

Office of Hon Alison Xamon MLC

MEMBER FOR NORTH METROPOLITAN REGION



Welcome

It has been a productive start to the year, not least since I have now moved to another temporary electorate office. I'm still at 7 Harvest Terrace, but have now moved upstairs to the first floor. It is great to have the extra space but it is still far from ideal as there remains no disability access. I remain hopeful that this year will eventually yield a permanent office!

The Government's cuts to the Education Budget have dominated the political landscape throughout January and February. I have attended a number of rallies and had meetings with stakeholders opposing the cuts. The Greens very much share the concerns about the closure of the residential colleges, camp schools, Tuart and Canning Colleges and closure of numerous programs. We also remain particularly concerned about the removal of positions in Aboriginal education

support teams for the regions.

I have been using the break from Parliamentary sittings to develop my strategic plan for 2018 in conjunction with my team. The Parliamentary schedule will be a full one when the Legislative Council sits again in March as there are many pieces of legislation to respond to, most of which fall within my portfolio areas.

As the numbers in the Council are so precarious it is particularly important that each piece of legislation is closely scrutinised and appropriately responded to as the Greens' votes can make all the difference.

I have also been making the most of the summer break from Parliament to meet with stakeholders. It has been great to catch up with so many people and organisations. I very much look forward to continuing to work with them in the coming year.

NEWSLETTER
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Concerns for vulnerable young offenders at Banksia Hill Detention Centre

Brain impairments

I welcomed the release of a report from the Telethon Kids Institute in mid-February which detailed the extent of neurodevelopmental disability among young people currently held at Banksia Hill Detention Centre.

The findings painted a heartbreaking picture and help us understand the reasons these

children are offending in the first place.

The fact that these young people have ended up in prison demonstrates how badly they have been failed by the system.

It is tragic that it is only now, at the age of 13 or 14, that these young people are being diagnosed with significant neurological impairments like Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). It raises the

question as to why these disabilities are not being picked up earlier.

Amnesty International report

Reports came to light in January of the serious mistreatment of young people held at Banksia Hill.

Locking young people in isolation is cruel and ineffective. The evidence is clear that isolation practices escalate

tensions and undermine rehabilitation.

I am pleased that the Custodial Services Inspector will examine these allegations, but the Government must completely reform youth justice detention.

We must move away from the current punitive and harmful practices and instead offer children and young people a genuine opportunity to turn their lives around.

Annual report hearings

The Annual Report Hearings of the Estimates and Financial Operations Committee were held from 13 to 16 February. These hearings allow members of the Legislative Council to ask limited questions about information in 2016-17 annual reports. I attended the hearings for the Department of

Education and the Public Sector Commission.

Education Department

Unfortunately questions about the Minister for Education's appalling recent cuts were not allowed at the hearing. I did, however, have the opportunity to ask questions about support for students, the number of school psychologists, information contained in student

records, conductive hearing loss programs and education grant funding.

Public Sector Commission

As they are ongoing, questions about the Machinery of Government (MOG) changes and the voluntary targeted separation scheme were not permitted at the Annual Report hearing.

I asked about the role of the Public Sector Commission in the Register of Lobbyists, and whether complaints had been received about lobbying activities. My questions uncovered that there is no proactive monitoring of lobbyist activity, and that adherence to the Code of Conduct relies solely on self-reporting.

Inquiry into Government programs and projects

The Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects report was tabled in Parliament on 20 February 2018. The inquiry, led by former Under Treasurer John Langoulant AO, examined 31 programs and projects entered into by the State Government between 2008 and 11 March 2017, focusing on governance arrangements, decision-making processes and financial consequences.

The inquiry report contains a range of criticisms, identifies some highly risky decision making and makes recommendations for improving governance, accountability and transparency.

I will shortly receive a formal briefing on the inquiry from the Government and will update you on findings in my next newsletter.

Corruption and Crime Committee

The Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, of which I am a member, is currently undertaking an inquiry into public sector procurement of goods and services, and its vulnerability to corrupt practice.

