

Office of Hon Alison Xamon MLC

MEMBER FOR NORTH METROPOLITAN REGION



Wave park woes

Many may have heard of the controversial proposed wave park for Alfred Cove.

I used my last opportunity before Parliament finished for the winter recess to outline some of my concerns about the proposal and the approvals process.

The site is almost entirely within the Swan-Canning development control area (DCA) and part of the Swan-Canning Riverpark. It is also part of Bush Forever site 331 and part of a lot recommended to become an A-class reserve. It is zoned Parks and Recreation under the Metropolitan Region Scheme and, importantly, is right next to a Wildlife Habitat Protection Zone on the Swan River.



The Bar-tailed Godwit is one of many species of migratory wading birds to feed at Alfred Cove

The site is also built on old landfill. These issues should be raising environmental red flags for the state and local governments.

In terms of the approvals process, the purpose of the DCA is to ensure

consistency in process and decision-making in areas that directly affect the Swan River – and to ensure that the protection of the Swan River will always be at the forefront of any planning decisions. In this case, however, part of the site falls within a road reserve, which means the proposal will now be assessed by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) rather than the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, as would have been the case if the whole site was within the DCA.

The Swan River Trust will now be invited to provide advice to the bodies which will make the final decision, the WAPC or a Joint Development Assessment Panel if the decision is delegated. If those bodies want to make a decision which is not consistent with the Swan River Trust's advice, the application will then be jointly decided by the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Planning.

The Swan and Canning Rivers protection strategy recognises ecosystem health as paramount. The strategy supports 'appropriate' commercial opportunities within the Riverpark, though it does not specify what is considered 'appropriate.' It does refer to low impact activities such as walking, cycling, kayaking or canoeing.

To receive permission to run a commercial operation in the Riverpark, the application must demonstrate that it is suitable for the river and that it will maintain or improve public access, community use and enjoyment, and the amenity and landscape of the river.

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The relevant policy goes on to say that the long-term health and natural ecosystem of the river is to be maintained and enhanced wherever possible. It will be interesting to see how the wave park proposal will demonstrate any of those things.

Importantly, the Swan River Trust Technical Advisory Panel has



The black-winged stilt

considered the potential impacts of climate change on the river and foreshore and recommends that the State Government avoid allowing development on low-lying areas. These areas will be needed to allow to buffer the anticipated sea level rises and to assist with landward migration of the intertidal zone.

It is concerning that merely for the presence of a road reserve, the Swan River Trust's role in the decision-making process has been reduced so dramatically. This area has been repeatedly identified as environmentally significant, both now and into the future, as the Swan and Canning river systems deal with climate change. The site is simply not suitable for this type of development.

Welcome

Parliament has now finished for the first half of the year – and the Greens have managed to get a lot of work done—but there is still so much more to do!

On the final day of sitting, I introduced my Equal Opportunity (LGBTIQ Anti-Discrimination) Amendment Bill 2018, which will prevent private religious schools from discriminating against LGBTIQA+ students, teachers and parents.

In a post-marriage equality WA it is very important that the remaining provisions that allow legal discrimination against people on the basis of their sexuality or gender history are repealed and replaced.

Also during the final week of Parliament, I delivered my budget-in-reply speech.

I raised my concerns about the Government's lack of investment in prevention and early intervention services. This budget fails to recognise that properly supporting vulnerable people makes the community safer and saves money in the long-term.

Estimates have provided an opportunity for me to ask direct questions of Ministers and I have attended hearings in many of my portfolio areas including Education, Training, Disability Services, Child Protection, Corrective Services, Health and Mental Health.

In my Electorate, I have been following up on the recommendations of multiple reviews and audits to establish how much work has been done to achieving the objectives set out in the Swan Canning

River Protection Strategy.

I also recently met with the Professional Abalone Fishers' Association, who raised some serious concerns about the impact of the Ocean Reef Marina on abalone fishing. I have begun investigations into what can be done to protect the species from the impacts of the build.

It has now been just over a year since I took my seat in Parliament and STILL we do not have our permanent office. My team has each picked a date for when they think we might move. I have the guesses written on a whiteboard in my office. So far the more optimistic among us have already lost. I live in hope that one day I may have a permanent electorate office that people with disability can access.



Senator Nick McKim on Manus



Senator Nick McKim shared his experiences of Manus Island, when he visited Perth on 6 June. Senator McKim's tale of the cruelty and despair he witnessed was nothing short of harrowing

Ending discrimination against LGBTIQ students, teachers and parents

Many would be surprised to learn that WA religious schools, including those receiving taxpayer dollars, can legally sack LGBTIQ staff, because of their sexuality or gender. It is also legal to expel LGBTIQ students and to refuse enrolment from students who come from families with same-sex parents.

