



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Hon Bradley William Pettitt, MLC
(Member for South Metropolitan)

Legislative Council

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 1 June 2021

Reprinted from Hansard

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from 27 May on the following motion moved by Hon Pierre Yang —

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our most gracious sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [3.11 pm]: Thank you, President. May I begin by also congratulating you on your election to the role. I would also like to congratulate all my colleagues here today on their recent election to this chamber.

I would like to begin my inaugural speech by acknowledging the Whadjuk people as the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and recognise that their culture, heritage and beliefs are still important today. Now, during National Reconciliation Week, it feels even more appropriate to acknowledge this, as it highlights an issue that is fundamental to our state's and, indeed, our nation's future. As WA moves towards 2029, 200 years since the establishment of the Swan River Colony, we have a unique opportunity to speed up our journey of reconciliation. Just this week, Reconciliation WA chief executive officer Jody Nunn said —

... as a State with our wealth, prosperity and opportunity—we should be the global leader in Indigenous cultural, heritage and practice ... “As we approach the bicentenary of the State in 2029, we've got a huge opportunity to say we're going to have a new future.”

This is something that I am personally acutely aware of, because my ancestors arrived in WA in 1829 on one of the first ships. William Bashford arrived on 12 October 1829 on a ship called the *Caroline*. Soon after, he was gifted some land on the Derbarl Yerrigan, what we now call the Swan River, up in the Swan Valley, which, of course as we know now, was wrongly assumed to be unoccupied. In the shadow of the Mabo decision, the myth of terra nullius has now been done away with and we, as a community, are now ready to take much bigger steps towards reconciliation. Fundamental steps should include truth telling and, ultimately, a treaty and a voice to Parliament. On this note, I would especially like to acknowledge Hon Rosie Sahanna on her election as the first Aboriginal person in this chamber. It is very, very significant.

My sense is that in recent years the reconciliation space has moved forward in a way that is deeply encouraging. Ideas that were once deeply radical and in fact controversial, such as dual naming, renaming places or finding a more inclusive date to celebrate our nationhood, are now increasingly part of mainstream conversation. I want to give my thanks to the very inspiring Western Australian First Nations leaders, whom I have had the honour of travelling alongside. In fact, as Richard Walley said this week, whom I have many times walked behind and learnt from, I hope that here in this place we can do our part in the forty-first Parliament to move WA along on this important journey towards reconciliation.

As I mentioned, my family have a long connection to this state, going back to 1829 on my mum's side. They were a pioneering family in the Swan Valley, where they lived for several generations

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until my grandfather Colin Hooper and his wife, Mary, who is with us here today, took the whole family, including my mother, Janet, to establish a wheat farm out east of Narembeen. I cannot help but be amazed by the courage that it must have taken to take the whole family out bush, when there was no electricity in the wheatbelt, let alone telephones. Going to live in a Nissen hut that originally had a dirt floor and kerosene lanterns, and was miles from anywhere, was certainly very brave, but I also know that it was deeply rewarding. My mum's side of the family, more than 60 years later, are still working on that family farm and other farms around the Narembeen area.

Less is known about my late father's side of the family, but I do know that dad moved to WA from Sydney as a boy and settled in Bicton. My grandfather William Pettitt was a customs officer at Fremantle port. My dad, Bill Pettitt, went to school in Freo, first at Fremantle Boys' School and then John Curtin Senior High School. As it happens, my mum finished her schooling at John Curtin in Freo as well. But that was not where they were to meet; that was some years later when dad, a sales representative, crashed his car and was looked after by my mum, who was a nurse at Fremantle Hospital. By the time I was born in the early 1970s, my parents had relocated to Roleystone in the Perth hills, where most of my childhood was spent. I have very good memories of that place, playing in jarrah bushland and being part of a tight-knit community that was extremely caring. I went to Roleystone Primary School and then Roleystone District High School before we all had to bus down the hill to what, at the time, was the biggest school in the state, Kelmscott Senior High School. As it happened, two other members of this Parliament, ministers Tony Buti and Rita Saffioti, also went to Kelmscott high—not bad for a public school in a largely lower socio-economic area.

After high school I took a year off and went travelling around Australia, mostly hitchhiking in a way we would not be allowed to do today, working on building sites and even hitching on a tug boat up the east coast before returning to WA and moving to Fremantle. I fell in love with Freo. I love its built heritage, its layers of history, its working port, its wonderful arts and music scene, and even its football team—most of the time. Freo is a place that I have largely called home ever since. On my return I also went to study at Murdoch University and was fortunate enough to have been taught by some of the best minds in this state, including Professor Peter Newman, Dr Patsy Hallen, Dr Ian Barns, the late Dr Ian Cook and even Hon Dr Sally Talbot, who now sits in this chamber. After completing my degree and then my doctorate I moved to Cambodia to work with Oxfam, an organisation that I previously sat on the board of and whose work I still greatly respect. In Cambodia, I learnt a lot and worked on a range of fisheries and forestry projects, but I also had that sense not only of how extremely lucky we are here, but also that we are living in a natural environment that is changing. It was there that the impacts of climate change, and the impacts it is having on the world's poorest people, first became evident to me.