The inquiry includes investigation of the adequacy and nature of oversight mechanisms, policies and guidelines to prevent corruption and serious misconduct, whistleblowing protections, and potential reform to current legal and administrative practices to reduce the risk of corruption.

This is very important work, as illustrated by the Auditor General's 2017 report on public agencies' tender processes and contract extensions, which found that most agencies needed to improve their procurement policies.

I encourage those of you with an interest in this area to make a submission to the inquiry. Submissions are due to the committee by Thursday, 15 March 2018, and the Committee will report by April 2019.



Meeting with the Commissioner for Children and Young People

A number of reports over recent months have highlighted the need for better protections for children and young people in WA, particularly vulnerable children who access youth justice, child protection and disability services.

I met with the Commissioner for Children and Young People Mr Colin Pettit (above) to discuss this issue, and specifically the proposal to establish an independent advocate for children and young people in Western Australia. This is something I fully support, and I look forward to working with stakeholders to see it progressed.

Elder Abuse Conference in Sydney



Along with my colleagues from the Parliamentary Committee into Elder Abuse I attended the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference in Sydney.

The Conference was extraordinarily well attended with the many aspects of elder abuse explored, in particular the complexities of financial abuse and the need for significant law reform in this space.

I also had the opportunity to meet with Members of the NSW Parliamentary Committee into Elder Abuse (above) which released its findings in 2016 calling for a range of reforms.

Non-fatal strangulation and DV

In February, I attended a seminar run by the WA Family Law Pathways Network presenting the findings of a recent study on non-fatal strangulation in sexual assault by an intimate partner. Strangulation is the ultimate form of power and control and has traumatic psychological effects.

Non-fatal strangulation was introduced as a separate offence in family and domestic violence laws in Queensland in 2016, reflecting the fact that strangulation is not only inherently dangerous, it is also predictive of an escalation in domestic violence offending, including homicide. WA should consider adopting this important law reform.

Unique environmental values must be recognised at Ocean Reef Marina

The Ocean Reef Marina development will be carved out of the Marmion Marine Park and Bush Forever site 325. We have long recognised this area as a unique part of the Perth environment. It has been nearly a year since submissions closed for the Public Environmental Review for the marine elements of the proposal and the MRS Amendment regarding the Bush

Forever site is still progressing through the system.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Landcorp and the City of Joondalup went before the Council in mid-February. The Council has insisted that the unique environmental values of the site be recognised. All elements of this development should

be best-practice sustainable design and sensitive to the location.

I will continue to watch this project and will be asking questions in Parliament to confirm that this project will be as sustainable as possible.

WACOSS' priorities reflect my own

I was pleased to have the opportunity in January to catch up with WACOSS Chief Executive Officer Louise Giolitto and Deputy Chief Executive Officer Dr Jennie Gray for a briefing on the WACOSS 2018-19 Pre-budget submission.

Unsurprisingly, many of WACOSS's priorities reflect our own, including a focus on early intervention, work to improve government responses to FASD, support for young people leaving out of home care and justice social reinvestment advocacy.

It is so important that government policies are evidence-based and I was particularly pleased to hear about WACOSS's work to advocate for improved data linkage. These are also all areas I plan to continue working on this year.

I was also happy to start the year off with the 2018 WACOSS New Year Sector Breakfast.

Transcultural Mental Health

Transcultural mental health services provide culturally appropriate mental health services to members of culturally and linguistically (CALD) diverse communities.

Currently Western Australia only has a small transcultural mental health unit that is run out of the health department, however, we desperately need a proper state-wide transcultural mental health service that can provide appropriate levels of services to meet the mental health needs of our diverse multicultural community.

This need was identified by the Government in the Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025. Excellent models of this type of service exist in other states.

During January I met with stakeholders to discuss this issue. I will continue to advocate for the Government to establish these much-needed services.

Environmental education vital for future sustainability

Another attack on the education of WA children came in the form of a cut to funding for the Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre.

The centre is vital resource for teaching children living in the metropolitan area about the biodiversity of our State's unique environment. It provides an excellent out-of-classroom experience for thousands of children every year.

