



## Parliamentary Committee finds 75,000 WA seniors at risk of Elder Abuse

The Parliamentary Select Committee into Elder Abuse, of which I was Deputy Chair, delivered its final report on 13 September. During the 12-month inquiry, the committee looked at a wide range of issues including what constituted elder abuse; who was at risk; the potential perpetrators; the need for education and awareness campaigns; as well as the role of the Government, the justice system and other agencies in preventing elder abuse.

One of the key issues the committee looked at was financial abuse of seniors and instances of the abuse of enduring power of attorney status. Interestingly, the committee found perpetrators may sometimes be unaware that their actions are illegal and instead feel an entitlement to particularly their parent's assets.

The 'granny flat' example outlined in the report showed what can happen when good family relationships turn sour. The committee found there are little legal protections in place for



**My fellow committee members and I deliver the final report to waiting media outside Parliament**

seniors who had combined their assets with their children's. There needs to be tighter controls and avenues to recover lost money in instances when children do kick parents out. We must also ensure the police take the issue of elder abuse more seriously and act swiftly when complaints are received.

Community perceptions about the low risk of elder abuse did not reflect the reality. There are up to 75,000 people, irrespective of background, at risk of elder abuse in Western Australia. The committee made a number of recommendations including the need for continued funding for community legal centres; more funding for advocacy services, and increased training for WA

Police and other 'gatekeeper' professionals such as doctors, lawyers, banking staff and health professionals.

The committee's work has re-ignited an important conversation about the devastating effect of abuse of our seniors and is one that must continue.

I call upon the Government to work towards implementing the report's recommendations as soon as is practicable. In the meantime we are still awaiting the Government's formal response to the report.

**For more on my current committees, see page 8.**

## Welcome

The long awaited report into Elder Abuse was tabled and has been very well received. I encourage interested people to read it, particularly the recommendations, and we now await the official Government response.

The issue of legal discrimination against LGBTI students, parents and staff at religious schools went national last month, following the leaking of the Ruddock Religious Freedom Review. The debate sparked an announcement from the WA Attorney General that the Government will now review the state Equal Opportunity Act.

Whilst I am pleased that a review will be happening it does not excuse the immediate need for Parliament to pass my Equal Opportunity (LGBTIQ Anti-Discrimination) Amendment Bill as

people and children are risking legal discrimination now.

I was pleased to receive bipartisan support for my motion to establish a Select Committee to examine alternative approaches to reducing the harm caused by illicit drug use in what proved to be an excellent 4 hour debate.

Our current approach to drug use is clearly not working and the Committee, which I am now chairing, will inquire into other Australian state jurisdictions and international approaches to reducing harm to the community caused by drug use – including the experience of countries such as Portugal. We will be calling for public submissions very soon.

My Industrial Manslaughter Bill has continued to garner attention, most recently with a recent Senate Committee report calling for such laws to be

introduced around Australia. The state Government continues to remain equivocal about the matter.

In my Electorate, I've continued to highlight environmental issues connecting with proposed developments at Ocean Reef and Alfred Cove (in terms of the impact on the Swan River); while also pursuing the issue of the cost of relocation of the international school and subsequent loss of green open space. I have also continued to urge the Government to see sense and ensure the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre is provided with sufficient funding so that it can continue its long history as a valuable environmental educator.

We officially have a moving date for the new office! By the time you receive the next edition of my newsletter, my team and I (cross fingers!) should be settled into our new digs in West Leederville.

## Greens call for better protection and management of South West forests



I emphatically supported a Greens motion that the Legislative Council recognise the economic opportunities of our South West forests beyond forestry. Our old growth forests are under considerable stress, before the impacts on habitat and of climate change are taken into account.

Currently only 10% of jarrah and 11.5% of karri logs become sawn timber, while

the rest become charcoal logs, sawmill residue or firewood.

There are much better ways to source wood rather than chopping down our native forests – a view that is supported by residents of the South-West, with fewer than 25% believing that the forest industry is having a positive impact on a range of community liveability markers.

We must make a move to truly sustainable plantation and farm timbers. It is essential, however, that anything that is proposed in this space takes into consideration the people and families who work in the native timber industry.

