

From the Office of

Hon. Alison Xamon MLC

MEMBER FOR NORTH METROPOLITAN REGION

Welcome

Hello! It has been quite the hiatus since the last edition of my newsletter (2013!) and I'm delighted to be able to resume this important means of communicating directly with members. Of course, many of you may not have seen my newsletter – but if you are interested the back catalogue can be found on my website.

I am very pleased to be back. It has been a big start to the term of the 40th Parliament, not least with the logistics of moving into a new (temporary) electorate office located opposite Parliament House and all of the challenges that come with that. I am still waiting for news of where my permanent office will be located but we are hopeful we will know soon - particularly as the temporary office has no disabled access, which is a disgrace.

It has been my absolute pleasure to welcome back my Electorate Officer Kirsten Richards and Research Officer Jocasta Sibbel, both of whom worked with me during my previous term.

We are also delighted to have been joined by Research Officer Leigh Sinclair and Arran Morton, who has taken the role of Media and Communications Co-ordinator. You may remember Leigh and Arran from their work at the office of my friend Lynn MacLaren.

The Greens Parliamentary team and I have been getting together regularly and South West MLC Diane and I are actually sharing our temporary electorate office digs.

A big thank you to all of those who came down to Parliament to watch me to deliver my address in reply to the Governor's speech opening up the 40th Parliament. I had so much that I wanted to talk about, but was limited to only 60 minutes. I picked up on many of my favourite topics (unsurprisingly mental health and suicide prevention got a considerable mention).

Moving forward, I have twenty portfolios to shadow, notably none of them are environment portfolios, and a large electorate with a great many constituents and local issues to represent so I have no doubt there will be plenty more to say in the next four years. I look forward to being able to work with you.

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Swearing in ceremony – with the Governor of Western Australia Kerry Sanderson AC

Climate Change and Mental Health

I gave a speech in Parliament on the research which shows a direct correlation between the impacts of climate change and rising incidents of adverse mental health impacts. With increasing (and justified) concerns about mental health it is important that people understand that this is also one of the many, many reasons we must act on climate change urgently.

Court Diversionary Programs

I have been asking a series of questions about the Government's intentions regarding maintaining funding and expanding our Court Diversionary Programs which help to ensure that people with mental health issues, disability or alcohol and other drug problems receive the support and services they need to break the cycle of offending. I will be keeping a particularly close eye on this when the budget papers come out.

Directors should be held responsible for work place deaths: Industrial Manslaughter Bill

Six years after I first introduced my Occupational Safety and Health Bill 2010, I have again sought to reintroduce the offence of Industrial Manslaughter into our Criminal Code.

The Criminal Code Amendment (Industrial Manslaughter) Bill 2017, introduced into Parliament in June, seeks to deliver important reforms in worker safety by expanding responsibility for workplace

deaths from the relatively abstract company level to the personal level. Existing manslaughter laws only allow the prosecution of individuals who directly caused the incident that has led to the death of a worker, even if it was others who made the decisions leading to the death.

The Industrial Manslaughter Bill will make it possible to prosecute a company for manslaughter when the directors have made decisions which they knew could, and then do, result in deaths.

Every worker has the right to a safe and healthy workplace and all workers are entitled to expect to be able to return home from work safe and well. Unfortunately, that is not always the case and one person is fatally injured every 19 days in Western Australia. This reform is an important part of a suite of changes which need to be made to reverse this trend.



Vale Marc Newhouse

Marc Newhouse, well known anti-racism campaigner, human rights activist, and long-time Chair of the Deaths in Custody Watch Committee, passed away in February this year and it was my privilege, four months later, to recognise his life and passing in the Parliament.

The public gallery had a significant presence for this acknowledgement, testament to the degree of Marc's influence. Marc's work on the issue of deaths in custody was transformative. It shone a powerful light on some of the great injustices within our state, in particular the deaths of Mr Ward and Ms Dhu.

Importantly, Marc also worked tirelessly to empower Aboriginal leadership in this important area.