The program of activities includes bird walks and wildlife excursions. The centre gives children the opportunity to interact directly with nature. It offers an important opportunity for school-aged children to learn about environmental sustainability, and Aboriginal history and culture.

The Herdsman Lake Wildlife Centre has operated on a shoestring budget for 34 years, thanks to the hard work of a team of amazing volunteers. Current funding levels are just \$165,000 of the Education Department budget.

Further, it has been reported that the Department of Education has also cut funding to the City of Canning for the Eco Education Centre, which offers environmental education to children south of the river.

There is a recognised need for these services. Environmental education is vital for WA's future sustainability.

Camp Schools

The Minister's decision to close six camps school sites was yet another example of the Government's failure to properly consult and consider communities.

These camp schools are well-used and provide important opportunities for students to learn outdoor and team-building skills. The opportunity for personal and social growth that students experience on camps is unparalleled.

Camp schools are also vital parts of communities, providing local employment and facilities. The closure of these facilities will be a long term loss for our state.

Residential Colleges

The anger and hurt felt by parents and the community at the Government's decision to close Moora Residential College was clearly evident at the CWA rally.

Moora Residential College provides accommodation for students attending Central Midlands Senior High School who live outside Moora. Families do not want to send their children even further away.

The closure of the residential college, combined with the plan to close six camp schools, is seen as a direct attack on regional communities. This decision takes away supports for our farming and other regional communities.

Country Women's Association rally



I joined CWA members as they marched on Parliament for the first time in the organisation's 94 year history, to protest cuts to Education in the regions

Cuts to Aboriginal support teams compounds educational disadvantage

Of the 36 positions in Aboriginal support teams stationed across the regions, the Government wants to move five positions to Perth – and anyone who does not take voluntary redundancy will be moved to low paid positions as school-based officers.

These are people who currently deal with all aspects of Aboriginal education – from enrolments, uniforms, stationery and timetabling, to engagement, attendance and behaviour.

The decision will take out every team outside of Perth, except one staff member to remain at the Kimberley District Office. It has taken 30 years to build support for Aboriginal students up to its current level.

Children living in remote communities already face multiple barriers to education with less access to early childhood education, lower attendance rates and lower performance in literacy and numeracy testing.

The Government has said that increasing school attendance and achievement of Aboriginal children is a priority – yet the Minister's decision to cut Aboriginal staff does not reflect this.

Employing and retaining Aboriginal staff is one of the key ways to genuinely include Aboriginal culture in children's education.

CPSU/ CSA rally against the cuts



I joined CPSU/CSA members in calling on State Government to reverse education cuts and keep its pledge to properly resource the public service

Tuart and Canning Colleges critical to pathways

I was extremely concerned to learn of the Minister for Education's decision to no longer take student enrolments for Tuart College. Canning College will also no longer be accepting local students, although according to the Minister programs will still be delivered at the college to overseas fee-paying students.

Tuart and Canning Colleges have played a critical role in assisting students who, for whatever reason, may not have satisfactorily completed Year 12. These Colleges have provided an important pathway to university for many students. I believe the decision to close the colleges to WA students is a poorly thought through policy change, which will disadvantage students who need alternative pathways to university or even to simply complete Year 12.

SOTA a part of WA heritage

I shared the outrage of many Western Australians when the Minister announced its plan to close Schools of the Air (SOTA). The Minister announced plans to merge SOTA with the Perth-based School of Isolated and Distance Learning (SIDE) just days before Christmas.

It was clear from the outset that the decision had not been fully thought through. And little detail was offered as to how the proposed merge with SIDE would retain elements such as pastoral care, individual visits and school camps, as the Minister claimed. The immediate and prolonged public backlash clearly showed the Government had drastically underestimated SOTA's importance to Western Australians.

Consultations undertaken by the Commissioner for Children and Young People have highlighted that the most important things to WA children are their families and friends. Positive relationships are significant contributors to mental health and wellbeing. Cutting SOTA could potentially have reinforced the isolation often experienced by remote families. It was clear that SIDE would not be able to offer the same social opportunities for students.

