centre. These are multimillion dollar collaborative deals with our great partner, the City of Bunbury. It is inconceivable that Bunbury, as the premier country city - sorry, Albany - with a rich tapestry that dates back to 1836, does not have a social museum. It has King's Cottage, but it really needs a museum of a magnitude that takes in not only Bunbury but also the hinterland. Bunbury has existed over the past 165 years, not as an island but as a focal point between the expanded hinterland of the south west and the rest of the world. The museum committee of the Bunbury City Council has already approached me with a method to build and operate the museum, and I have passed this request to Hon Jim McGinty. I will push for this item to be achieved well within the first half of my term.

A single telephone number for government agencies - a call centre - will be established, as it fits in well with our stated aims of decentralisation and regionalisation. A major call centre already exists in the Bunbury central business district. Very few people know it is there and it is of national significance. The Centrelink call centre already employs 300 people on two floors of the Bunbury Tower and provides a service all over Australia. Bunbury has the telecommunications technology to support such single telephone number call centres but, more importantly, it has the skilled work force to fill such positions. Once again, this is another example of the clean, green industry which I am keen to support.

ENVIRONMENT

The role of the environment and the failure by the previous Government to grasp the clear aspirations of the people of Bunbury are a large part of the reason I am standing here today. One issue that drew me to local politics was a report written by the member for Vasse, Bernie Masters, on three blocks of tuart forest known as blocks 301, 302 and 303 West Withers. I take the opportunity to congratulate the member on his report. It was a first-class piece of scientific endeavour. In the public consultation process the people of Bunbury sent a clear message that they did not want West Withers touched. As the member for Vasse pointed out, it was a quality piece of tuart woodland that needed to be preserved. I made a submission during the public consultation process early in 1993-94, and piggybacked into the city council on that issue. The travesty is that after eight years, the West Withers tuart forest is still not safe from development. It has not yet been placed in an A-class reserve.

During the past three years, an adjacent forest, the Shearwater tuart forest, has emerged as an equally vital issue. This forest, owned by Homeswest and the City of Bunbury, is well worth preserving. A large grass roots organisation grew up in Bunbury to preserve this forest. It had its culmination in a petition organised by Mr John Sherwood, Ruth Taylor, Brendan Kelly and Phil Smith of the

South West Environment Centre. That petition had nearly 4,000 signatures. A clear public statement was made for its preservation. The petition suffered an inglorious ending when the local member refused to accept it - another nail in the coffin.

I must take time to personally thank John Sherwood, Phil Smith and Bernard Bischoff for being a major driving force behind the environmental movement in Bunbury, particularly their role in the Shearwater preservation. They have the ability to organise, mount and sustain a movement that has brought many environmental benefits to Bunbury and the surrounding areas. When the ocean to Preston River park becomes a reality, it will owe its existence to John, Phil and Bernard.

Throughout my doorknocking, it became perfectly clear that the preservation of old-growth forest was a major vote-changing issue. Having been raised in Nannup, this was for me a change of paradigm that took some time to come to grips with. During the six months leading up to the election, I was not a popular person in the front bar of the Nannup Hotel. I said at all times that the Labor Party would not desert those people, and I am more than happy to report that, as a result of the \$1.4 million spent by this Government to bring the Nannup timber mill up to a value-adding stage, I can now think and drink in peace at the front bar. This is truly a win-win situation. The electors of Bunbury are happy that the Labor Party has fulfilled its election promise and the people of Nannup now have a viable future.

A second major environmental plank that surfaced during the “phoney war” in the 12 months leading up to the election was the issue of the Back Beach, an issue in which the former Deputy Premier is well versed. The Back Beach is a well-kept secret. It is free of stingers, and warm enough to have a substantial swim, unlike the beaches to the south of us. It is not a cliché to say that the people regard the Back Beach as an icon. Messing with their beach is messing with Bunbury. However, it is at a point, due to population pressures, at which it does need restoration work. As a former chairman of the city council’s Back Beach enhancement committee, I have had a special interest in it. At one stage the committee released a plan for restoration that was firmly rejected by the people of Bunbury. Therefore, we went back to the drawing board. However, it was such an important issue that it was hijacked by the State Government in 1996, and then it set off on its own path to self-destruction. As happened in the case of the Shearwater tuart trees, a group of concerned citizens rose as one to protect their icon. I must make special mention of Ross Ranson, Erol Barrett and Mike Smith, who were in the vanguard of the group of citizens that took the fight to the Government and won - another nail in the coffin. The people of Bunbury rejected groynes as an option to conserve their beach. This Government has committed itself to preserve the funding of the Back Beach, and works will commence shortly in the Rocky Point area. As with Shearwater, the people cried out and were ignored for a long time. However, people power won in the end, and that is another reason I am standing here today.