Despite the absolute seriousness of Marc's work, Marc remained ever irreverent, self-deprecating and intensely kind. Because of this, he had a unique ability to influence and persuade those in power. Marc was simply a lovely person to work with and to be around and his huge impact is felt as strongly in his absence as in his life.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CUTS FUNDING

I have been working with a number of community based organisations which have been advised Department of Health funding will be cut because their objectives are "no longer in line" with the Government's strategic direction.

One of these services is Living Proud which has been providing services which improve the health and wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ community for more than 40 years. I was deeply concerned one of the most vulnerable communities in WA, the importance of which is recognised in the

State Suicide Prevention Strategy, could lose essential funding at a time when demand for their services continue to climb. I raised the issue in Parliament several times and the organisation has since been placed on 'bridging funding' until they are eligible to apply for Mental Health Commission funding in September. I will continue to lobby to make sure their doors are kept open. Similarly, Coeliac WA has served as the peak body for the 1 in 70 people in WA who have Coeliac disease, since 1979.

It has consistently met Government- set KPIs and is invaluable in providing information and undertaking research into the condition.

This de-funding is particularly worrying because there are no other sources of like government funding – three year agreements – which the organisations can apply for. Money invested in preventative and early intervention community mental health and health services are proven to reduce major spending in our acute health services and it is foolhardy not to ensure the ongoing viability of these specialist services.

Treatment of refugees a source of shame

I MARKED WORLD REFUGEE DAY ON 20 JUNE WITH AN ADJOURNMENT SPEECH OUTLINING MY APPRECIATION FOR THE CONTRIBUTION REFUGEES HAVE MADE TO AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY. I ALSO SPOKE ABOUT THE GREENS' ABSOLUTE OPPOSITION TO OFFSHORE DETENTION AND THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO FEDERAL CITIZENSHIP LEGISLATION.

In recent years, Australia has developed an appalling record in terms of how it welcomes and supports refugees. People have a right to safety and we as a country have international obligations to offer refuge.

Our detention centres are often referred to as mental illness factories, where already traumatised men, women and children experience a level of despair, misery and hopelessness. This treatment of vulnerable people is a source of great national shame.

I also expressed my outrage to the Parliament at proposed changes to citizenship federally, which will adversely affect many groups, including refugees. For many from this background, obtaining Australian citizenship is a great achievement. Under the proposed changes, people who have been told they will have to wait one year may now have to wait four. Changing the rules on them without notice is not fair and it is not okay.

Outside of Parliament, I was able to continue the conversation about the overwhelmingly positive contribution refugees have made to Australian culture and the economy, when I caught up with Paddy Cullen from Oxfam.



Concrete plants no longer suitable for East Perth

I am currently working with a group of Perth residents and business owners in challenging operating license renewal applications from two concrete batching plants based in the suburb.

In 2012, Ready-mix concrete suppliers Hanson Construction and Holcim (Australia) were issued a five-year operating licence.

This timeframe was recommended by the State Administrative Tribunal to allow for the finalisation of a number of State and Local Government planning documents.

Five years later and Hanson and Holcim are seeking to extend licenses indefinitely, a move that is at odds with the proposed Town Planning Scheme which envisions a vibrant high-density mixed-use transit-oriented development in North Claisebrook.

This area is also recognised as the gateway to our major sporting stadiums.

I support the local community, the City of Vincent and the East Perth Redevelopment Authority in their united vision and planning for an amazing inner-city precinct.

Consultation lacking in plan for western suburbs schools

In June, I renewed my call for an Independent Schools Commission, in response to strong community opposition to the McGowan Government's plan to relocate Perth Modern School and re-brand its general intake. Despite being just days into my term, I received huge amounts of correspondence from Perth Modern parents alarmed about the Government's decision. I was also contacted by many others dismayed the decision not to re-open a high school in City Beach.

I spoke in Parliament to support a motion from the opposition calling on the Government to reverse its Education Central policy, scrap plans to move Perth Modern and open a school for the Western suburbs. One of my key concerns had been the lack of consultation with families who stood to be affected by the proposed relocation of Perth Modern. I also pointed out the disastrous decisions to close Hollywood, Swanbourne and Scarborough senior high schools, which inevitably put enormous pressure on Shenton College, Churchlands Senior High School and Mount Lawley Senior High School. Parents of children at those schools have also, rightly, been very concerned about what will happen moving forward.