From Cambodia I moved to Canberra and worked with the Australian government international aid program, which was then called AusAID and is now part of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, before again moving back to WA and to Murdoch University to lecture in sustainable development, eventually taking on the role of dean of the School of Sustainability. I really loved teaching and research, and I love the role that universities can play in teaching us to think critically about key issues, but I was also deeply interested in how these ideas, and their well-researched theories, could be put into practice.

My time as a councillor and as mayor at the City of Fremantle was a wonderful opportunity to do just that—to demonstrate what the implementation of sustainable development can look like. I think it would be fair to say that there was no better place than Freo to do this. The Freo community is pretty unique. It is very passionate, very progressive and it demands local government think globally while acting locally. The leadership that Freo has shown on a range of issues was possible only due to the extraordinary support of this wonderful community, including the council and the City of Fremantle staff. I want to thank them for their support along the way on what was a very rewarding journey together.

Local government has already been the subject of a fair bit of discussion in this house. I agree with many of my colleagues that local government is about more than just roads, rates and rubbish. In fact, I think the strength of local government is that it can be connected to, and meet the needs and wishes of, its local community. In this house I hope we can continue to support and not squash the innovation and leadership that can come out of the local government sector when it is working well. I was lucky enough to have served on the Fremantle council for 16 years as an elected member—almost 12 of those as mayor. I am incredibly grateful that my community trusted me in this role for so long, a role that taught me a lot. It taught me that you can do things differently and get good outcomes. It taught me the importance of being pragmatic and not letting the perfect be the enemy of the good. It taught me the value of working across the usual political divides and it taught me the value of collaboration and working as a team. As a result of this and my very good fortune of being surrounded by many great and competent people is that my hometown of Freo is now going through a decade of change perhaps not seen since the days of the America's Cup.

When I became mayor more than a decade ago, I was scared that Freo was turning into what we call a dormitory suburb—a place where people go to sleep and not do much else. We knew that our focus had to be on economic development, bringing back investment that actually would make sure Freo was a place where people could live, work and play all in one place. Although the results of this are still being revealed, the approach we took has worked. We are seeing more than \$1 billion of new, private sector investment come into Fremantle. Importantly, that means we have now doubled Fremantle's residential CBD population and created thousands of new jobs in the centre of Fremantle and lots of great new places for people to recreate in. I highlight this because some might say that is not what they would expect a Green mayor or a Green-leaning council to be focused on but the evidence shows that economic development and community building can and, in fact, must go hand in hand, and that is exactly what we did. Let me explain this a bit more. Sustainable cities are compact cities, the cities in which you can live, work and play all within a short distance of each other. I love the term the “15-minute city”, as some experts have called it. They are compact, mixed-use cities with more density, more jobs and a greater diversity of dwellings. This kind of city, of course, is a more sustainable city.

The CEO at the City of Fremantle used to always tell the council as we were debating these issues about density: “Just remember, every dwelling that we build here in central Freo is one less that we are required to build on Perth's urban fringe.” That is really important because what we are doing at the moment is actually bulldozing our way, as we sprawl, through an internationally recognised biodiversity hotspot—one of about only 30 in the world. We are putting most of our new housing on the urban fringe and, unfortunately, most of that housing is car-dependent and not part of a 15-minute city. It is a city in which you have to travel a long way to get anywhere.

As a result, I read recently that Perth has just become the longest city in the world. I am not sure that that is something we should be proud of. I think, actually, that needs to change for both the good of our people and the planet. A 15-minute city, in addition to slowing urban sprawl, means that people can have access to the things they need. It means they can choose to drive less to get to work, school or shops and gives people a real choice about how they get around, be it public transport, walking or cycling. It also means that you can actually have people coming together, creating community. This was the other part of what we are trying to do: retain our diverse and inclusive community. At the heart of that was making sure we had the affordable housing to do it.

Some of the things I am proudest of are projects like SHAC, which stands for sustainable housing for artists and creatives, along with Gen Y housing in White Gum Valley, Nightingale Fremantle and the Bannister Street partnership. They show that we can make smart, innovative and affordable housing, even in an area with really high property values like Freo. We even did things that are now normal, like “Granny flats without grannies”, which started in Fremantle. Now, of

course it is a statewide initiative. The Fremantle alternative housing model is also being trialled, showing smart ways of doing infill and getting more people living in our centres. Importantly, economic development like this also has social and cultural benefits. It has meant that people of varying incomes and demographics are able to be part of the Freo community. It also means that we are able to provide more spaces for artists to work and live, making our community richer and more vibrant.

