

House: Legislative Assembly - Address in Reply
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Member: Jacob, Mr Albert
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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

MR A.P. JACOB (Ocean Reef) [8.00 pm]: It is with significant honour that I rise to make my first speech in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly. Mr Speaker, may I begin by offering my congratulations to you on your election to the office of Speaker of the Assembly, and I wish you well. I extend my congratulations to all members elected on 6 September; in particular, those elected for the first time. I also extend my appreciation to the Clerk of the house and to his staff for their assistance and advice since my election.

I also thank the people of the electorate of Ocean Reef for the faith that they have placed in me by electing me as their representative. Ocean Reef is a brand-new seat. I am deeply honoured to be the inaugural member of an electoral area that I have had a strong affinity with my whole life. The seat of Ocean Reef follows approximately 10 kilometres of the northern metropolitan coastline. The electorate is located within the City of Joondalup and runs up the coast from Pinnaroo Point in the south through to the local government boundary with the City of Wanneroo north of Burns Beach. In many ways Ocean Reef is a coastal electorate and much of the lifestyle is based around the beach and marine activity. Boat ownership is high, and there is a strong need to develop better facilities to accommodate this. In particular, a statewide shortage of boat pens is being felt strongly in the seat of Ocean Reef. A range of other facilities will also need to be provided, not only for boat owners but also for the broader community in how they interface with the ocean. A particular project that has the support of the majority of the Ocean Reef community and one that I will continue to strongly champion is the redevelopment of the Ocean Reef marina. This facility can produce solutions to both of these challenges and provide a world-class development for the residents of Ocean Reef and beyond while meeting the current and future needs of the broader boating community. Boating can often be a hazardous activity, and it requires extra precautions to ensure public safety. In providing for this, Ocean Reef is proudly home to the Whitfords Volunteer Sea Rescue Group, which is the largest metropolitan volunteer sea rescue in the state. Whitfords performs nearly 400 vital rescues a year on an entirely voluntary basis.

Issues with the fishing industry are also particularly relevant to the seat of Ocean Reef and often form a big part of coastal and boating activity. I recognise that there is a need to not only protect ecological fish stocks, but also accommodate recreational fishermen. Recreational fishing needs to be balanced with the livelihoods of commercial fishing operators. Geographical locale and an affinity with the coast aside, what makes Ocean Reef an electorate is the uniqueness of the people who live there. Every person who resides within those boundaries gives the seat its identity, and it is the trust that they have placed in me that allows me to be here today. I once again thank my electors for their confidence in me.

Both my wife and I grew up in and around this area and have attended numerous local groups and functions, including the sea sports club, the Mullaloo Surf Life Saving Club, local church events, sports associations and senior citizens groups. In recent years as the local ward councillor I have also enjoyed the privilege of attending and speaking at many school graduations as well as meeting local P&C presidents and other local community representatives. These opportunities have given me the chance to not only meet many people within the electorate of Ocean Reef, but also gain an insight into the concerns and issues of the area and an appreciation and affection for my electors, who are also my neighbours.

It would not be possible to generalise on the communities that I represent. Many people have come to Western Australia from overseas and many were born here. The electorate includes people of all ages, walks of life and backgrounds. Similarly, my electors have already begun to highlight to me many varied concerns and issues, and I look forward to working with them to meet these challenges. One thing that is of particular note is that the people of Ocean Reef are quick to give up their time as volunteers. Having mentioned the volunteer sea rescue, I also wish to pay credit to our other volunteers. Indeed, we have seen such a volunteer turnout that some groups, such as the Mullaloo Surf Life Saving Club, have to put prospective members on a waiting list because there are more people who want to join in than the club has the capacity to accommodate. Ocean Reef has a wealth of volunteers in just about every area imaginable. The spirit in which so many residents of Ocean Reef give up their time to be available wherever there is a need is something that I would like to pay special tribute to today. To the people of Ocean Reef, I once again affirm that I will work tirelessly as your local representative in state Parliament to combat crime and hoons in the local community and to ensure that our hospitals, schools, transport and other infrastructure projects receive much-needed funding. I look forward to working to ensure the electorate of Ocean Reef continues to be the best place in Australia to live, work and raise a family.