Thankfully, in the week between the start of my remarks and the next opportunity to speak on the issue, the government had responded appropriately to the concerns of residents, the Greens and others, and backpedalled on its policy.

I said very clearly during the election campaign that for too long, decisions about the location of new schools and school upgrades had been subject to politically-driven promises rather than independent assessment. That is not the way planning for public education should be undertaken. Too often it is safe seats that end up missing out on new schools or desperately needed upgrades. School funding should not be about politics or election promises, it should be about the best decision for our children – now and into the future.

An Independent Schools Commission would be an important step in removing the politics out of these decisions relying on both population data and working directly with communities.



Youth Parliament

I met with the group of fantastic young people chosen to take part in this year's western Australian YMCA Youth Parliament.

It never fails to amaze me just how engaged this group of young people are – and how many excellent ideas they have.

Every young person should feel safe at school

We know that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and people who identify as queer and who are subject to homophobia and transphobia, are at higher risk of suicide.

The Safe Schools program is an absolutely vital tool for addressing and stopping homophobic bullying. Every young person should feel safe attending school.

The Greens at both the State and Federal level have continued to call for this important program to continue to be funded. I was pleased to attend the first Save Safe Schools WA rally of the year, on 17 June.



All Australians deserve access to Medicare

During private members' time, I put forward a motion calling on the government to lobby the federal government to grant access to Medicare to people incarcerated in WA prisons.

Currently the 6,092 men, 684 women and 134 young people incarcerated in WA prisons and Banksia Hill Detention Centre are denied access to Medicare funded services, resulting in diminished health and mental health outcomes – at great cost to the state.

Prisoners and detainees often have complex health needs and the prevalence of mental illness is extremely high. The rate of recurring substance abuse is also disproportionately high among this section of the population – and is further elevated among female prisoners. This has been identified as a central factor contributing to offending and particularly recidivism.

The Greens believe all Australians should have access to Medicare, no matter where in Australia they are. Granting access makes sense for health and mental health outcomes – and also for the already overstretched Corrective Services budget.

The Government expressed support for the motion and advised they would raise the issue at the Council of Australian Governments.

Review needed to ensure users not unjustly targeted

The Schedules within the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1981* which determine quantities of drugs which constitute personal use and intent to supply have not been reviewed in more than 25 years, possibly leading to unintended consequences for drug users.

In late June, I called for a review of the thresholds set out in the Schedules to the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1981*, to ensure the life sentences proposed for methamphetamine traffickers under the *Drugs Amendment (Methylamphetamine Offences) Bill 2017* did not unjustly target users caught in the cycle of drug addiction.

The thresholds that are set out in the schedules are supposed to filter out drug users from drug dealers and traffickers. I pointed out that Schedule V, which outlines the “amounts of prohibited drugs giving rise to presumption of intent to supply” has not been reviewed since schedules were put into the legislation in 1990.

It is likely that the schedules no longer reflect current patterns in drug use and distribution, which could result in unintended consequences with the passing of the Bill.

The Greens do not want to see further criminalisation, marginalisation or stigmatisation of people who are caught in the cycle of drug addiction but are doing no harm to others. It is a concern that has been reflected within the alcohol and other drugs sector.

While the Greens supported the bill broadly – our policy says that criminal sanctions should apply to people who manufacture, sell and supply prohibited drugs – it will not do anything to address the demand for methamphetamine.

Good alcohol and drug policy involves a balance between reducing the supply of drugs (which this bill seeks to do) and reducing the demand, thereby reducing the harmful consequences of the cycle of abuse. I have called for the establishment of a Select Committee to look further into alternative methods of reducing the personal and societal harm of drug addiction.

A Select Committee to examine drug policy

We know that, for decades, governments around the world have pursued a disastrous “war on drugs” policy that criminalises a health problem and succeeds only to make things worse.