I repeatedly called for the Minister to reverse her decision and she did just that on the first day back to work in January – but not before considerable distress was experienced by the affected families.

Landsdale Farm School

The funding cuts included the much-loved Landsdale Farm School. The school plays an important role in supporting the education of vulnerable and disengaged students, as well as those with a disability.

Its loss will undermine the delivery of education in the areas of sustainability and the environment.

The Government's plan to close the school is yet another example of a decision made with no proper process or consultation.

ISWA to move despite Government's refusal to re-open City Beach

The Government remains committed to funding the International School of Western Australia's (ISWA) move from the City Beach High School site to the Doubleview Primary School site at a cost to the state of \$21.6 million.

This is despite its decision not to re-open City Beach High School. The original agreement signed with ISWA included a sunset clause that building works must have started by

31/12/2017. The plans for the new school were only approved in February 2018.

The Government could have chosen to end the agreement and put tens of millions of dollars back into the education budget but instead agreed to extend the sunset clause date to 31 August 2018.

This development will mean the loss of a large number of mature trees on the

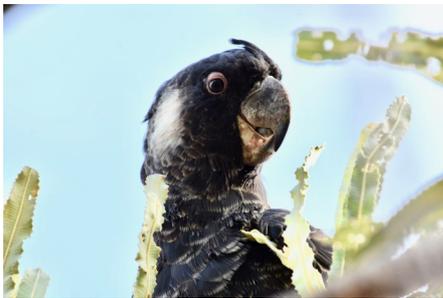
site, and the co-location of a high school and primary school.

The Government will not say what it intends to do with the City Beach High School site. The community is understandably concerned that the land will be sold off and in five or ten years' time we will see another urgent need for a public high school, with no space available.. I remain committed to seeing the City Beach High School site used for educational purposes.

Still standing up for our bush

An update on Underwood Avenue Bushland

Underwood Avenue Bushland is one of the key pieces of the ecological linkage between Kings Park and Bold Park. It provides essential foraging habitat for our vulnerable and endangered black cockatoos, who roost and breed in nearby bushland. UWA own this land and while it is a recognised Bush Forever site, it has also been slated for development for decades.



A male Carnaby's Cockatoo at Underwood Avenue Bushland

The current plan would clear more than 50% of the bushland. Strategic planning documents prepared by the Department of Planning already state that the loss of any further bushland in this area would substantially harm the whole. This is why we are fighting so hard for bushland on the Shenton Park Rehabilitation Hospital site as well.



Two Carnaby's

In 2007 the draft Federal environmental recommendation for this site was that it not be approved. UWA withdrew the project for

consideration the next day. State approval was granted in 2010 – and in 2014, concerns about failures managing Conflict of Interest at the EPA required specific legislation to validate this approval, along with more than 20 other recommendations and decisions.

We are currently in a situation where the environmental approval is in limbo. The date for substantial commencement of the project passed in September 2016. The planning approval is current but will end this year.

The Minister for Environment plans to make another determination on the matter and I have requested that he

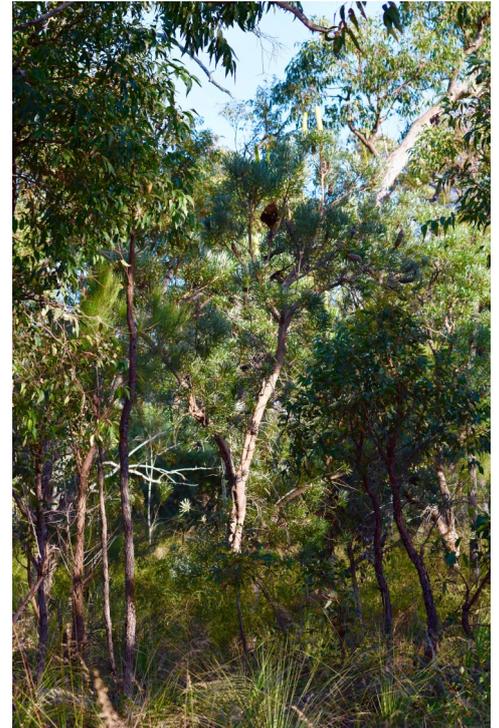


A family of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos investigate a hollow at Underwood

seek updated environmental advice. The environmental report prepared by the EPA on this land is now more than 10 years old.