They deserve to have stability about what the future holds for their communities and are suffering from a lack of Government planning.

### Alcoa workers' strike

I offered solidarity to the workers involved in the industrial dispute with Alcoa, as part of a motion calling on the corporation to reconsider the cancellation of the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA). The dispute is about concerns over job security as a result of the proposed loss of employment clauses within the EBA. Precarious employment is detrimental to families and regional communities.

## Reform of Retirement Villages Act a priority

I have given notice in Parliament for a motion calling on the Government to reform the Retirement Villages Act in the context of a growing ageing population increasingly looking for suitable accommodation options to facilitate ageing in place.

Former Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chairman Allan Fels considers retirement villages the greatest untouched consumer protection issue of this century. With more than twenty thousand Western Australians currently living in retirement villages, and these figures set to grow quickly, it is vitally important that we take steps to ensure that people are adequately protected. Much work has been undertaken to date on identifying what needs to be done to improve legislation and regulation in this area, and I am hoping the debate on my motion will build the momentum needed for the Government to prioritise reform.

## Alternative approaches to dealing with drugs

I am very pleased to have received bipartisan support for my motion to establish a Select Committee to examine alternative approaches to reducing the harm caused by illicit drug use.

Our current approach to illicit drug use is clearly not working: WA has seen the greatest increase in accidental drug-related deaths in the country, with numbers doubling in the past 15 years; drugs play a prominent role in the removal of children across the state; and they are a huge problem within our prisons.

The Committee will inquire into other Australian state jurisdictions and international approaches to reducing harm to the community caused by drug use – including the well known experience of Portugal.

The Portuguese have shown that it is possible to take a different approach and as a result turn things around. In the early 2000's Portugal made the decision to treat illicit drug use as a health issue rather than a criminal one and to instead invest the money ordinarily used to police and imprison people, into health services to assist people caught in the cycle of addiction

instead. The result was both a dramatic drop in the number of drug related deaths as well as drug use itself.

Looking at illicit drug use as a health issue has long been Greens policy, now it is hoped this cross party parliamentary inquiry can follow the evidence and determine what strategies may work best in WA. The Committee will also look at the relative weighting given to enforcement, health and social interventions.

I look forward to Chairing the committee, which has representation from five different parties, and the opportunity to take an in-depth look at how we can do things differently.

## Senate committee supports making industrial manslaughter a crime

The Australian Senate in October completed its inquiry into the framework surrounding the prevention, investigation and prosecution of industrial deaths in Australia.

I was heartened to see the committee's recommendations supported the long fought campaign for the need for industrial manslaughter laws in WA. There is simply insufficient legislative provisions to act as a deterrent to prevent unnecessary workplace deaths in WA or, as the report shows, across most of the country except Queensland and the ACT.

The sudden death of a loved one is absolutely devastating and changes the course of many lives. It is particularly horrendous if the death could have been avoided or the risk was foreseen. No worker's life should ever be sacrificed in the pursuit of profit.

My Bill, which I reintroduced to Parliament last year, will, if passed, make industrial manslaughter a crime. The WA Government and opposition must now take on board the findings of the Senate report and support my bill as a priority.



About 5000 turned out at the first national Change the Rules rally at Solidarity Park in the weeks following the release of the Senate report to call for job security, better pay and conditions and industrial manslaughter laws. I'm with Australian Council of Trade Unions secretary Sally McManus

## Minister downplays effect of SMS implementation on TAFE enrolment figures

The implementation of the new Student Management System at TAFE has been beset with challenges. Throughout 2018 staff, students and teachers have found it very difficult if not impossible to use the system effectively.

North Metro college was the first one to roll out the new system. I have been following up with the Minister to see if the new system did affect enrolments and the answers I have

been getting have been less than informative. They show a drop of more than 6,000 students – more than 25% - of the previous years' numbers, whereas all of the other colleges have seen only a variation of about 1,000 students between Semester 1 2017 and Semester 1 2018.

While the Minister assures me that the delay in processing of enrolments has now been fixed, the Minister has not been

able or willing to quantify the impact the system had on the number of enrolments in first semester 2018.

I will continue to follow up and continue to call for any further roll out of the system to be delayed until the issues with the system have been resolved.

