



## Welcome

**NEWSLETTER**  
**VOL.2, ISSUE 14 | October 2019**



**I'm so proud to have taken part in what we now know was the largest climate demonstration in Australia's history – led by passionate and inspirational students and supported by us all**

With six full sitting weeks over September and October there has been a lot happening in the WA Parliament, including debate on voluntary assisted dying legislation, consideration of this year's committee reports, motions about the McGowan Government's (poor) performance and the tabling and discussion of agency annual reports.

The Greens continue to advocate for climate action at every opportunity. It was incredibly disappointing that our motion for the WA Parliament to declare a climate emergency was voted

down last month. It is appalling that WA is the only Australian state still increasing emissions, when we are well positioned to be a leader on climate action. Next month we bring on debate on our motion about the massive greenhouse gas emissions that will be produced by the Browse Basin and Burrup Hub LNG development. The impact this project will have on our environment is simply too great to justify it proceeding

Over the last two months I've enjoyed some opportunities to hang out with gorgeous greyhounds and their humans. As I learn more about the cruelty done to these and other animals in the racing industry I am more determined than ever that we need to ban these horrific sports.

I am looking forward to presenting the findings from my parliamentary committee inquiry into alternate approaches to addressing illicit drug use before the end of the year. The other parliamentary committee I am on, the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, recently announced we will be undertaking an important new inquiry into the CCC's oversight of police misconduct investigations, particularly allegations of excessive use of force and how they are handled.

Abuse of police powers, inadequate protection of whistleblowers and inadequacies in government transparency mechanisms like FOI have continued to feature heavily in my current work.

I have also continued to speak out publicly against the Government's insistence on including Trackside in the sale of the TAB and expanding electronic gambling in WA. Despite a concerted effort by the community sector through the #pokiesbystealth campaign, the Government simply isn't listening.

And finally, this month we farewelled my wonderful Research Officer Leigh Sinclair, who is going to be working closer to home as the south west metro manager of Imagined Futures, an exciting collective impact project. Leigh has been a fantastic member of my team since I took my north metro seat – we all wish her the very best in her new role.

## Greyhound welfare

I was astounded to learn through questioning in Parliament that WA Police are not notified when a greyhound tests positive for an illicit substance such as amphetamine because the detection of a prohibited substance in a dog is not considered a criminal offence. We know that at least one dog has tested positive for amphetamines after winning a race in April this year. An inquiry is being undertaken into this matter by Racing and Wagering WA – clearly this process takes a very long time! I believe a confirmed sample of amphetamine or any illegal substance should be sufficient to immediately trigger notifying the police and it should then be up to the police to assess whether to investigate the matter if for no other reason than the inherent cruelty of giving an animal amphetamines! There are many problems with the greyhound racing industry - drugging is just one of many.



Photo: Animal Welfare and Greyhound rights event with Senators Mehreen Faruqi and Jordan Steele John (below)

## Racehorse welfare

Like others I was horrified by the report aired on ABC's 7.30 program on the horse racing industry. The report highlighted the incredibly cruel practices occurring over east within the horseracing industry. Like greyhound racing, it is clear that horseracing is an industry that is predicated on overbreeding, using and disposing of animals. I asked the Minister for Racing and Gaming whether similar practices are occurring in WA. The response was

that whilst he did not believe so there is currently no system for recording what is happening to our retired racehorses. There have been some suggestions that a tracking system is needed, and while I believe this idea has merit I am also conscious that this measure will not be effective on its own. It will only be effective if it is accompanied by a rigorous monitoring and enforcement regime. This has been shown in the greyhound racing industry where there

are already requirements to track racing animals across their lifetime. I have received anecdotal evidence that this has not been well monitored nor effective and I am following up on this issue through the parliamentary question process. At the very least, the industry needs to step up and make sure that it is being transparent and accountable about what is involved throughout the lifecycle of the animals that are being bred purely for our "entertainment".