The roosting and foraging patterns of Carnaby's Cockatoos and the Forest Red-Tailed Black cockatoo have changed substantially in that time and this is now a key area for these species.

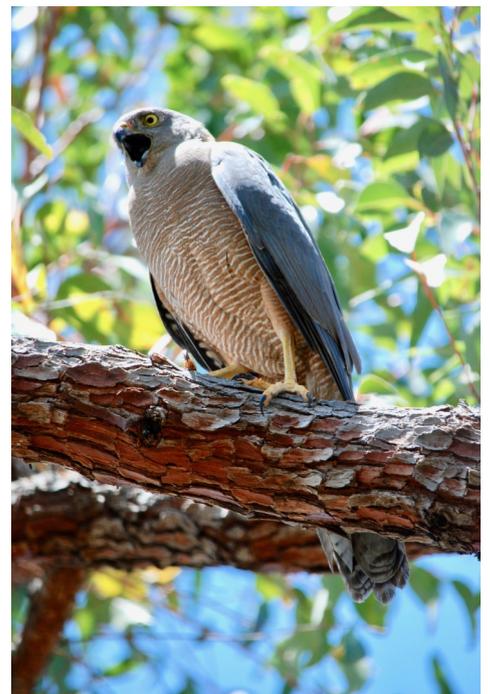
During the last few years, with no Greens Member for North Metropolitan, the Hansard record is very quiet about the value Underwood Avenue Bushland holds for the community and for Perth as a whole.



A view of the bushland

A Greens MP in North Metro will always work to save our precious Bush Forever sites.

With thanks to Friends of Underwood Avenue Bushland for the beautiful photographs.



A female brown Goshawk

Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre



During the summer break in Parliament, I met with Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre chairperson Bernadette Wright and CEO Wendy Rose

People with a Disability WA meeting



People with a Disability WA Executive Director Sam Jenkinson and I met to discuss issues facing the sector

Students visiting Parliament House



The students very much enjoyed a tour of Parliament House in February

10th Anniversary of National 'Sorry'



I attended the 10th Anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generation on 13 February. I am photographed here with Dr Richard Walley

Northam Suicide Prevention Network



Despite its relative proximity to Perth, the Northam district and surrounds continue to experience ongoing underinvestment in critical mental health and suicide prevention services despite experiencing a high level of need. I was pleased to spend time in Northam meeting with the Suicide Prevention Network and local mental health providers

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

Code of Practice for FIFO workers' mental wellbeing does not go far enough

The Code of Practice for the mental health of FIFO workers, which was released for public comment on 19 February, does not go far enough to assist in the prevention of adverse mental health and high suicide rates amongst FIFO workers.

The Code does not meaningfully address the challenges originally raised in the Committee report in 2015. It identifies some risks to workers, but fails to provide examples of

best practice.

The Committee report clearly stated that the Code of Practice should set out best practice for roster length, but it has failed to do that.

I am very concerned the Code fails to provide adequate guidance for managers, particularly those who are inexperienced or operating on small, new sites.

Ultimately, the Code does not offer concrete direction about what

managers should be doing to ensure workers' mental wellbeing.

There are examples within industry of good practice which the entire industry could benefit from. Currently the Code of Practice is only one small piece of the work that still needs to be undertaken.

It is clear that there is still a long way to go in terms of getting support for FIFO workers right.

Get in touch.

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Finally, a team Xamon pic!

I have been trying for months to get my team together (they work different days) to have their photograph taken to share with you. Finally, we did it!

Please meet Research Officers **Leigh Sinclair** and **Jocasta Sibbel** (far left and second from right), Electorate Officer **Kirsten Richards** (second from left) and Media and Communications Co-ordinator **Arran Morton** (far right). That's **me** in the middle.

Now you can put faces to names!