# Concerns remain over wave park proposal for Alfred Cove

I met with the Appeals Convenor regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's decision to not assess the Wave Park proposal. I spoke on the EPA's incorrect nomination of the site as Urban, rather than Parks and Recreation; the original purpose of the site's inclusion in the Bush Forever program and the EPA's own Interim Strategic Advice on Perth & Peel @ 3.5 million; the extremely unfortunate sliver of land that

excludes a development so close to the river from being considered under the Swan-Canning Rivers Management Act; and the anticipated impact of sea level rise on the site and the processes of the river. I discussed my concerns over the planned water use and recycling at the site and remain hopeful that the Appeals Convenor will soon report their decision on this issue.

I also tabled a petition against the

Albert Cove Wave Park on behalf of Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group (SERAG). It specifically calls on the Government not to sell the Crown Land Lot 9789 to the City of Melville for the purposes of leasing the land to the Wave Park project.

Additionally, it reminds the government that the preferred use of that land according to a number of Government strategic documents is to be a buffer for the Swan River and to be added to the Class A Nature reserve.



I attended the Mental Health Week opening at Parliament House. Pic of Taryn Harvey and I courtesy of Ammon Creative

## Suicide prevention in focus during Mental Health Week

I have had the opportunity on two separate occasions to speak about how we are going in relation to suicide prevention in WA; in September to mark World Suicide Prevention Day, and again during the first week of October for Mental Health Week. In 2017, 409 Western Australians died by suicide – compared with 300 in 2008. Trends are particularly alarming in Aboriginal communities, where suicide rates have increased by 21% in ten years. Suicide accounts for a third of all deaths in Aboriginal young people aged between 15 and 24. Almost one in two transgender young people in WA have attempted suicide, and we are seeing an increasing trend in the rate of suicide among older Australians.

For every death by suicide, 30 more people attempt to take their life. Around half of all visits to GPs involve mental illness, yet 90% of our health budget is spent on physical health. We need to invest more money in mental health because we are just not meeting need. We must also ensure the process of evaluating the current suicide prevention strategy does not interrupt on-the-ground services that are proven to work.

## Police and mental health co-response teams trial a resounding success—need to expand

September saw the completion of the trial of the police and mental health co-response teams initiative – the first of its kind in Australia. A new approach was very much needed following a staggering sixfold increase in police call-outs to incidents involving mental health in just ten years. The majority of these calls were not related to criminal incidents, but the result of the desperation of community members who could not access emergency mental health supports. Those who were hospitalised found the process much more streamlined. The initiative now needs to become an integral part of the mental health system.

Aside from the resounding success of the trial, other parts of the mental health system are failing and require significant investment. A good place to start finding the money to fund the Western Australian 10-Year Mental Health And Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan, would be to ensure 100% of the proceeds from the sale of Graylands Hospital is ring-fenced and goes directly back into the mental health system.

## Stuttering Awareness Day

I spoke in Parliament to mark Stuttering Awareness Day, which is recognised worldwide on 22 October. Australian Speak Easy Association (ASEA) and Speech Pathology Australia (SPA) say stuttering impacts the lives of 2% of adults and 4% of children. More than 20% of 7-12 year olds and 40% of adults who stutter also suffer anxiety disorders. ASEA and SPA seek greater awareness of the condition and access to mental health professionals. They say urgent Government action is needed to raise awareness about stuttering in schools and bullying.

# EO Act review welcomed but urgent action needed

The Attorney General has announced a long overdue review of the Equal Opportunity Act. The Act was enacted 34 years ago yet it has been reviewed only once and that was back in 2007. The vast majority of the recommendations arising from that review were never enacted.

Needless to say I am very pleased that a review will be taking place and hope the Law Reform Commission, who has been tasked with undertaking the review, will take a broad approach.

While the review is needed, I am concerned that the Commission's most recent annual report shows that since 2014 the Equal Opportunity Commission has lost 12 positions. This is unacceptable as these reductions are impacting service delivery and the Commission's ability to undertake outreach activity.

At the same time as we have had these reductions in service, the number of complaints made to the Commission has gone up 10% from last year. It is not enough to have good laws if you do not appropriately resource the body you task with addressing unlawful discrimination.