EDUCATION

It would be remiss of me not to mention state education in my inaugural address. Having spent 23 years as an educator, 11 of those as deputy principal at Australind Senior High School, I can only shout from the highest hilltop my deep and unwavering admiration for everything my colleagues are doing in state schools. This is particularly in the case of teachers in primary schools, where the advent of student outcome statements and curriculum frameworks has magnified an already difficult and time-consuming vocation. I call on the Minister for Education to reassess the present position on curriculum frameworks, particularly in the light of the proposed new upper school curriculum. Teachers are tired and need to consolidate.

My progress through the Education Department of Western Australia over the past 23 years has been an enjoyable one. With a degree in agricultural economics, I moved to agricultural colleges,

where I could put my farming frustration to theoretical use. At Narrogin Agricultural College in 1978 and 1979 I taught farm economics, and during my eight years at Cunderdin I taught sheep husbandry to a fair number of people who I hope are now successful central wheatbelt farmers. At Narrogin I met two Labor people who were the most influential in moving me towards a political career - my head of department, Dennis Doust, and his wife Pam. Dennis was one of the most decent human beings I have ever met. As my mentor, he helped me and my wife through my initial years of teaching. Dennis Doust was president, secretary and treasurer of the Narrogin branch of the Australian Labor Party, and, as I have already said, in post-Whitlam years in rural Western Australia, that was not a pleasant thought. He was a man of great values and principles, to such a degree that he left teaching in 1986 and became a full-time Uniting Church minister. He is currently posted at Pingelly.

The Bunbury electorate has two very good senior high schools and a first rate Catholic college, where Hon Jim McGinty received a very good grounding in the classics. Having spent three years on the board of the Catholic college, I know it is run with the best interests of students in mind. Also in my electorate there are five state and two Catholic primary schools. I know many of the staff at those schools, and I know first-hand that their work is their life. During the last four years, parents have been fighting to maintain the status quo with respect to the structure of these schools. It has not been an easy task, but common sense has prevailed. It is not a process that this Government will put its people through. My presence here is another consequence of the consultation process that the previous Government failed to carry out - another nail in the coffin. Bunbury and Newton Moore Senior High Schools are starting to show their age. I am keen to continue with the refurbishment of Newton Moore Senior High School, and to implement a building program for Bunbury Senior High School. This will be made possible by a joint effort of the Government and the City of Bunbury to develop reserve 9997 on the Back Beach, which will provide an excellent athletics track, not only for Bunbury Senior High School, but also for after-hours use. This will be another unmistakable sign that there exists a real partnership between this Government and the Bunbury City Council. Bunbury has a number of primary schools, which, when built, served the community well. However, in the age of student-centred learning, their 1960s structure is deficient. One such school is Bunbury Primary School. Built in 1962, it served its purpose well when textbooks and teacher-centred learning were the go. The needs of the new millennium are vastly different. Teachers must now tackle such diverse issues as drug education, student sexuality, growth development, values education and pastoral care. To cater for such a diverse curriculum, such things as sick rooms, wet rooms, purpose-built specialist rooms and open classrooms to facilitate collaborative learning must be built, and all those older schools lack these facilities. Why spend millions on new schools when the basic structure already exists? Not only does the physical structure exist, but also a culture of the school already exists in many cases that has come from the hearts and minds of the parents and the local community. Bunbury primary is an ideal site to convert a school from the mid-twentieth century to the twenty-first century. It could become a true lighthouse school.

Education is dear to the hearts of many people. Investments made today will be paid back many times. This Government has correctly identified that concern, and quarantined education from funding cuts. The average age of teachers continues to increase. As with nurses, we need young, vibrant people to take up the challenge. The profession must reinvigorate. However, I do have grave concerns about the unintended sex bias that is creeping into the profession, particularly in primary schools. Research needs to be initiated to establish why young males are no longer seeking to become primary school teachers. They are a dying race.