The picture that I hope members take away from this is that a progressive, what some might have called Green-leaning council, was also one that had a strong economic development focus in addition to the cultural and environmental issues that we were often better known for. This is because a sustainable future, one that I am passionate about, also has a triple-bottom-line approach: economic, social and environmental. It is this triple-bottom-line, pragmatic outcome-focused approach that I think we used with great success in Freo that I hope I can also bring to this Parliament. I hope I will be able to contribute to better decisions and outcomes at a state level.

I stepped down as mayor—I must say, a job that I loved to the very end—and ran for this seat because I did not want what we were doing in Fremantle to be the exception. I wanted it to be the new normal across the whole state. I remember not that long ago when the City of Fremantle banned single-use plastic bags—twice! Under the previous government, this very house twice voted to overturn that ban. I want to acknowledge the work of Minister Dawson on this issue. It is now a mainstream, uncontroversial, statewide ban with huge benefits but I think members can see that local government can lead the way on some of these conversations. I hope that this house can support more of this kind of innovation on issues that matter.

There is perhaps no bigger or more substantive issue facing us right now than climate change. The global transition towards decarbonising our societies and our economies over the next decade is going to be—in fact, it must be—at a scale we have never seen before. We must act urgently if we have any chance of a safe climate for our grandkids and kids. By the end of this decade, we will likely be living in a world that has undergone a major transition, and hopefully a state that has, too. This transition is a huge opportunity for our state and, with the right leadership, we can do it in a way that benefits everyone.

If we get it right, by the end of this decade, we will have a reliable and affordable energy grid running predominantly on renewable energy. Western Australia will have stopped investing in new oil, gas and coal projects and transitioned workers to secure clean energy jobs. We will be a major exporter of green hydrogen and lithium, and other rare earths and components that are essential for the clean energy transition and created thousands of new jobs in these areas. We will have permanently and fully banned logging in our native forest areas and instead have expanded our forest plantation industry and invested in regenerative forestry as a major carbon sink. New electric vehicles will outsell those running on petrol and diesel. We will have greatly increased the number of people getting about by riding, walking and catching public transport by investing in the right infrastructure to make leaving the car at home a viable alternative. We will have become a more compact city, with less sprawl and enlivened urban centres with more residents and jobs at their core.

All these are great ideas and they are all ideas that are supported by the Greens, but they are not exclusively Greens ideas. All these ideas are the recommendations of global experts in energy, public health, urban planning and climate. They are all based on the best evidence available. Whether it be the Royal Society, or the US National Academy of Sciences, whether it be NASA or the CSIRO, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or the Medical Consortium on Climate and Health or the International Energy Agency or the Planning Institute of Australia, they are all saying one thing: we must get to zero emissions as soon as possible and this decade is the critical decade to do it. Listening to the best experts and making decisions on the best evidence has served this state extremely well over the last 15 months when it comes to COVID. I think we can all agree on that.

Now, the challenge is that evidence-based decision-making must better inform us on issues like climate whereby science and the best public health experts should guide the necessary and significant changes we must make. Western Australia is already feeling the impacts of climate change. Experts tell us that the average temperature has already risen by about one degree. Perth and the south west's climate is drying. Rainfall has decreased by 20 per cent since the 1970s and flow into our dams has dropped by about 80 per cent. The fire risk has significantly increased across the state and the rising sea level is causing erosion at some of our favourite beaches.

Emissions reduction is going to be a big challenge for WA. We are one of the worst performing states in one of the worst performing countries when it comes to emissions reduction. Our level of carbon pollution per capita is nearly double the average that other developed nations are emitting and more than four times the world average. As the world rapidly transitions to making, first, a 50 per cent reduction by 2030, which is the new emerging global consensus, and, second, net zero by 2050, it means that WA will have more work to do than most. But the good news is that we also have more opportunity than most. We live in one of the sunniest and windiest places on earth, an ideal place for the renewables revolution. This energy revolution is essential for the WA economy, but it is only one part of the net-zero challenge before us. We must decarbonise all of our economy, from housing and transport to energy and agriculture, and the experts tell us that this is the very decade in which we must do it. I am talking about this decade, because pretty much every political commentator has suggested that it is highly likely that the Australian Labor Party will be in government for not just the next four years, but the next eight. That is significant because if we think about it, it means that it will take us through to 2029—almost the end of the decade—and we will actually start to think about the long term. This unprecedented election result, which I think we all agree it was, means that we can think big and plan for the necessary transition that is before us and work across the aisle to make sure that the transition is sustainable and just, and one that does not leave anyone behind. I am looking forward to working with each of you to achieve this in a constructive, collaborative and pragmatic way, on not only climate and carbon reduction, but also planning, housing, homelessness and mental health, and the many other areas that desperately need our attention.