Furthermore, I want to be clear that the review does not detract from the immediate need for Parliament to pass my Equal Opportunity (LGBTIQ Anti-Discrimination) Amendment Bill to stop religious schools from discriminating against LGBTIQ students and staff members.

The review will take a long time to complete and LGBTIQ people have waited long enough.

We must protect the rights of children, of families and of workers now.

## National Australian Ally Conference 2018

I participated in a panel discussion about the importance of allies to the LGBTIQ community, as part of the Second National Australian Ally Conference 2018. Later, I was very pleased to meet his Honour Michael Kirby who also spoke (right)



## Corrupt police practices focus of film

I had the extraordinary privileged of meeting courageous whistleblower Sgt Edwin Raymond and filmmaker Stephen Maing, the creator of award-winning documentary Crime and Punishment. The film is a powerful indictment of corrupt police practices and procedures (below)

## PrideFest launch

I was pleased to be asked to speak at the launch of PrideFest 2018 (above)



## Walkers against uranium

I caught up with the Walkatjorra Walkabout group, who continue to campaign against uranium mining at Yeelirrie, ahead of their rally at Parliament on 11 September, which I also attended



## Still standing up for Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre

The Minister for Education has made the right decision to reverse many of the cuts to the Education budget, the decision to remove funding for Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre was not reversed.

I am working with the WA Gould League, who run important education programs through the Wildlife Centre and will continue to lobby the Government to ensure the Wildlife Centre is provided with sufficient funding so that it can continue its long history as a valuable environmental educator.

In the meantime, if you have skills in administration, Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre are looking for volunteers to help with administrative tasks and to assist keeping the centre open on weekends. Please express your interest directly to the Gould League by emailing [admin@wagouldleague.com.au](mailto:admin@wagouldleague.com.au).

## DV, mental health important in discussion about homelessness

I spoke in Parliament about the relationship between domestic and family violence (FDV) and instances of homelessness. Domestic violence remains an endemic problem that is currently at crisis levels in WA. So far this year, 23 people have been killed in suspected family-related murders in this state. The figure includes ten women and nine children. WA has the second highest rate of reported physical or sexual violence against women in Australia, which is horrifying. Gaps remain in FDV services, particularly for women who live in regional and remote areas and Aboriginal women remain disproportionately affected. We also have a deficit of crisis accommodation for young women aged between 14 and 18 who are victims of domestic violence. The intersection between homelessness, mental health, and alcohol and other drug issues is also well-established. It is essential that these issues be taken into consideration in any discussion about homelessness.

## Funding for systemic disability advocacy

I was pleased to see the Government's recent announcement of funding for systemic disability advocacy to cover the transition phase to the NDIS, something I and the disability sector have been calling for. The NDIS represents enormous change and it makes sense that additional funding is directed toward advocacy to highlight the systemic issues that will inevitably arise during the course of its implementation.

However, I have also expressed concern that this funding should not detract from the need for ongoing funding for systemic advocacy as a core service. We don't want to go down the same path as Victoria and New South Wales where the withdrawal of systemic advocacy funding at the end of their NDIS transition periods resulted in community outrage, only for the state governments there to then have to step in and provide ongoing funding.



## Human Chain to end live exports

I took part again in this year's Stop Live Exports Human Chain along with Hon Tim Clifford. The Greens have long opposed this industry and continue to call for an immediate transition from live exports

## East Wanneroo Structure Plan

Recently, MRS amendment 1308/41 was tabled to change the zoning of the East Wanneroo Structure Plan area from Rural to Urban Deferred. The rezoning included four parcels of bushland totalling 101 Ha that are either contiguous with Bush Forever sites, or form part of ecological linkages between Bush Forever sites.

The WAPC recommended that these bushland areas be left out of this amendment and be zoned as Parks and Recreation at a later date. MRS Amendment 1308/41 advertised this plan to the community and this was the plan finalised and sent to the Minister for approval.

I was very disappointed to see that the Minister decided to rezone these bushland areas to Urban Deferred. This is not a decision that correctly prioritises the use for this bushland. I continue to press the Minister for the reasoning behind her decision.



