

**NINA
TAYLOR**
MP

Southern Metro

Maiden speech to Parliament
Wednesday 19 December 2018

Address in reply to the Governor's speech

I move:

That the Council agree to the following address to the Governor in reply to the Governor's opening speech:

May it please the Governor:

We, the Legislative Council of Victoria assembled in Parliament, express our loyalty to Australia and the people of Victoria, and thank you for the speech which you have made to the Parliament.

We declare that we will faithfully carry out the important duties entrusted to us by the people of Victoria, to advance the best interests of all sections of the community.

I acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet, the Kulin nation, and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

I descend from a long line of strong women who have bestowed an expectation of outspokenness and devotion to others. The ethos of giving without anticipation of reciprocity was deeply held, built on the premise that there is an inherent circularity to human existence. This is not to suggest or endorse martyrdom but rather sharing of one's capacity in a meaningful way.

Some years back I volunteered in a legal capacity at the Women's Legal Service, triaging victims of domestic violence over the phone. This experience had a profound impact of instilling a deep sense of gratitude for my late father's respectful attitude towards women. He was decent and kind, with a powerful intellect and irreverent humour. I fear, however, for the many children who are exposed to unhealthy relationships, where dysfunction prevails over reason. There is no question in my mind that the Victorian Labor government's commitment to the establishment of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and resultant recommendations, which are now well underway, was simply the right thing to do, and represents a critical step towards improving safety within Victorian homes.

Our legal system can be the great embodiment of justice, and it provides a necessary boundary for the parameters of human interaction. However, in spite of the noblest efforts of legal reformers, loopholes and other factors can work contra-equitable outcomes. I do not take the role of member of the Legislative Council lightly. Whilst my legal training inspires a persisting faith within me regarding the honourable objectives of the law, I respect the need for constant vigilance with the review of legislation and a readiness to address deficiencies unveiled.

Many wonderful teachers have supported and inspired my pathway to an interesting and varied career, which has included teaching, briefly; the health sector; law; and most recently the union movement, whilst serving the community as an elected councillor in local government. I believe that every child should be entitled to a quality education, and not necessarily one which demands intellectual excellence and the attainment of a university degree. The commitment to the revitalisation of TAFE by the Victorian government is a testament to Labor's dedication to a cross-section of credible and accessible learning experiences. A healthy education system is valued not only for the precursor to expanded vocational opportunities but equally for the gift of an enriched living experience, including active participation in our democratic processes.

I do wish that my primary school education had incorporated a greater emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. My parents did encourage a deeper appreciation of the Dreamtime and family trips to informative sites such as William Ricketts Sanctuary in the Dandenongs. However, this does not replace a lived experience. As an adult my exposure to the rich complexity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nexus to land has been ameliorated through law school, of all places, through case analysis in property law—namely, Mabo. I also learned about the bigotry of early lawmakers through a critical evaluation of caste classifications that were sadly once enforced. I am deeply sorry for the many transgressions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, including the forced removal of children from their parents. I am very hopeful, however, that progression to treaty in Victoria will help to reconcile inequities perpetuated since colonisation.

Part of respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, as I see it, includes taking good care of the land and water systems. I am deeply concerned about the present trajectory of dangerous increases to global temperature rise as outlined by the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. I cannot fathom why we have come to accept such a low bar for the quality of the air that we expose our children to, threats to food security, protracted bushfire seasons and many other serious consequences of human-triggered climatic change. I am a strident advocate for renewable energy, and I am incredibly proud of the Andrews Labor government's commitment to a cleaner energy future as well as a just transition for workers from high-carbon, high-pollution industries.

I look forward to playing my part in resolving the many challenges to the sustainability of our planet, including the heavy reliance on plastic packaging, emissions from vehicles, the destruction of biodiversity and the need for a restoration of habitat. I am confident that we can surmount the consequences of human excess and waste and that we have the necessary skills, policy framework and resources to see these critical changes through.

