

# GOVERNOR'S SPEECH – OPENING OF 41<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021

*\*Check against delivery\**

Madam President and the honourable members of the Legislative Council,

Madam Speaker and the honourable members of the Legislative Assembly,

May I begin today by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are assembled, the Wadjuk people of the Noongar nation, and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

It is a pleasure and a rare privilege to have the duty this afternoon, to open and address the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament of Western Australia.

As a result of the March 13 election, which saw the re-election of the McGowan Labor Government, we will see 36 new members take up their seats in this new Parliament.

In fact, with a record 43 women elected, the WA Parliament will have nearly equal representation, and our first woman Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

To the members who have retired or not been returned, we thank you for your service to this Parliament and your communities.

To the newly elected members, you will be thrilled to be here. Rightly so. You are all people of profound conviction. Politics is a calling as much as a profession. You and your families have sacrificed much and will sacrifice more. The public however will not perceive that.

You have taken on a job unlike any other.

Something that I can speak on with some authority, given I am the first Western Australian Governor since Sir James Mitchell, to have previously been elected to parliamentary office in their career.

With your election, your constituents have put their faith in you.

That is a solemn responsibility. As we look around the globe, we see that faith in democratic processes is declining.

This is dangerous because the only alternative to it is authoritarian Government. The first step in the process is always an attack on the integrity of the democratic system. In Australia we protect that better than anywhere else.

Now that you are here you know confidence in our democracy depends very much on what is delivered and the process by which it is. You know that those in political life are held to a very high standard of conduct, personal and professional.

Elected membership is not about achieving minimum standards. The public expects more than that.

You know they expect you to lead, to set the example,

To help the people that come through your door,

To play your role in this honourable, enduring institution of Parliament, and in whatever way necessary, enhance this great state and polity.

And always, always, appeal to what a great American President, Abraham Lincoln described as 'the better angels of our nature'.

I have every confidence that this fine group of Western Australians who have been sworn in today to serve the people of Western Australia, know you are here to do an exemplary job. Every election pamphlet promised that. As did those who will join you in the new Council in May.

I wish you the very best in your endeavours this term, confident that those who elected you do so as well.

The re-elected McGowan Labor Government has advised me of its agenda for the 41st Parliament of Western Australia.

Understandably management of the pandemic continues to occupy much of the time and resources of the Government.

The events over the weekend are a timely reminder that the COVID-19 pandemic is not over.

Western Australia's world leading performance across the duration of the pandemic is a result of keeping WA COVID-free, and the confidence of the public that the Government will follow the health advice and do what is required to keep it that way.

The three-day lockdown and current transitional restrictions, while disruptive, are designed to quash the virus as quickly, safely and painlessly as possible, so that life can promptly return to COVID-normal, and our economy to its world leading performance.

While pandemic continues to fuel uncertainty around the globe – the Government is committed to keeping the State of Western Australia safe, fair and strong.

As was canvassed last year, one of the first priorities will be to extend again the **state of emergency powers** to ensure that the legislative tools required to respond to the pandemic and keep the virus at bay can continue.

The beginning of 2021 has also been marked by the twin natural disasters of the Wooroloo Bushfires and Tropical Cyclone Seroja. While we are incredibly fortunate there was no loss of life in either event, there was still great devastation to livelihoods, communities and property.

Recovery of the affected communities is an immediate priority of the McGowan Government, to ensure those affected can get back on their feet.

In this time of uncertainty and global volatility, the Government remains committed to ensuring the State economy remains in gear, **creating new Western Australian jobs.**

The prosperity and stability of this state has always been anchored by the creation and availability of quality, stable employment.

The Government took a **new WA Jobs Plan** to the election, based around reducing interstate FIFO, more training through TAFEs and schools, and diversifying the State's economy.

The re-elected Government has identified several sectors that represent burgeoning opportunities for the state, namely; hydrogen, tourism, battery industries, Aboriginal employment, agriculture and aquaculture, renewable energy, a new film industry and of course local manufacturing.

With regards to **manufacturing**, the Government intends to pursue opportunities to allow for the local manufacture and fabrication of iron ore railcar components, as well as renewable energy technologies.

This builds on early successes in local manufacturing such as the Matagarup bridge and railcar manufacturing, with the local facility for the construction of the new METRONET and Australind railcars at Bellevue to be handed over to the successful tenderer shortly

I am advised that the Government also intends to establish the **WA Jobs Taskforce**.

Chaired by the Premier, it will oversee the implementation of the WA Jobs Plan, identify new local job creation opportunities in new and existing industries, as well as identify the skills gaps that fuel the use of an interstate FIFO workforce.

The Government also intends to build on the success of its drive for more **local content** through public sector procurement

The WA Jobs Act, the WA Industry Participation Strategy and the Buy Local 2020 policy have together driven higher levels of local content, and local capacity, right across this great state, with a key focus on the regions.

In this new term, the Government has committed to ensuring **several new manufacturing endeavours are declared a "strategic project"** under the WA Jobs Act, mandating stricter levels of local participation and content.