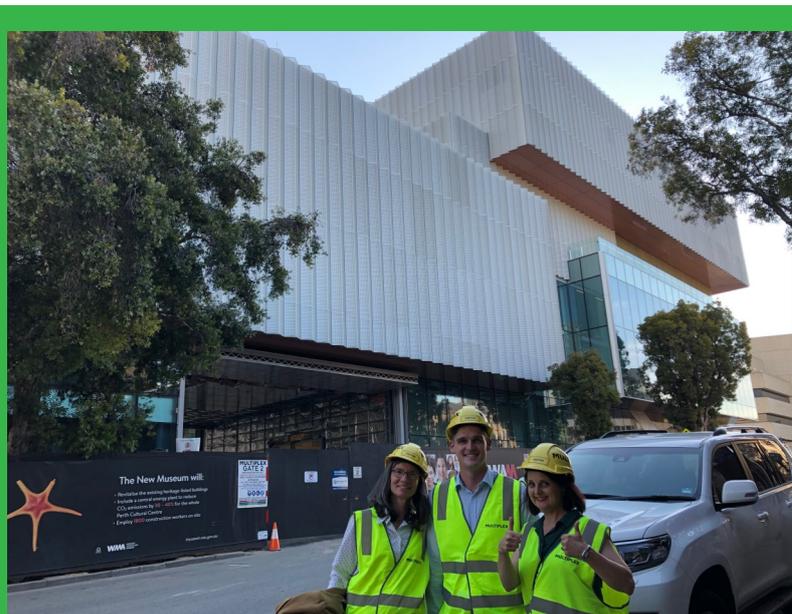


Photo: I was excited to have been invited for a behind the scenes tour of our new museum. I can't wait until it is open to the public.

## Protecting our children

I recently debated the complex issue of children who sexually abuse other children, and in particular how our schools respond to this issue. I will continue to advocate for an evidence-based, sensitive and individualised response that takes account of the often extremely challenging context of this behaviour.

I also called on the Minister for Child Protection to improve our Working with Children Check processes after the Auditor General identified that 53 unsuitable people were able to work with children for 14,192 days during 2018-19. The Auditor General's report made a range of recommendations to strengthen protections for children—it is vital the McGowan Government acts upon these recommendations.

# Climate emergency motion

On 4 September the Greens moved that the Parliament declare a climate emergency. I highlighted that WA is the only Australian jurisdiction still increasing emissions. The Gorgon project has been permitted to operate while not meeting environmental conditions and that one project alone is not only responsible for half of WA's increase in gas emissions – it has also wiped out the gains made by the rest of Australia in reducing their emissions. We already know that if every country meets their Paris Agreement targets, that will not be enough to keep warming under 2° Celsius. We need to reduce our emissions by 46% by 2030 to keep warming below 1.5° Celsius. The IPCC's report about what the world will look like at 1.5° warmer makes for very sobering reading. WA's emissions trajectory is rising steeply yet this Government seems hell bent on assisting the fossil fuel industry to build and run more LNG plants. We have 11 years left to halve emissions from current levels. It is beyond belief that all the other parties chose to argue against the reality of a climate emergency and to vote down the motion.



**Photos: With my Greens WA parliamentary colleagues Hon Diane Evers and Hon Tim Clifford at an Extinction Rebellion rally (above) and with WACOSS CEO Louise Giolitto at the WACOSS public forum on the introduction of simulated racing as part of the sale of the TAB**

## Pokies by stealth

Despite my best efforts the TAB Bill (which allows for the introduction of electronic gambling outside of the casino) passed through Parliament. During the debate I moved amendments to remove electronic gambling from the sale but they were voted down. I also spoke to the significant concerns raised by many community sector agencies who are staunchly opposed to this move. I am dismayed that the government has disregarded the warnings of these credible people who work on the front line and who are all predicting that immeasurable harm will come out of the roll out of electronic gaming. These community agencies which include WACOSS, WAAMH, the Financial Counsellors Association of Australian and others are not deterred. It is clearly so much better to avoid introducing these addictive machines in the first place which is why we have held such a longstanding bipartisan position in WA of not allowing this form of gambling outside of the casino.

## Gambling court programs

I spoke in Parliament on the need to expand the provision of court intervention programs in WA. These programs, also called diversionary courts, aim to address the underlying causes of offending behaviour, divert people from prison, and encourage rehabilitation. We currently have very successful drug and mental health courts in Perth but we need these programs to be expanded out to regional areas, and we need diversionary courts that address other types of offending, including that associated with problem gambling. These programs have been proven to reduce offending, enhance community safety, and to reduce overall costs to the community.