In speaking to the Assembly today, I have the opportunity to share a bit about myself and the circumstances and choices that have led me to be here today. At 28, I am the youngest member of the thirty-eighth Parliament and the youngest Liberal elected to the Western Australia Parliament in over 50 years. I initially grew up in rural Wanneroo, where my parents were small business owners, running a successful machine tools business that mainly serviced the mining industry. The demands of the business meant that the daily upkeep of our small citrus farm was often the responsibility of my six siblings and me, which gave me an appreciation of the value of hard work, cooperation and discipline from a very young age. After finishing high school I worked as a tree surgeon and horticulturalist for a number of years. It was during this time that I met my wife, Cecylia, who is now a clinical nurse in the critical care unit at Joondalup Health Campus. After we married I returned to study as a mature age student, completing a Bachelor of Environmental Design at the University of Western Australia. While undertaking my studies, I realised that if I wanted to see my community change for the better, I needed to stand up to effect that change. This motivated me to successfully stand for the City of Joondalup Council in the North Central Ward. The philosophy of standing up to be part of the change that I wish to see is what motivated me to successfully stand for both my local council and as a candidate for my state electorate.

In sharing my own history, I am especially honoured that today, Remembrance Day, is the day that I have the opportunity to give my first speech in this house. This is a day that holds two separate meanings for me, both deeply personal, yet both meanings have profoundly shaped who I am. The first is the meaning that I share with the rest of our community, that today is a day to commemorate the sacrifices of members of the armed forces and civilians in times of war, specifically since the First World War. On my mother's side, my Australian heritage goes back to the convict Cornelius Crawley, who was shipped to Australia in the early days of settlement. Successive Crawleys have proudly served our country as Anzacs throughout our nation's conflicts, including both world wars. This day is an opportunity for me to remember and acknowledge them, none more so than my uncle Paul, who was killed in action in Vietnam on 6 June 1970 while serving with the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. The liberties that they stood for are the very freedoms that allow me to stand here today as a member of this Parliament. Today being Remembrance Day brings to mind for me the motto of the Returned and Services League of Australia that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and this is no less true here in Parliament. Our liberties and freedoms depend on men and women of good character who will stand in these chambers and fight for those liberties.

We are a nation that was founded on principles; a peace-loving nation that was formed with a vote and not a war. I believe this to be a fundamental foundation by which we can claim to be a peace-loving nation. However, returning to that motto, I am profoundly humbled that

my forefathers were prepared to do whatever it took to maintain and defend this liberty. I am deeply thankful that the fruits of their sacrifices can be enjoyed by us today. I believe this to be the conviction that we should carry forward as members of Parliament who will often be faced with difficult decisions. As a member of this Parliament, I will endeavour to remain true to my core values and make my decisions because I believe them to be right, whether or not they are popular. The results of the decisions that we make today will be measured in the decades to come. It is incumbent upon us to maintain this perspective as we grapple with immediate challenges.

For me, the second meaning of Remembrance Day is the more personal of the two, but equally significant. In the Flanders poppy, the icon of this day, there is for me the symbolism and synergy of my Flemish ancestry. I am the first of the Jacob family to have been born in Australia. Before this the Jacobs have lived in Flanders as far back as we can trace. I honour the courage that it took my father to relocate his young family to Western Australia, knowing nobody and speaking very little English. He came searching for a way of life and the opportunities that a growing and diverse state could offer. Whilst he embraced citizenship as quickly as he could, as with most migrant families we retain a strong sense of pride and connection with that heritage we share with other parts of the world. So for me the Flanders poppy not only represents the remembrance of our Australian Anzac heritage, but also recalls the Flanders fields, which much of my family has called home for many generations, and is in remembrance of my father, a Flemish serviceman who has since passed.

As I begin to serve Ocean Reef as a state member of Parliament, I believe that I have been well prepared as I have been very privileged to have represented much of this electorate in recent years as a local government councilor. My time on council has been an honour. The opportunity to make a difference in my local community has been an experience that has instilled in me the value of local representation. I have been amazed at how the responsibility of being a local elected representative has become such a passion and the driving force of motivation in my life. I have learnt the importance of having elected representatives who are there first and foremost to make decisions in the best interests of their electorate and not themselves. My time on council has given me an appreciation of the principles of good governance. I will commit myself in this role to growing in both my understanding and implementation of governance principles.