The Government has also committed and budgeted to keep the already reduced **TAFE fees in Western Australia frozen for another four years.**

Keeping training affordable is essential to ensure that Western Australia has the skilled workforce it needs, and that opportunity is offered to every Western Australian to share in our prosperity.

The Government has also committed to improving and reforming the rights of Western Australians at work. The Government will reintroduce the **Industrial Relations Amendment Bill** to enhance the powers of industrial inspectors and workers' representatives, and bring many of the existing provisions into the modern era, in addition to finalising the regulations for last year's **Work Health and Safety Act reforms.**

There are seismic shifts across the world at present, with the rapid developments in both technology and price of renewable energy sources.

With the ever increasing challenge of **climate change**, as well as the economic opportunities on offer, the Government intends to build on its achievements, and take the next important steps.

The Government has committed to delivering its "**Green Jobs of the Future**" policies as part of the WA Jobs Plan, as well as the Climate policy announced last year, to seize new job creating opportunities for the public, as well as driving towards achieving net zero emissions for Western Australia by 2050.

There are numerous opportunities available, from new industries in hydrogen and future batteries, recycling, green steel and carbon farming, and the Government is progressing the necessary changes and investments to make them happen.

This complements the appointment of the state's first ever Ministers for Climate Action and Hydrogen Industry.

The Government will also continue to deliver its record breaking **infrastructure** program. The McGowan Government has committed more than \$7 billion for the WA Recovery and Jobs Plan and made a record investment of \$28.9 billion in

infrastructure to support our economic recovery, create jobs and benefit Western Australians over the long-term.

Over the next four years, **METRONET** will change the way we travel around Perth and the outer suburbs. This is the biggest ever investment in Western Australian public transport and the centrepiece of the Government's infrastructure program.

Nine METRONET projects are currently under construction, creating thousands of local jobs, with another three projects in procurement.

Commuters will soon be able to catch the train to Yanchep, the Airport, Byford and Ellenbrook, and for the first time, travel east to west, without going through the city centre with the new Cockburn-Thornlie link, and take advantage of fares that will be capped at two-zones.

Government also continues to pursue the once-in-a-century WESTPORT project.

Now that a location for the new container port has been selected at Kwinana, detailed design work continues, along with assessing and mitigating environmental impacts, protecting port and corridor land, and developing the Infrastructure Australia business case.

Crucially, despite the extensive Asset Investment Program and WA Recovery Plan, the Government is committed to ensuring that **the state finances are managed responsibly**. With the state continuing to receive highly volatile revenue sources, and facing a highly uncertain global economic landscape as a trading state, the Government believes it is responsible to budget prudently.

Western Australia is currently the only Australian jurisdiction forecasting operating surpluses, with a flatter debt profile than the rest of the nation. Indeed, Standard and Poor's has identified Western Australia as possibly the best performing sub-national jurisdiction in the world. Prudent budget management today through responsible spending and conservative estimates ensures Western Australia retains the fiscal capacity to respond into the future, come what may.

The Government has also pledged to continue to **remove unnecessary red tape from our economy and public sector**. The Government will embark upon the next generation of liquor reform for Western Australia, undertaking consultation with the sector with a view to removing burdensome restrictions and allowing for better experiences for customers.

Further, the Government is working to **reduce application wait times** for key environmental, mining and heritage approvals, while also establishing Environment Online and progressing the bilateral approvals agreement with the Commonwealth Government.

However, where current regulation is proven to be inadequate, the Government is committed to providing a more robust regime. This term, the Government will seek to pass the anticipated **Security of Payments laws** to provide an effective and fair process for securing payments under construction contracts in the building and construction industry, including for sub-contractors.

In the second term of the McGowan Labor Government, the health of the public continues to be a key focus. The global pandemic does not replace the ordinary challenges to the health of Western Australians. But it does burden our health system with additional requirements, policies and obligations.

500 additional beds are being added to our health system right across our state, including 95 beds being brought online at metropolitan **emergency departments**, one of the biggest expansions of Emergency Department capacity in the State's history

While outside the city, there are upgrades in hospitals across every region in the state. Not to mention progressing the new fully funded **Women's and Babies Hospital** at the QEII precinct

100 additional **mental health** beds are coming online to help Western Australians presenting to EDs with increasingly complex mental health challenges.

This complements the Government's commitment to significantly expand community mental health services, peer support, preventative services, as well as youth and Aboriginal mental health services and support.

Western Australia is investing more than ever before when it comes to mental health, as we learn more about how best to care and treat those suffering from those challenges in our community.

The government has also committed to increase support to \$100 per night for the **Patient Assisted Travel Scheme**, as well as expanding eligibility for people accompanying vulnerable patients, to help keep healthcare affordable and accessible for regional Western Australians.

With regards to legislative reform, the Government will reintroduce the **Health Services Amendment Bill**, that was not passed by the previous Parliament to improve our public health regime.

The Government will also seek to address injustices with regard to **Asbestos related diseases**. It has committed to removing "once for all" damages and introduce provisional damages for asbestos related diseases.

The Government will also reintroduce the **Wittenoom Closure Bill**, to end the sorry chapter that was the town of Wittenoom.