On 13 June I gave notice of a motion to establish a Select Committee into alternative approaches to reducing illicit drug use and its effects on the community. I'll be proposing that the Committee inquire into and report on other Australian state jurisdictions and international approaches to reducing harm from illicit drug use.

I will be asking that the Committee look closely at what has been achieved in Portugal, for example, which, after decriminalising drugs 14 years ago, has reported a significant drop in overdose deaths. The five Committee members would be asked to take into account the relative weighting given to enforcement, health and social interventions.

The Committee would also be asked to compare the effectiveness and cost to the community of drug related laws in Western Australia, with laws in other jurisdictions; as well as look at the applicability of alternative approaches to minimising harms from illicit drug use.

The Committee would be asked to provide a report no later than 4 months after the motion is agreed to.

Corruption and Crime Commission committee

I was nominated for and have accepted a position on the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission. The Committee is charged with making recommendations to Parliament and government around changes to the Act, reporting on the integrity framework and overseeing the operations of the Corruption and Crime Commission. Please be advised that, because of my position on the Committee, I cannot advocate through my electorate office on matters put before the Committee.

Queers for Reconciliation at The Court Hotel

To celebrate Reconciliation Week, I joined Queers for Reconciliation and Black Queer mob for an evening of networking and experience sharing at The Court Hotel. It was great to catch up with some old friends, meet some new ones and discuss the ways in which the movement can take things forward.

Palliative Care

I gave a speech in Parliament about the importance of ensuring that our palliative care services receive the funding they need. This issue is particularly so for regional Australia where too many people are forced to leave their homes and country at the very end of their lives, when they most want to be able to die surrounded by their loved ones, all because of a lack of services.

NDIS

The issue of the WA rollout of the NDIS is a particular priority, including the rollout of the inclusion of psycho-social disability. There are many concerns about the decision to have a separate system and the uncertainty is proving untenable for people with disability, their families, and also service providers. As my first Motion on Notice to the Parliament I have called on the Government to ensure that as the system is rolled out within WA that there is genuine consultation and co-production with people with disability, their families and service providers. The Motion is likely to be debated within the next few months. I have been also asking a series of questions as to the detail and will continue to drill down as to what is happening and work with the disability community to ensure that this hard fought for reform is not derailed.

Machinery of Government

The public sector is currently undergoing a massive shakeup, with a number of government departments being subject to amalgamation. This process, known as Machinery of Government changes, has caused a significant level of disquiet among both the public servants directly affected and the external stakeholders who are yet to see how the changes land. Some of the changes, on the face of it, appear to be fairly logical, and some may go part way to resolving traditional, and unhelpful, "silos" between government departments. But there has been a significant lack of transparency over the decision making processes and even more concern about the lack of consultation occurring.

OTHER PARLIAMENTARY MATTERS

- Apprenticeships and State Training Board
- Supply Bill
- Constitution Amendment (Demise of the Crown) Bill
- Occupational Health and Safety harmonisation
- Children with disabilities in the classroom
- Youth justice innovation fund
- Reform of the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act
- Palliative Care

HON. ALISON XAMON MLC
7 HARVEST TERRACE
WEST PERTH 6005

P. (08) 9486 8010
E. xamonoffice@mp.wa.gov.au

 Alison Xamon, Greens MLC
 @alisonxamon

PORTFOLIOS

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Mental Health
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Public Sector
Seniors and Aging
Sexuality and Gender Diversity
Suicide Prevention
Training
Volunteering
Women
Worker Safety
Youth

What matters to you?

From Butler in the north, North Fremantle in the south and east as far as Wanneroo Road (including the city). North Metro is a large area with many issues of concern to The Greens.

What are some of the local issues you think require The Greens' attention?

Which of my portfolio areas do you think most need my attention?

Post the enclosed survey back to me at my electorate office, or have your say by visiting:

[Bit.ly/NorthMetroSurvey](https://bit.ly/NorthMetroSurvey)

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Authorised by Alison Xamon, 7 Harvest Terrace, West Perth.