I would like to finish by thanking those who have supported me to be in this chamber today. They are many and I am extremely grateful to them. First, I would like to thank the Greens party. People have asked me why I chose to join the Greens, perhaps thinking that it might have been a relatively recent decision. I have actually been a member of the Greens for about a quarter of a century. One of the key reasons for that—it has probably come through in this speech—is that I have a sense that the Greens is the only party that has grasped the scale of the changes that we as a society will need to make for this planet if we are going to leave one that is better for our children. Progressive but necessary reform is something that the Greens are proud to lead on, even though, as my colleague Alison Xamon recently reflected in her valedictory speech, it is often five, 10 or 15 years later that the majority end up adopting our position. I am very proud that the Greens membership and much of the voting public have placed their trust in me to be their voice in this Parliament. It is a huge responsibility but one that I am committed to doing everything that I can to further.

I thank those members and supporters who doorknocked, phone-banked, leafletted, stood on stalls and staffed polling booths. Those people gave up their time and energy because they have put their hope and trust in the Greens to create the change that they passionately believe in. Rest assured, I have listened and I will do everything that I can to represent you.

Thanks to the Greens WA staff who put in a huge effort in the statewide campaign. I particularly want to thank those who were a part of the South Metropolitan Region team, who volunteered and worked so very, very hard, had my back and looked out for and supported each other. Special thanks to former MLC Lynn MacLaren; Daniel Garlett, who joined me on the South Metro upper house ticket; and to the amazing lower house crew, Liberty Cramer, Mark Brogan, Gerard Siero,

Lauren Rickert, Felicity Townsend, Simone Collins, Breanna Morgan, Heather Lonsdale, Jesse Smith, Simon Blackburn, River Clarke, Robert Delves, Jody Freeman, Adam Abdul Razak and Annie Hill Otness. All 15 of those people and the team behind them are the only reason that I get to be in this place.

Of course, there are dozens of other amazing volunteers who helped in an amazing variety of ways. I apologise that I cannot name everyone, but I did want to name a few: Trish Cowcher, Juanita Doorey, Aaron Camm, Verity Ives, Tim Young, Troy Treeby, Jarrod Tan, Alex Wallace, Ryan Spencer, Josef Hubert, Chris Johansen, Bill Hare, Ursula Fuentes, Abbey Monk, Chloe Durant, Ross McCallum, Phil Jenkins, Mark Taylor, Christine Lindsey, Angel Reimers, Traci Gamblin, Rob and Nic Briggs, John and Jan Little, Roy Lewisson, Brian Smith, Giz Watson, Sarah English, Elizabeth Po, and Adrian Glamorgan. Thanks to all of you. I especially want to thank Rachel Pemberton for being so reliable during the campaign and holding the team together.

Finally, I want to thank all those who voted for the Greens in the South Metro Region and express my gratitude to those who keep fighting for what is right and necessary, whether it be the students marching in our streets or the Extinction Rebellion grandparents who have been quietly protesting each day outside this Parliament. My only disappointment is that I will not be working with former MLCs Alison, Tim and Diane. I was hoping to share this chamber with them. I want to thank each of them and Robin Chapple for the extraordinary work that they have done in this place over recent years. I hope that I can continue their impressive legacy and that of other Greens MLCs who have served in this house. I especially want to thank Alison Xamon for encouraging me to put up my hand in this place, and for her support during and since the election.

On a personal level, I want to thank my mum, Jan Little; John Little; and my sisters, Janelle and Renee, for their encouragement and support along the way. I also want to thank my extended family, including those who are here today, nan, Gail, Sheryl, Pat, Spencer, Greta and Kerrie. Thanks to all of you. It is wonderful to know I have the support of my broader family.

Finally, I want to thank my little family, who mean everything to me. Emma, thanks for your amazing support throughout this journey. Thanks, too, for your tolerance of a partner whose choice of profession means that I am often not there in the evenings and on the weekends, leaving you to carry the disproportionately heavy load. I honestly could not have done it without you.

Finally, I want to thank our little daughter, Aoife. She is a very cheeky little girl and I hope that I can do her proud in this place. It is because of her—in fact, all our children and grandchildren—that I am so passionate about what we must achieve. I just hope that I can make some changes that will leave her a world that is just a little bit better, cleaner, safer and greener.

Thank you.

[Applause.]