## Anti-Poverty rally

I joined members of the Anti-Poverty Network Perth at the group's latest rally, calling for a rise to the Newstart allowance

## Renewed call for independent oversight

I used the opportunity of National Child Protection Week in September to again call for the establishment of an independent child advocate in Western Australia. The need for independent oversight and advocacy was recommended in the government review of the Children and Community Services Act, and in the final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I was heartened to hear that this is now an issue being considered by Government.

By the time a child has experienced physical or mental abuse, multiple opportunities to prevent this have often been missed. Given the ongoing, often lifelong, costs to the individual and to the community more broadly of the impact of child abuse and neglect, it is essential we do our utmost to invest in avoiding it happening in the first place. Children rely on adults to protect them and we need to make sure that we put in place all the mechanisms necessary to be able to do so effectively.

## Visit to Banksia Hill Detention Centre

In early September I had the opportunity to visit Banksia Hill Detention Centre. It is very clear to me that this maximum security facility is a completely inappropriate setting in which to successfully rehabilitate vulnerable children and young people.

We know that this model is an expensive failure because nearly 60% of young people leaving the Centre return within two years. I continue to be concerned that nearly half of the children and young people in the Centre are not even sentenced and that some of them are eligible and deemed suitable for release but remain incarcerated because there is either no suitable accommodation available for them, or no available placements in drug and alcohol programs.

I also recently met with representatives from Amnesty International Australia to discuss their shared concerns with youth justice detention in WA.

## Corrective Services queries

I have continued to advocate for our prison system to better address the needs of prisoners so that they have a greater chance of living successful lives upon release. I asked a range of questions in Parliament to the Minister for Corrective Services about whether the Bunbury Regional Prison upgrade will include improved access to technology for prisoners (no commitment was given by the Minister), whether the Government will repeal confinement provisions in the Young Offenders Act (it will be considered during an upcoming review), and whether there is work being done on getting prisoners access to Medicare (it is being pursued with other state and territory Ministers).

I was concerned to uncover that the Department of Justice's prison complaints handling service has lost half of its staff allocation since 2015. This is simply unacceptable given the vulnerability of women, children and men in our prison system. I also attended the Women in Prison Conference organised by Soroptimist International of Western Australia which discussed, among other things, the lived experience of women in prison, and the need for reform to reduce the number of women, particularly Aboriginal women, entering our prison system.



I met with Dr Elizabeth Drake of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy when she visited WA to present a forum run by the Australasian Corrections Education Association



Protesting fracking with my Greens colleagues outside Parliament on 11 October (left)

# Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

An average of 750 Australian children between the ages of zero and 14 are diagnosed with cancer, I told Parliament when I spoke in support of a motion to mark September's Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. While survival rates have improved greatly over the last 50 years; from 2% to 80%, 50% of survivors experience physical or mental health issues as a 'late effect' of treatment. A diagnosis changes the trajectory of the lives of all involved.

The medical staff who treat children are a special breed who make an immeasurable difference for families at the most difficult of times. Investing in research is at the core of reducing the impacts of cancer generally. The Telethon Kids Institute is carrying out exemplary work in this area through the Kids Cancer Centre, which brings together specialist teams of researchers and oncologists. The centre is among world leaders in personalised medicine, which personalises treatment based on genetic information. We have come a long way in cancer treatment, but there is still a long way to go.

## Current committees

**Joint Standing Committee overseeing the Corruption and Crime**

**Commission:** currently undertaking an Inquiry into Corruption risks surrounding Government Procurement Practices

**Parliamentary Inquiry into Alternate Approaches to addressing illicit drug use (Chair):** currently calling for public submissions



## At the WACA

I attended a briefing on the future of the WACA grounds and surrounds as part of my electorate of North Metro. Also, here is hoping the Scorchers have an excellent season, the first at the new Stadium

# Get in touch.

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## 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  
Worker Safety  
Youth

## Bills debated

Criminal Law Amendment  
(Intimate Images) Bill 2018  
Coroners Amendment Bill  
2017  
Court Jurisdiction Legislation  
Amendment Bill 2017  
Courts Legislation  
Amendment Bill 2017  
Duties Amendment  
(Additional Duty for Foreign  
Persons) Bill 2018  
Heritage Bill 2017