Also, the Government will legislate for **Safe Access Zones**, to ensure that women accessing abortion services can do so safely and with dignity, free of harassment.

As always Education remains a core priority of the Western Australian Government. From building the new schools our growing suburbs need, to creating a better learning environment for Western Australian children.

The Government took to the election a **\$355 million plan to upgrade schools' facilities** and deliver better Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics opportunities in schools, a plan that's expected to create 1,620 local jobs.

It builds on the **Government's record in the portfolio**, including the \$492 million Major School Upgrade package included in the WA Recovery Plan, the \$200 million Maintenance Blitz program of 2019, as well as delivering new science laboratories in 200 public schools, and reintroduced Education Assistants, Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers and Level 3 classroom teachers back into the classroom.

This is in addition to 32 new primary and secondary schools opened or announced since 2018, including the new Bob Hawke College.

This term the McGowan Labor Government will seek to enhance the role of **vocational education and training in secondary schools**, to ensure every student has a pathway to quality employment, including new programs for year eight and nine students, industry placements for TAFE lecturers and teachers and financial support for vulnerable students susceptible to not completing their school based training.

The Government will also seek to **improve student wellbeing and support**. The Government will recruit more than 100 additional school psychologists, provide funding for every WA public school that wishes to engage a school chaplain to do so and expand the McGowan Government's successful Alternative Learning Settings and Respectful Relationships programs following successful trials.

This will help ensure that we tackle violence in our schools, ensure that classrooms are conducive to learning, and our vulnerable or at risk students receive the support they need

Western Australians are the proud inheritors of a wonderful, unique and precious natural environment. The McGowan Government is driven to ensure that future generations can enjoy our natural plenty without sacrificing the prosperity of the present.

Work continues on **the Plan for Parks**, the record increase to Western Australia's conservation estate. The Government will introduce the **Conservation and Land Management Amendment Bill** to allow for the joint vesting of marine parks with traditional owners.

In addition, the Government will reintroduce, with its mandate, the **Beeliar Wetlands Bill**, to remove Roe 8 from the MRS, to ensure the sensitive wetland is protected into the future.

The Government has also committed to take the **next practical steps with regard to waste**, with a new plan to address ocean plastics, as well as E-Waste, following successful initiatives with Containers for Change and actions on single use plastics.

The McGowan Labor Government has a strong agenda for the coming term with regards to community safety and justice.

As flagged previously, the Government intends to proceed with **anti-consorting laws** in order to take the fight to organised crime by disrupting communication and networking between convicted offenders.

The Government will also reform our **firearms laws**, to ensure that guns are not only kept safely when they are in the community, but out of the hands of criminals. Yesterday marked twenty-five years since the Port Arthur Tragedy. Australia has benefited greatly from strict gun control laws passed in its wake.

It is essential that Governments continue to ensure that we do not lose the ground we've gained.

Also on the agenda for this term is reform to the **Bail Act** and conditions, for adults charged with sexual offences against a child following the tragic death of Annaliese Ugle.

The Government will also deliver its commitment to allow for **extended hours at Gosnells, Rockingham and Warwick police stations**, in addition to new police stations at Baldivis, Fremantle and Forrestfield.

Work is continuing recruiting the 800 additional police funded at the last budget, building on the over 300 officers already recruited.

The Government will also seek to reintroduce the **Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Amendment Bill** to restore the power and jurisdiction of the CCC, in relation to misconduct by MPs. In addition, the Government is determined to end the impasse that saw the Corruption and Crime Commission without a permanent commissioner for an extended period of time.

In order to help protect some of the most vulnerable in our community, **the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill** will be reintroduced, which amongst other reforms, includes the expansion of mandatory reporting to all five categories of individuals recommended by the Royal Commission, including ministers of religion.

The Government has an **expansive and wide ranging agenda for the forty-first Parliament**. The Parliament will be tasked with considering issues of reform for Western Australia, from the long awaited Aboriginal Heritage Act reforms, Police Compensation reform, family and domestic violence reforms, banning gay conversion therapy, elder abuse, GTE and financial management reform and puppy farming.

In addition, the Government intends to address **reform of the Western Australian electoral system**, to ensure that Western Australian elections are conducted fairly, the results reflect the intent of the public, and are protected from outside and overseas influence.

This is before the **extensive work of Government that will occur outside this chamber**, delivering initiatives on housing and homelessness, capping the cost of transport whether on our public transport or for regional airfares, the essential moral work of closing the gap, or keeping the pandemic and the consequences of the pandemic at bay.

Both the Government and the 41st Parliament have a lot of work ahead of them. There are many initiatives that have been canvassed publicly that are not included here for the sake of time.

But this comprehensive agenda, to confront the challenges that face this state, is what the people of Western Australia rightly expects.

The challenges of 2021 are quite different from those of 2017 – but the duty before you all today is the same:

To serve the public of Western Australia,

To make your electorates proud,

And take this great state forward.

Madam President, Madam Speaker – and the members of the Western Australian Parliament,

It is my great honour to now declare the 41st Parliament of Western Australia open.

ENDS