This is why on 28 June I introduced a bill that removes the exemptions from the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 that allow religious schools to legally discriminate against people on the basis of their sexuality and/or gender history.

The Equal Opportunity (Anti-Discrimination) Amendment Bill 2018 also has the additional positive effect of preventing discrimination by religious schools on the basis of other attributes listed in the Act such as marital status or pregnancy, thereby upholding the rights of many other members of our community and providing them with access to recourse if discrimination does occur.

While the positive effects of removing this Section are widespread, the impact on LGTBIQ people will be particularly profound. It's important to recognise



With Beth Cole and Brian Greig before introducing my bill to the Legislative Council

that in 1984, when the Act was drafted, homosexuality in Western Australia was a criminal offence. All gay men were regarded as criminals and faced up to 14 years in prison for engaging in consenting sex in private.

In developing this Bill I remained conscious of the need to maintain

religious freedoms.

Accordingly, the Bill will still allow religious schools to discriminate for: enrolment practices that favour students who adhere to their faith over others; and for selecting teaching staff whose role has a specific religious purpose. This is in line with other states.



With Pride WA president Jeremy Wray, John Carey MLA, Senator Louise Pratt and UNAWA chair and Redhead Communications director Tanya Finnie

IDAHOBIT

I was pleased to be invited to speak at an event organised for the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT).

I spoke about being a good ally.

IDAHOBIT day is a time when we can come together to celebrate the LGBTIQ community, acknowledge and honour the hard-fought advancements in human rights, while recognising that there is still much more work to be done.

More investment needed in research for ME/CFS

The 12th of May marked the International Day of Awareness for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis. This condition is also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and is often referred to as ME/CFS. ME/CFS is a complex chronic illness that affects most body systems. It is conservatively thought to affect between 0.4 and one per cent of the population. In WA this equates to somewhere between 10,000 and 26,000 people.

The day of awareness forms part of a broader #millionsmissing campaign. I gave a member's statement in Parliament to acknowledge the first #millionsmissing event ever to be held in Western Australia.

It was a powerful depiction of a silent yet impactful illness and heightened awareness of the challenges people with ME/CFS face.

Having this condition is made even harder because sufferers face difficulties securing a diagnosis in the first place, or even worse, being believed.

There are many parallels with tick-borne illness, which I have also been working on.

It is clear that greater attention must be paid to improving treatment options for people who are already affected, while at the same time ensuring that we are investing in research.

Deafblind community and NDIS

I met with representatives from the Deafblind community to discuss the challenges they are experiencing in accessing NDIS funding. There need to be avenues in place that enable people with disability to work with the National Disability Insurance Agency to address the broad range of issues. Mechanisms for co-design of services and funding for systemic advocacy are central to resolving problems. We need to ensure that we are catching up with what is happening in other states, particularly around funding of systemic advocacy so that we can ensure the successful implementation of the NDIS in WA.

Outside Parliament with Janelle Macri, Deafblind West Australians chair Eddie Szczepanik, Rita Klenfeld Fowell, Karen Wickham and Ivy

Government must pay attention to older adult suicide

I have become increasingly disturbed about the growing trend of suicide in older Australians and have been questioning the Government about what it is doing to address this issue.

Anecdotal evidence suggests elder abuse may be a contributing factor. People may be feeling pressure from their families or they feel their lives no longer have purpose. Whatever the reason, it is absolutely devastating and a heartbreakingly indictment of where we are as a community and how we treat older people. Disappointingly, the Government's response to my line of questioning showed that there are no suicide prevention programs targeted at seniors. It is imperative that the Government monitors trends in mental health and suicide and then uses this information to respond quickly.

Older Australians should be valued, and supported, so that they can continue to be active participants in all aspects of community life.



Integrity in Police Complaints processes

We are seeing an ongoing level of concern in the community that complaints about police are being handled poorly.

One of the issues raised is the lack of transparency in dealing with the initial complaint. People have no way to be assured that the initial investigator is sufficiently independent of the police officers they are investigating.

The Corruption and Crime Commission is the body that oversees the way the police handle complaints against themselves. However, this body is not infallible either. We have seen reports tabled in Parliament that show a shocking lack of willingness to exercise their powers in situations that are crying out for a thorough investigation.

Repeated reports and investigation have raised the same issues again and again, with no solutions presented. The way we handle and oversight complaints against police needs a thorough overhaul.