NYOONGAH PEOPLE

No mention of Bunbury could be made without a significant comment on the role of the Nyoongah people in its development. The Nyoongah people of Gomburrup, which is the Aboriginal name for Bunbury, proved to be, according to Lieutenant Henry St Pierre Bunbury in 1836, a civilised, peaceful and very curious people. Up until 1850 the majority of the total population of Gomburrup was Nyoongah. Throughout the early Wadjela history of Bunbury, relations with Aboriginal people were complex. The interaction of two incompatible cultures, stimulated by need and the desire to coexist, places us where we are today. Overall, it has not been a happy and desirable outcome. We have arrived at a situation today in which the local Nyoongah culture, language and beliefs are making a substantial resurgence. As with most Wadjelas, I did not have a great deal to do with Nyoongah people while growing up in Nannup. However, while I was on long service leave in 1991, I had the opportunity to work with two Nyoongah sisters, Rose Whitehurst and Merelda Hardy, in their business, Wanandi Enterprises. I was employed by them to instigate homework classes, stretching from Brookton to Busselton, and I came to know and respect the great difficulties under which their culture is operating.

In 1994 the Bunbury City Council, of which I was a member, signed “A Commitment to Nyungar People”, and I would like now to read that document into the record. It states -

The City of Bunbury acknowledges that Nyungars were the first people of this area and have survived Wadjela (Non-Aboriginal) settlement for more than two centuries

The arrival of Wadjelas brought massive changes to this land and to its indigenous people
For its part, the City of Bunbury acknowledges and grieves for the loss by the indigenous people of their land, their children, their health and their lives

We acknowledge the right of Nyungars to live according to their own values and customs, subject to law, and to mutually respect Nyungar special places

The Council supports Nyungars and Wadjelas working together towards a treaty or other instrument of reconciliation which promotes a greater understanding of Nyungar and Wadjela peoples history and culture in our community

This Council recognises the positive contribution made by Nyungars and looks forward to a future of mutual respect and harmony

That document is once again signed by that great man, Dr Manea, and Alice Bennell and Phyllice McGuire, two elders of the Nyoongah people. It is dated 6 September 1994. Once again, Bunbury City Council is far ahead in the game. I make special mention of Steve Hill, an excellent history teacher, who is also a city councillor. He was one of the driving forces behind that commitment.

Where to now for the Nyoongah people? I think there is light at the end of the tunnel. Carey Park is home to Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School, a primary school with a current enrolment of about 100. The school teaches mainstream Wadjela education as well as Nyoongah culture and language. The school is prosperous and stable and the children are delightful; however, it is only a start. There is a compelling reason to insist that the study of Nyoongah language and culture be transferred to the tertiary education field. A generation ago, only about 20 people knew and understood the language. Thankfully, this has changed. I would like to see the implementation of some form of tertiary studies of Nyoongah language and culture. The Bunbury campus of Edith Cowan University would be an ideal site, and it could easily collaborate with Djidi Djidi so that lifelong learning is truly achievable. I am happy to report that one of the Government’s achievements has been the opening on 19 April of the Nyoongah Language And Culture Centre Keeping Place. It will revive and preserve the Nyoongah culture. It is a start, but it does not diminish my call for tertiary studies in that field.

ELECTORAL REFORM

I move onto electoral reform. I am the member for one-third of Bunbury. The greater city of Bunbury is about 65 square kilometres. The Australian Electoral Commission identifies the City of Bunbury as covering an area of 22 square kilometres. I look forward to representing the entire city under a system of one vote, one value. I look forward to the placement of Rathmines, Carey Park and Kinkella Park fairly and squarely in the electorate of Bunbury. Any person who says he could not handle the additional workload should not enter politics. The Premier has given a guarantee that Bunbury will be retained as a seat, and I look forward to representing 100 per cent of Bunbury, not just 33 per cent.

ROYAL COMMISSIONS - ST KILDA

The Labor Party made many promises to the electorate in the run-up to the election. However, one promise I could not make was to a teacher at Australind - I told him at the time it was not kosher - to call for a royal commission into umpiring standards against St Kilda Football Club. I say to Keith that I am sorry; but I cannot do that in this place.

CONCLUSION

In concluding, I refer to my opening remarks. The people of Bunbury are politically aware. They base their judgment on performance and, in one way or another, they have been giving the correct call for the past 50 years. The people will judge; the people will decide. When it is time to look back, in either four, eight or 12 years, I wish to be able to let the people of Bunbury know that I arrived and achieved to my maximum. I want them to abide in the words of one of my favourite authors, St Paul, when he wrote to Timothy -

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

[Applause.]