Photo: At the Living and Loving in Diversity in WA launch

## Elder abuse

The findings of the Select Committee into Elder Abuse included that there is a huge problem with the lack of access to specialised legal services across Western Australia. As the Deputy Chair of this important committee I had the opportunity to hear firsthand evidence about the particular vulnerability of older people. The Committee report recommended “the Government ensure that every older person in Western Australia, regardless of where they reside, has access to specialised community legal services which provide advocacy and advice on elder abuse.” I continue to raise this issue in Parliament and to urge the Government to address the recommendations made by the Committee.

## Ambulance charges

My office was recently contacted by a constituent who is being pursued by debt collectors for failing to pay for ambulance charges. As a Disability Support Pensioner their plight highlights a broader concern for income recipients in WA. If this person were in almost any other state in the country the ambulance service would be free.

I wrote to the Minister for Health expressing my concerns and raised the issue in Parliament. The Minister has advised that the Department is currently undertaking a procurement planning process to establish a new Service Agreement for road-based transport services in WA. As part of this process the Health Consumers’ Council has been contracted to consult with consumers about their experiences of using ambulance services.

I will continue to monitor this situation - access to emergency transport should be available to everybody in our community.



Photo (above): At the ‘No right to discriminate’ rally

## Legal reforms for LGBTIQ

During the recent sitting of Parliament I asked questions about the status of two Law Reform projects that have the potential to make a significant difference to the lives of LGBTIQ people. The first is a completed review into the registration or change of a person’s sex and/or gender status otherwise known as Project 108. The second project is currently underway and is a review of the Equal Opportunity Act. On both occasions I was disappointed to hear that there is going to be no concrete action in the foreseeable future. This information has renewed my hope to have my Bill (which amends a section of the Equal Opportunity Act to stop private religious schools from being able to discriminate against LGBTI staff, students and their families) passed now as an interim measure until the full review is complete. Realistically, as the experience of Project 108 demonstrates, it will be years before we see any other amended legislation that serves to uphold the rights of LGBTIQ people before this Parliament.



Photo: With Frances Burgess, Chair of Pride

## Voluntary assisted dying

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill is currently being debated in the Legislative Council. The Greens have long been champions of the principle of Voluntary Assisted Dying and know that this legislation must be crafted with the utmost thought and care. I have been inundated with correspondence from all sides of the argument, and am acutely aware of concerns about possible unintended consequences of VAD. We must always protect the rights of people with disability and people with mental illness, implement proper safeguards to mitigate elder abuse, and invest in culturally sensitive services delivered for and by Aboriginal Australians. People should not have to suffer when their lives are naturally coming to an end and with the necessary standards and safeguards in place, we can give Western Australians peace of mind knowing they will have a choice at end of life.

**Photo: At the NDS Conference**



## Transparency and accountability

In response to a recent motion in the Legislative Council about government transparency and accountability I again raised my concerns about the gutting of the State Records Office. I also used the opportunity to speak about the importance of freedom of information processes. As recent federal government attacks on press freedoms have clearly demonstrated, access to information is a vital part of a well-functioning democracy. If freedom of information processes are not robust, timely and appropriately funded this has a significant impact on transparency and accountability.

## Model litigant guidelines

Model litigant guidelines impose a duty on governments and government agencies to act honestly, fairly and with complete propriety and in accordance with the highest standards. These guidelines arise from the recognition that the state has significant power and resources at its disposal and that, unfortunately, we cannot always rely on the state to do the right thing when it comes to actions against individuals and members of the public. As I recently noted in parliament, I am disappointed that the Attorney General has not followed the lead of the commonwealth and other state governments and established model litigant guidelines as an important integrity safeguard for ordinary citizens.