Greens leading way to a plastic-free future, despite reluctance from Government

I was delighted to support my colleague Hon Robin Chapple MLC's Environmental Protection Authority (Banning Plastic Bags and Other Things) Bill 2018. Robin's Bill is both visionary and important in its attempt to restrict the supply of plastic bags, balloons, plastic drinking straws, polythene and polystyrene packaging and prohibit the use of microbeads in products. So it is disappointing the State Government has indicated that they will not support this important Bill.

While the plastic bag ban, which came into force on 1 July is a good start, we need to go further to reduce landfill waste, reduce pollution of our oceans and waterways and prevent harm to marine life. In particular I spoke about the cumulative and toxic impact that plastic micro beads are having on our marine environment and our food chain. The community has responded well to the plastic bag ban. We need to do things differently.



Plastic pieces are removed from the mouth of a bird at Lord Howe Island. Picture courtesy of Ian Hutton

WA Budget fails to invest in prevention and early intervention services

The 2018-18 State Budget, released on 10 May, provided disappointing reading across many of my portfolio areas. I am particularly concerned about the Government's lack of investment in prevention and early intervention services across a range of areas. The failure to take a long term view is evident across the mental health, health, communities and child protection areas. There is no recognition that appropriately supporting vulnerable people makes the community safer and saves money in the long term.

Specifically, there is a worrying lack of investment in parenting support programs. Without these programs vulnerable families are much more likely to end up in crisis, and needing more intensive and expensive levels of support. Ultimately this leads to more families torn apart and more children in out-of-home care. I also share the mental health sector's distress about the Government's intention to cut over 40% of funding to mental health prevention services across the forward estimates.

I was also disappointed to learn the Government has not allocated any

money for additional forensic beds, nor do they even have a plan in place to meet the desperate need for more forensic beds in WA.

The WA Budget also misses an important opportunity to reduce imprisonment rates and to use savings for more prevention, diversion and in-prison programs. We need to stop locking people up, yet there is no evidence the Government is willing to do the work needed to reduce the horrendous rate of Aboriginal incarceration in Western Australia.

The constrained funding environment is exactly why we need to look at reducing the number of prisoners being detained, many of whom would be better served being managed in the community, and reinvesting those funds back into our prisons.

The budget was not all bad news. I am pleased to note the Government's commitment to establishing community mental health step up/step down services in regional areas over the forward estimates, including a 10 bed facility in Geraldton to add to existing services in

Joondalup and Rockingham. I hope the Department of Communities' Target 120 program will provide much needed early intervention and specialist support for vulnerable young people at the initial sites at Bunbury and Armadale.

Estimates

The Legislative Council budget estimates hearings were held during the week beginning 18 June. They provided an opportunity to directly ask Ministers to provide further details or clarify information in the budget.

Education, Training, Disability Services, Child Protection, Corrective Services, Health and Mental Health were my portfolio areas called before the Estimates Committee this year.

I did not have the opportunity to ask as many of the questions I would have liked and these additional questions have been put on notice for response by the relevant Minister over the next few weeks.

Visit the WA Parliament website for full transcripts.

Commonwealth Redress Scheme and apology

In the final week of Parliament the State Government made a formal apology to those people who had been subject to sexual abuse, acting on one of the recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse. I spoke in the Parliament and issued an apology on behalf of the Greens. I also welcomed the Government's commitment to formally signing up to the Commonwealth Redress Scheme.

Following the Premier's apology, I urged the Government to ensure Redress processes are easily accessible, prompt and transparent. It is crucial that the mistakes made in the operation of the WA Redress Scheme do not happen again.

It is also important to remember that an estimated 50% of WA Redress claimants will not be eligible under the Commonwealth Scheme because the abuse they suffered was not sexual abuse. The abuse that those children suffered still had lifelong negative consequences.

Workers' Compensation

I was pleased to see the passage of Worker's Compensation and Injury Management Bill 2018 through Parliament during the last sitting period. In the event a worker is killed on the job, this Bill serves to increase the lump sum payable to dependants and more than doubles the allowance to each dependent child.

These changes are much needed, and are long overdue. I welcome them. However, they do not detract from the need for a whole suite of other measures to improve safety at work, including industrial manslaughter laws.

Well functioning worker's compensation laws are essential – but it is equally important that we work towards eliminating workplace injuries and fatalities altogether.

My Industrial Manslaughter Bill which is currently before Parliament awaiting debate, would make senior managers personally responsible if they made a decision, which knowingly created an unsafe workplace, and that decision led to a death.



Disability Support Awards

I was honoured to attend the WA Disability Support Awards on 28 April (below)



Marina a threat to abalone

Recently I met with the Professional Abalone Fishers' Association, who have raised some quite serious concerns about the impact the proposed Ocean Reef Marina might have on the abalone population in the reef to the north of the site.

Previous harbour and marina builds have been associated with substantially greater impacts on abalone than expected. The abalone population to the north of Mindarie Quay was devastated and has never recovered. Other developments have similarly seen a much larger impact on abalone than was anticipated.

The reef to the north of the proposed Ocean Reef Marina site contains 40% of the abalone in the metropolitan area. I am waiting on responses from the Minister about what kind of research has been done on our abalone – and how they might best protect the abalone from any potential impacts of the build.

Metronet

The northern expansion of the city is planned all the way up to Yanchep – and our rail and road is set to follow. The proposed northern extension of the rail line will cut through a precious Bush Forever site. I am seeking advice as to why it cannot be part of one of the existing or proposed road reserves, to minimise the impact on our precious bushland.



At the Community Sector Excellence Awards

Community Sector Awards

I had a fantastic time attending the Community Sector Excellence Awards (left) on 2 May along with Senator Rachel Siewert. I was particularly pleased that Tuart Place, with whom I have long worked, were named the winner of Category 2 – Medium Organisation.



Iftar Dinner

It was my pleasure to join members of the Perth Muslim community for the annual Iftar dinner at the Parliament House dining room. (above)

Aboriginal incarceration rates still horrendous

While I welcomed the announcement from the Government in May that it would – finally – establish a Custodial Notification Service (CNS), there is still much to be done to reduce the horrendous rate of Aboriginal imprisonment in Western Australia.

First recommended by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 27 years ago, a CNS will provide culturally appropriate support and advice for Aboriginal people brought into custody. Since the introduction of a CNS in New South Wales in 2000, deaths have effectively stopped.

However, more action is needed to reduce the overall number of Aboriginal adults, children and young people incarcerated in this state. We need to be paying urgent attention to reducing the rate of imprisonment for fine default, for example. The case of Ms Dhu highlights the potentially tragic consequences of not putting alternatives to prison in place for vulnerable people who are unable to pay fines.

WA still has the highest rate of Aboriginal incarceration in the country – and it is increasing. We must be doing more to ensure that every possible mechanism is put in place to prevent deaths in custody and reduce incarceration rates.



Eurydice Dixon vigil

It was with a very heavy heart that I joined hundreds of mourners at Hyde Park in the city to remember murdered Melbourne woman Eurydice Dixon.



MATES in Construction fundraising lunch

I attended the MATES lunch 2018 on Friday 4 May. Lunch guests heard from Olympic swimmer Liesel Jones, who shared her experiences of overcoming adversity

Youth Justice

I am still concerned about the Government's failure to commit to addressing the ongoing problems with youth justice. It is appalling that young people are being confined by themselves for months on end.

Answers to questions in Parliament revealed that rates of self-harm in young people at Banksia Hill continue to be unacceptably high. I also found that children and young people continue to be detained at Banksia Hill because there is no suitable accommodation available for them. It's just not good enough. Detention should be the absolute last resort, not the place they are left because the government refuses to come up with appropriate alternatives.

Fixing youth justice is still not the priority it should be for this Government. They continue to be evasive on which parts of Youth Justice Services are moving from Corrective Services to the Department of Communities, and when. They are also unclear when, if at all, younger children, girls and young women will be moved from Banksia Hill to more suitable accommodation. My questions in budget estimates revealed that the Government has not allocated any money to any of this essential reform, and they have yet to develop a concrete plan for this to happen.

Get in touch.

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Rally for Palestine at Yagan Square



I was invited to speak at the Friends of Palestine rally at Yagan Square (above) on 19 May. The event remembered those who have been killed in fighting in the 70 years since the establishment of the state of Israel.

Biggest Morning Tea

I was pleased to attend an Australia's Biggest Morning Tea event at Parliament House (right)



PORTFOLIOS

Alcohol and Other Drugs
Community Services
Corrective Services
Disability
Education
Electoral Affairs
Family and Domestic Violence
Gambling
Health
Industrial Relations
Integrity of Government
Law and Order
Mental Health
Multicultural Affairs
Pay Equity
Public Sector
Seniors and Aging
Sexuality and Gender Diversity
Suicide Prevention
Training
Volunteering
Women

Bills debated

Corruption, Crime and Misconduct and Criminal Property Confiscation Amendment Bill 2017

Liquor Control Amendment Bill 2018

Payroll Tax Assessment Amendment (Exemption for Trainees) Bill 2018

Terrorism (Extraordinary Powers) Amendment Bill 2018

Tobacco Products Control Amendment Bill 2017

Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Amendment Bill 2017