I would like to use this opportunity today to also acknowledge and thank my fellow elected members and the staff of the City of Joondalup for their friendship and for everything that I have learnt from working with them. As I now embark on the new challenge of state Parliament, I am grateful for the foundation and the invaluable education that I have gained through my work on the Joondalup City Council. They have been the experiences that have

helped to shape and prepare me to work for the seat of Ocean Reef and the state of Western Australia and to face the challenges that lie ahead.

Other experiences that I believe will serve me well in this place are my background in architecture and planning. Having studied architecture at the University of Western Australia, worked for an architectural firm and through my role in local government, I bring to the Parliament particular technical skills in the areas of architecture, planning and development. I hope to use these skills to assist in the future growth and development of well-planned and sustainable urban communities across Western Australia and look forward to working in close association with key industry groups, including the Urban Development Institute of Australia, the Housing Industry Association and the Master Builders Association to ensure that quality affordable housing is available and that more efficient systems are in place for processing development approvals across all government agencies. This is a key area through which we can begin to address many of our urban sustainability challenges. Greater implementation of environmentally sensitive and sustainable design principles in both architecture and planning can help deliver a quality way of life that is far more energy efficient and environmentally responsible. In speaking specifically to Perth, our climatic conditions present opportunities to build smarter and more efficiently, with structures that respond to our local climate and reduce our reliance on artificial heating and cooling. Similarly, in urban planning, by creatively addressing our densities and zonings, we have the opportunity to achieve diverse yet quality planning outcomes that will also lead to a more sustainable city and state. However, as we strive for better outcomes, we must also ensure that supply meets demand and that homeownership remains an achievable target for everyday Western Australians.

Whilst my background is more in the area of urban development, I would like to touch briefly on the development of our resource industry and the need for government to ensure reliable supplies of energy and water. Although I have limited involvement in this field, I realise the economic importance that the mining and resource industry has for the prosperity of Western Australia. As a person starting out in my parliamentary career, I will endeavour to develop a better understanding of the key issues by working closely with industry bodies, such as the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, the Australian Pipeline Industry Association and the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies. As a government, we need to work to remove the red tape and bureaucracy restricting the development of our resource industry, in particular the North West Shelf, to enable the development of additional gas fields such as Browse Basin.

Another crucial responsibility of government that is of particular focus for me is the integrity of our society and the importance of promoting family values in public policy. I firmly believe that the strength of the traditional family unit is the best means by which our social fabric

can be maintained and restored. I am deeply blessed to have grown up in a strong family unit. It was not perfect, because there are no perfect people, but my parents maintained a strong marriage, which, in turn, fostered a healthy family environment for me to grow up in, giving me the best possible foundation on which to build my life. I thank them for that. As a government, when faced with matters of social policy, we need to ensure that our decisions always foster and encourage the healthy family unit.

As I begin to draw to a close, I express my appreciation to the many friends who volunteered their time and support so that I could be successfully elected and stand here today. I also take particular note of those people who have joined my wife in the public gallery tonight. Cecylia and I consider ourselves truly blessed that there are too many of you to name, but we will always remember and value the individual roles that each of you have played, and we are forever grateful.

I would like to use this opportunity to briefly make some specific acknowledgments. Firstly, I would like to thank God for what I believe to be a divine opportunity. While I stand charged with a measure of authority, I will endeavour to exercise it with humility and in a considered manner. Secondly, I thank my beautiful wife, Cecylia. We have partnered in everything that we do and so much of my being here today can be attributed to you. I cannot thank you enough for the sacrifices that you have made so that we could be here today. Thirdly, I thank David and Cindy Harding, who first believed in Cecylia and me for this path and followed through with their support all the way. Fourthly, I acknowledge the wonderful friends we have made over the years in the Liberal Party who have supported us to be here today, in particular members of the Moore Division and its president, Councillor Ian Goodenough and his family. Fifthly, I thank both Cecylia and my family, in particular my mother, Julia, who constantly lives an example and is a great hero in my life. Finally, to my late father, Marc Jacob—your principles and your passion for WA politics have become my inheritance. My only regret is that you could not be here to see us today. I will always endeavour to heed my lessons, stay true to the principles that you instilled in me and be a son who you would be proud of.

I will conclude with a quote from Abraham Lincoln that I believe will be relevant to my role as a member of the Legislative Assembly. He said —

I never had a policy; I have just tried to do my very best each and every day.

I wish all my fellow members well and I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity.