

# Office of Hon Alison Xamon MLC

MEMBER FOR NORTH METROPOLITAN REGION



**NEWSLETTER VOL.2, ISSUE 21 | December 2020**

The last two months have been extremely busy with extended sitting hours in Parliament in the lead up to the summer recess, as well as annual Budget Estimates and Annual Report hearings which had been delayed due to COVID-19. We debated Hon Tim Clifford's excellent Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Bill 2020 which seeks to legislate net zero emissions targets, renewable energy targets and ensuring that climate change is at the centre of all government decision-making. It was incredibly disappointing that the Government did not take the opportunity to pass this legislation.

I hosted a Roundtable with eminent Noongar women to discuss child protection matters, attended rallies for climate action, forest conservation, and mental health, and was invited to place a rose at the 30th Annual Silent Domestic Violence Memorial March. November was Pride month and I again co-hosted Pride at Parliament and attended a number of Pride functions in the electorate.

I continued to work to advocate for improved integrity of government through mechanisms that will increase transparency around decision making like publishing ministerial diaries. I was also delighted to facilitate an event at parliament with the leaders of the Halls Creek Olabud Doogethu project and Social Reinvestment WA. The Olabud Doogethu project is WA's first justice reinvestment site and is seeing stunning results in local empowerment, youth engagement, employment and crime reduction – I hope to see this project replicated throughout WA.

Animal welfare has again been a high priority over the last couple of months with widespread campaigns against the Melbourne Cup and work in Parliament to advocate for improved greyhound welfare.

Parliament has now been prorogued, which means it will not sit again until after the March 2021 state

election. The WA Greens are working hard to retain and build on the four seats we currently hold in the Legislative Council, including of course my own. I am hopeful that I will be able to continue to represent you as your North Metro Green in Parliament after the election.

I know many of you have faced some incredible challenges this year. As the year draws to a close I wish you and your loved ones a happy and safe Christmas, and I hope that 2021 brings some welcome progress including, hopefully, real action on addressing climate change.



**Welcoming MPs to learn from the Halls Creek Community Leaders and Social Reinvestment WA about the excellent Olabud Doogethu project**

# First Nations children in care

An alarming 56% of children in out of home care in Western Australia are Aboriginal. First Nations communities know the solutions to addressing the over-representation of their children in care, but the Government is not listening to them. In early December, and in conjunction with Senator Rachel Siewert, I hosted a roundtable with a group of Noongar women who all have extensive experience in child protection and family support. We had a positive wide-ranging discussion. Amongst other things it was agreed that WA needs a Commission for Aboriginal Children and Young People to provide greater accountability in the child protection system and to support Aboriginal self-determination in this sector as well as a significant increase in funding and urgent action on FASD. I look forward to continuing to work closely with this group and amplifying their voices calling for change.



On the steps of parliament with the XRWA Grandparents who were participating in the XRWA Hunger Strike for Climate Justice (left)



Meeting with the Youth Affairs Council of WA to discuss the experiences of young people during the COVID-19 crisis (above)



The participants of the Child Protection Roundtable (left)

# Education for children with disability and mental health issues

The right of people with disability to access education without discrimination is internationally recognised – yet children with disability still face barriers to accessing education in Western Australia. The Disability Royal Commission has found that children with disability are experiencing systemic failings and human rights breaches in schools across the country, and that complaints processes are inadequate in resolving issues. I have been contacted by a number of families with children who are being failed by our education system. Their individual

cases highlight the lasting impact that the use of seclusion and restraint can have on children, and the importance of positive behavioural support in schools. Too often schools do not work with families to ensure our education system is meeting the needs of these vulnerable children. It is crucial that schools improve complaints handling processes and that they acknowledge when things go wrong. I spoke in Parliament about these issues and have followed up concerns among WA parents regarding complaints processes and misconduct.

## Greens' Climate Bill not passed

The Greens have four occasions each industry. We know that the planned year when we can introduce and expansion of LNG in the northwest will debate our own legislation. Our last entirely wipe out the benefit of the opportunity for the year was in the first actions to reduce emissions being week of November, when we brought taken elsewhere in Australia. It was forward for debate Hon Tim Clifford's incredibly disappointing that the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Government did not take the Emissions Reduction Bill 2020. In my opportunity to pass this legislation. It second reading speech on the Bill I would have presented the perfect spoke about the failure of the opportunity to take concrete steps Government to urgently act to address towards meeting WA's worldwide climate change, and contrasted this to obligations to reduce our greenhouse their ongoing support for the LNG gas emissions.

## Environmental Protection Bill

I spoke in Parliament during matters, including Matters of debate on the Environmental National Environmental Protection Amendment Bill as to Significance. It is also concerns that the bill completely disappointing the bill did not lacked any reference to addressing broaden the scope of public climate change. We know that the referrals in the environmental ongoing lack of climate action in impact assessment scheme. The WA will continue to adversely public needs more opportunity to impact the environment and it is have a say on proposals that will unbelievable that not a single impact the environment, because mention of climate was made in it currently has so few. That would the Bill. Additionally, in have improved transparency combination with changes to the significantly. Overall I believe the EPBC Act at the federal level, the legislation represented a litany of Bill opens the door to Western lost opportunities to improve our Australia being solely responsible state environmental protections. for approvals of all environmental

## 350.org report

I welcomed the recent release of "Captured State," a report prepared by 350.org that looks into the influence of the gas lobby on political decision-making in WA. The report's authors pulled together donations data, revolving door appointments, and ministerial diaries, and then analysed this information in light of the failures of government to adequately regulate the gas industry. This kind of investigation is painstaking and labour intensive, but this work is needed because of the complete lack of transparency around decision making and the lack of safeguards around political influence.

In WA the community has no insight into how Ministers split their meeting time between industry and community members, and we still have cash-for-access fundraisers being peddled by the major parties and their associated entities with no transparency about who is attending these events. This is why the Greens are campaigning so strongly for improved integrity of government and why my Bill amending the Electoral Act aims to outlaw cash-for-access schemes. We need to know Ministers are making decisions for the right reasons and with consideration for the long term health of our planet and not simply to appease donors.



Rallying for real action on climate change in the lead up to debate on the Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Bill 2020

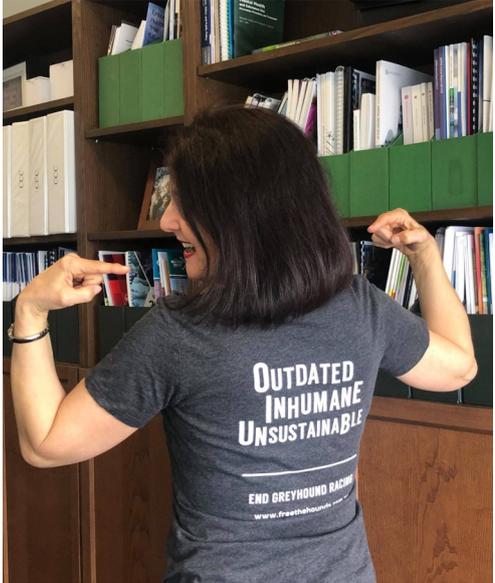
# Greyhounds

I continue to work with stakeholders to campaign against greyhound racing and in November asked the government a series of questions about greyhound racing in WA flowing on from the annual report. The questions covered a broad range of issues including how often greyhound kennels are inspected,

equipment provided to on track veterinarians by Racing and Wagering WA, whether greyhounds' microchips are scanned before each race, track design, the increase in greyhound injuries, and whether blood test results include the levels of substances found. I will continue to advocate for the welfare of these beautiful animals and for an end to this inherently cruel sport.



Attending the guide dog graduation class



Wearing my new Free the Hounds shirt

Celebrating 30 years of the great work of the Telethon Kids Institute



As a past President of the WA Association for Mental Health I am a strong supporter of their Prevent Support Heal campaign, which calls for the Government to properly fund mental health community supports and prevention programs. I welcomed the opportunity to speak at their recent rally at Parliament.

# Local Government Disallowance

Good laws should be unambiguous and easy for the community to understand and follow. During a motion in the Legislative Council on 11 November I spoke in favour of the disallowance of the Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Amendment Regulations 2020 because the new regulations were badly drafted and unclear. As a result they left councillors exposed to

disciplinary action from the Local Government Standards Panel if they availed themselves of independent legal advice, a clearly untenable position. There is a clear need for new regulations to provide certainty in this space and to make it clear that elected representatives cannot interfere in day-to-day administrative

functions, but can still retain the capacity to avail themselves of independent legal advice in order to fulfil their governing functions. I raised my concerns in Parliament during debate and was pleased the motion to disallow the regulations was successful. I hope the government will now turn its attention to drafting new provisions that provide greater clarity and certainty for councillors.

## Neerabup National Park

I raised in Parliament community concerns that Neerabup National Park is constantly being chipped away at in favour of development. This is something we are seeing happen to our precious places across Perth more generally. This time, Main Roads wants to use the park and adjoining Neerabup Nature Reserve for the Mitchell Freeway extension. I reminded Members that our banksia woodlands are now of national environmental significance, but that doesn't seem to have stopped us from destroying them. Crucial elements of recommendations from the Environmental Protection Authority regarding Neerabup remain unmet. We cannot continue to allow excisions from our conservation reserves. It is a disaster for our bushland and our unique biodiversity. We have to do much better for Neerabup and bushland across the biodiversity hotspot in which we live.



Above—With Mary Gray from the Urban Bushland Council at the WA Forest Alliance & Save Our Jarrah rally.

Right— speaking out against transphobia

## Nup to the Cup

On Melbourne Cup Day I spoke in Parliament about my dismay at the death of yet another horse during the race. There have been seven deaths during the Cup since 2013.



The issue of retired racehorses being slaughtered in knackeries was raised again around the time of the Cup – this time with allegations raised in the Victoria Parliament about retired racehorses being slaughtered in New South Wales, despite a ban on the practice. WA is getting started with its own tracking of former racehorses. I asked the Government to table the newly completed Memorandum of Understanding between Racing and Wagering WA and WA registered abattoirs and knackeries, which, disappointingly, gave little heed to actual animal welfare concerns. We need to reconsider whether subjecting animals to injury and having them die in the name of entertainment is really worth pursuing.



## Ocean Reef Marina

The Ocean Reef Marina development approvals process continues to confuse and alarm the local community. In response to their concerns I have contacted the Minister for Environment to ask whether a revised Coastal Processes and Wrack Management Plan has been developed as per the conditions of the environmental approval, and if so, that the Minister advise how stakeholders can access a copy of the plan. Again and again I have raised concerns about the community consultation process around this development, and how difficult it has been for people to be kept informed. It's really disappointing that this continues to be an ongoing issue.

# State Agreement Acts

A State Agreement is a legal agreement between the state government and companies seeking to develop a major project. State Agreements are commonly used for large resource projects, and may become legislation as a State Agreement Act. The Greens have an in-principle objection to State Agreement Acts because they are anti-competitive. They modify state laws for the convenience of the other party and undermine the concept of a level playing field. In November I raised in Parliament my concerns about the lack of transparency in the use of State Agreement Acts because the acts are not published in consolidated form. MPs regularly debate amendments to these acts without knowing exactly what is being amended and this is not good enough. The Greens have asked throughout the 40th Parliament for the Government to make available full, consolidated versions of State Agreement Acts, but the Government has resisted. Better transparency is needed to ensure the public has proper access to what should be public information.

**Photos clockwise from top – With the Indian Consul General at the opening of the Divali Lights festival, laying a rose at the silent march against domestic violence, with the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainee’s social enterprise ‘Fare Go’, at the launch of WAAMH’s report on co-designing Community Mental Health supports**



**At the Beaufort Street Community Centre Open Day**



## Estimates

This year budget estimates and annual report hearings were held concurrently, and much later than usual, due to COVID-19. Budget estimates hearings provide an opportunity to unpick some of the Government’s proposed spending for

the coming year and into the forward estimates. I was pleased to have the opportunity to question the Government’s funding commitments across WA Health, Mental Health Commission, Disability Services, Child Protection, Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and the Department of Education. I asked a

range of questions during these hearings and also submitted questions on notice to agencies that were not called. Many of my questions required detail that the Government was unable to provide at the hearing and I look forward to receiving the answers to those questions over the coming weeks.

## NDIS Bill

I welcomed the passage of a bill to establish a screening process for workers delivering NDIS services to people with disability. The bill aims to prevent people with disability from experiencing harm from poor quality or unsafe support or services. This is obviously something the Greens strongly support. During my second reading speech on the bill I expressed concern that the legislation would create a two-tiered system where some people receiving disability services would be protected through

worker screening, while others people receiving state-funded disability services or being supported by workers of unregistered providers, would not have these protections. I urged the Government to closely monitor this situation.

## Disability Justice Centre

I spoke in Parliament about my concerns regarding the continued under-utilisation of the Disability Justice Centre and ongoing desperate need for reform of the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act (CLIMIA). The Disability

Justice Centre was created to ensure there was an appropriate place to accommodate mentally impaired accused people who were living with a cognitive or intellectual disability. Frustratingly, people who would benefit from the Disability Justice Centre are being inappropriately kept in prison and in the 2019-20 the Disability Justice Centre has accommodated just three residents. The Government must address the barriers that are preventing the Centre from being utilised as intended.



**Rallying against homelessness**



**I was pleased to host WA's first social justice reinvestment project, Olabud Doogethu. I hope to see this wonderful project replicated across WA.**

## Aboriginal Visitors Scheme

I have continued to follow-up with Parliamentary questions progress made by the Government filling vacant positions in the important Aboriginal Visitors Scheme. I was very disappointed to learn that positions that had been vacant before March had still not been filled by November. The Aboriginal Visitors Scheme provides support and counselling to First Nations people in prison and is an important strategy for helping to prevent Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

## FIFO mental health

I have continued to ask questions of the Government regarding the implementation of recommendations made as part of the Education and Health Standing Committee report 'The Impact of FIFO Work Practices on Mental Health'. While a mental health and suicide prevention training program recommended by the committee has been developed, it has had very little uptake from within the resource industry. According to answers to my questions in Parliament, only six out of more than a hundred mining companies in WA have undertaken the training. More broadly, the Government's response to recommendations made to prevent suicide of FIFO workers has been disappointing. As we come into summer holidays with FIFO workers spending much of the traditional holiday period separated from their families and loved ones it is vital they receive appropriate support at work.



**I was delighted to again attend the WA Mental Health Awards, which honours excellence in the sector.**

# Palliative care committee report

The Joint Select Committee on Palliative Care in Western Australia (the Committee), of which I was a member, delivered its final report on 19 November 2020. The need for a committee was identified during debate on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill in December 2019 and following the report of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices in August 2018, which made a number of findings regarding palliative care. The Committee examined progress of the implementation of these recommendations, the delivery of

palliative care in the regions, and progress on ensuring equity of access across WA. It found that palliative care services in WA are fragmented, that respite care is limited or non-existent in some areas, and that there is significant scope to improve knowledge of palliative care among GPs. I will continue to raise issues arising from this important report. This is a crucial area and it is important that we get this right – and that everyone regardless of location has access to palliative care services if they need them.



**Our last Parliamentary Strategy Group meeting of the 41st Parliament**



**30 years of Western Australian Greens Members of Parliament**



**I was delighted to once again co-host Pride at Parliament. We must keep working towards true equality**

## **Bills Debated**

- Criminal Law (Unlawful Consorting) Bill 2020
- Criminal Law Amendment (Uncertain Dates) Bill 2019
- COVID-19 Response Legislation Amendment Bill (No.2) 2020
- Mutual Recognition Western Australia Bill 2020
- Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration (Change of Name) Bill 2018
- NDIS (Worker Screening) Bill 2020
- Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Bill 2020

## **PORTFOLIOS**

- Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Animal Welfare
- Child Protection
- Community Services
- Consumer Protection
- Corrective Services
- Disability
- Education
- Electoral Affairs
- Gambling
- Family and Domestic Violence
- Health
- Industrial Relations and Worker Safety
- Integrity of Government
- Law and Order
- Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
- Multicultural Affairs
- Public Sector
- Seniors and Ageing
- Sexuality and Gender Diversity
- Training and Workforce Development
- Veterans Affairs
- Volunteering
- Women
- Youth

# Get in touch.

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