## Whistleblower protections

I raised again my concerns about ludicrously ineffective protections for whistleblowers both at the state and national level. This issue has recently come to the fore in WA with action taken by Murdoch University against whistleblower Professor Gerd Schroeder-Turk. As a proud alumna, former Murdoch University Guild President, and member of the University Senate I am extremely disappointed that, rather than focusing on the issues raised by Professor Schroeder-Turk and other whistleblowers, the University has decided to pursue Gerd.

Although oversight of universities in Western Australia is a federal government responsibility, the state government does have a role to play, including in ensuring adequate protections for whistleblowers. I have raised my concerns about this issue with the Minister for Education, Public Sector Commissioner, WA Ombudsman, Auditor General and with the Murdoch University Vice Chancellor. I have also been liaising closely with representatives from the NTEU.



Photo: I'm proud to demonstrate my support for whistleblower Gerd Schroeder-Turk

# Corrective services

I continue to question the Minister for Corrective Services about the operation of our prisons and Banksia Hill Detention Centre. Some of the concerning information I recently discovered include: that in 2018 there were 172 incidents of self-harm of young people in Banksia Hill Detention Centre; that serious assaults in prisons were underreported by at least 27% in 2017-18, and; that there were 58 staff positions vacant at Hakea prison in September. The majority of the positions vacant at Hakea prison were prison officers and senior prison officers. Given the incidents and issues at this particular prison this year, it is concerning that understaffing continues to such an extent.

## Strip searches

Strip searches are extremely distressing and can cause long term harm so it is vital more work is done to minimise their use, particularly on individuals who have been arrested as participants in non-violent direct action. I asked Parliamentary questions about the use of body scanners to reduce the need for intrusive strip searches. WA Police currently use only one body scanner, located at the Perth watch house. I also asked questions about strip searches undertaken in the field, following the NSW inquiry into unlawful strip searching at music festivals. Inappropriate use of strip searching is an important issue I intend to continue to pursue.

## Fine default

In September I co-hosted a forum organised by Social Reinvestment WA about the need to reform WA's fine default legislation. Imprisonment for fine default can have a terrible impact on vulnerable people, is incredibly costly to the community and disproportionately impacts on Aboriginal people. I am pleased that the Attorney General has now finally introduced long-awaited legislation to expand the options available to people who are unable to pay off fines, and to ensure imprisonment is an option of last resort. I look forward to debating the Bill when it comes before the Legislative Council.



Photo: I was pleased to be invited by the North Fremantle Residents Association to a meeting discussing the Outer harbour proposal - with Mayor Brad Pettitt (right)

## Custody Notification Service

I was pleased to welcome the introduction of a Custody Notification Service (CNS) in WA in October. As an important recommendation of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, this initiative was well and truly overdue. The CNS will provide an important support for Aboriginal people and is a valuable initiative to help prevent deaths in custody.



Photo: At the Social reinvestment fine default forum

Photo: At the Launch of 'Finding a Place to call home' Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre report



## Veterans and families strategy

I was pleased to speak to a motion in Parliament about the Government's Veterans and Families Strategy. While the federal government has primary responsibility for veterans' programs it is vital the state adopts a strategic approach to ensuring we augment the support for veterans in WA. We know that as many as one in twenty homeless people in WA are veterans and that nearly half the veterans who leave the forces will experience a mental disorder within five years of leaving, and there is the tragic statistic that more Australian veterans have lost their lives by suicide than have been killed on active duty since the Vietnam War. Given that we know all this it is deeply concerning that only 10% of people leaving the Forces seek help from Veterans Affairs. We need to ensure that veterans are supported and accessing the services they require.

# Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

The 10th of September marks World Suicide Prevention Day and this is followed a month later by World Mental Health Day. These days present an opportunity to collectively focus on the impacts of suicide and mental ill health on our community. Sadly, there has been little progress made toward reducing the suicide rate and the number of people affected by poor mental health. We know that more people die every year from suicide than on our roads for example. While we have made great strides in reducing the road toll we don't seem to have been able to address the root causes that underlie our high rates of suicide. This is a similar story for mental health.

In my last newsletter I gave an overview of a damning assessment made by the Auditor General into how state-managed mental health services are working. Since then there have been another two equally concerning reports. The key messages from the Mental Health Advocacy Service's Annual Report are that there are many gaps in services, and demand is growing. Despite government investment in some areas it is nowhere enough. The Productivity Commission's report into mental health services Australia-wide is equally disheartening. The case for change is undeniably compelling on all fronts, yet we are just not acting quickly enough.

I keep calling on the government to take heed of what the experts and the community are saying and to put suicide prevention and mental health front and centre of their agenda.



Photo: With Jo Worthington at the Roses in the Ocean stall in Forrest Place on World Suicide Prevention Day 10 September.



Photo: At the Launch of WACOSS' 2020-21 State Budget Submission

## Police co-response teams

After the tragic shooting of a young woman by Police in Geraldton I renewed my calls for an urgent expansion of the Mental Health Police Co-response program. The joint teams are deployed in incidents when the police are called out to an individual experiencing a mental health crisis. The joint mental health and police teams have been operating in the metropolitan area for a while now and they have been shown to be enormously successful in de-escalating situations and reducing the number of people having to be taken to hospital. Police themselves recognise the value of the program and want to see it more widely available.

## Overdose Awareness Day

The 31st of August is International Overdose Awareness Day which aims to raise awareness of the effects of drug overdose, reduce the stigma around drug-related death and acknowledge the ongoing grief felt by people who have lost a loved one to overdose. This year to mark the event I attended a morning tea to commemorate people who had died from drug overdose.

I heard from parents about how the irreparable trauma of having lost a child is amplified by the stigma that is attached to their death. I also delivered a statement in Parliament to give voice to these experiences and highlight the far reaching impacts of overdose on our community.



Photo: Acknowledging International Overdose Awareness Day

# City Beach High School site – Western Suburbs school strategy

It has become clear that the new Bob Hawke College will reach capacity by 2025. The expectations for Churchlands Senior High School, Shenton Park College and Mt Lawley Senior High School is that they will continue to be straining at the seams.

It is clear that the Department of Education needs to hold on to the City Beach High School site. Smart infill should keep increasing the density in these areas and we know we are going to need more schools, not just bigger schools.



**The Greens (WA) State Conference in October provided a great opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues and to collaborate on the important issues facing our state.**

## Get in touch.

HON. ALISON XAMON MLC

3 OXFORD CLOSE

WEST LEEDERVILLE 6007

P. (08) 9388 3955

E. [xamonoffice@mp.wa.gov.au](mailto:xamonoffice@mp.wa.gov.au)

Alison Xamon, Greens MLC



@alisonxamon



@alisonxamon



Printed by the Environmental Printing Company on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper using vegetable based ink.

## Alison's committees

**The Joint Standing Committee overseeing the Corruption and Crime Commission:** The ongoing inquiry into public sector procurement of goods and services and its vulnerability to corrupt practice is drawing to a close, with our report due early next year.

The Committee also recently announced it will undertake an inquiry into the Western Australian Corruption and Crime Commission's oversight of police misconduct investigations, particularly allegations of excessive use of force. The Committee will report by 25 June 2020.

**The Parliamentary Inquiry into Alternate Approaches to addressing illicit drug use (Chair):** The Committee is due to report before the end of this year.



Reserves (Marmion Marine Park) Bill 2019

## Ocean Reef Marina

In mid-September I debated the bill that saw the excision of a parcel of Marmion Marine Park to enable the development of the Ocean Reef Marina. I ensured that all of the environmental concerns regarding the loss of environmental values in the marine park and the Bush Forever site were raised – especially in the context of the expected losses to beaches and foreshore through sea level rise and climate change.

## PORTFOLIOS

- Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Animal Welfare
- Child Protection
- Community Services
- Consumer Protection
- 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 Ageing
- Sexuality and Gender Diversity
- Suicide Prevention
- Training and Workforce Development
- Volunteering
- Women
- Worker Safety
- Youth

## Bills debated by Alison

- Consumer Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2018
- High Risk Offenders Bill 2019
- TAB (Disposal) Bill 2019
- Betting Control Amendment (Taxing) Bill 2019
- Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Change of Name) Bill 2018
- Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Amendment Bill 2019
- Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019
- Reserves (Marmion Marine Park) Bill 2019
- Criminal Procedure Amendment (Trial by Judge Alone) Bill 2017