My movement into politics has been an organic progression rather than a constructed path. I will concede that I did harbour a desire to be a professional dancer throughout my childhood. However, genetics ensured that I grew too tall for pas de deux by the age of 16. The high-risk pursuit of an artistic career requires persistence, the ability to endure physical pain and the profound and unshakeable pursuit of perfection. It follows that the arts remain close to my heart. A well-supported arts community is one of the markers of a civilised society and a must for any progressive government's prioritisation.

I am deeply humbled by my election to Southern Metropolitan Region. It is a testament to the extraordinary vision, conviction and successful implementation of policy by the Andrews Labor government over the past four years. I am extremely proud to be joining this incredible team.

Southern Metropolitan Region boasts a wonderful multicultural constituency, which is part of the reason why I love living in this area of Melbourne and have done so for many years. I should note that as a former councillor of Glen Eira I will continue to have the honour of serving those residents who are also part of our region, albeit in a different capacity.

Now to some eclectic trivia about Southern Metropolitan Region from a bygone era. In 1873 the first of three sea baths was opened at South Melbourne beach as open sea bathing was prohibited in Victoria on the grounds of modesty. Caulfield was once a source of timber and a resting place for cattle en route from Gippsland to Melbourne, owing to a number of natural springs and swamps. Whilst predominantly affluent, a small pocket of the Malvern district of Tooronga was offered by the Closer Settlement Board to buyers with limited income in 1913. During its 120 years the title of 'Kew asylum' went through a series of name changes, reflecting changing attitudes to mental illness. The genesis of the term 'asylum' was apparently premised on it initially being a place of detention rather than healing.

The abovementioned historical trivia highlights issues which are still equally relevant to Victorians in the modern era: the evolution of societal attitudes to morality; the dramatic impact of encroachment upon our native flora and fauna; the ever-present need for social and affordable housing; and the frequently misunderstood realm of mental illness, where there is a clear and identified need for a royal commission to ameliorate mental health care into the future.

Of course no pathway to Parliament happens without the incredible contribution of others. I would therefore like to express my gratitude to many of those who have assisted me on this journey, including my previous employer, the CPSU. Organisational work with the CPSU has taught me the necessity to properly engage and consult with decent, hardworking Australians on legislation which directly impacts the quality of their working lives. Everyone deserves to be safe and respected at work, with fair and reasonable conditions.

To my CPSU colleagues, thank you for always being so supportive, ready and willing to assist me and each other no matter how foreboding the weather or unsociable the hour. To Kat Hardy, Mark Kettle and Mat Hilakari: you have all been incredibly supportive of me in my journey to Parliament. Thank you. To Emily's List: you do wonderful work for women. To the Honourable Martin Foley, MP: thank you for consistently encouraging me to fight for good values—words not taken lightly. To the former Deputy Premier of Victoria, John Thwaites: your uplifting attitude to the pursuit of political ideals has given me the confidence to take risks and forge ahead.

I would like to thank all Labor candidates and returning members who ran in Southern Metropolitan Region. I know that my election to the upper house has been greatly assisted by the personal engagement of each one of you with voters in our region. Specifically I refer to Labor candidates Marg D'Arcy for Kew, Oliver Squires for Malvern, Neil Pharaoh for Prahran, Sorina Grasso for Caulfield, Declan Martin for Brighton and Anita Horvath for Sandringham. To newly elected Labor members John Kennedy, MP, member for Hawthorn, and Will Fowles, MP, member for Burwood: I look forward to working with you. To the returning members Martin Foley, MP, Nick Staikos, MP, Steve Dimopoulos, MP, and Philip Dalidakis, MLC: I personally witnessed the incredible commitment you each displayed to your local districts and region, and although you did not anticipate the outstanding outcome from the election, I am pleased that your hard work has been vindicated.

To Belinda Wilson: thank you for being eternally optimistic and always ready to assist throughout the campaign. To all the volunteers who donated hours and hours of personal time, enduring sunburn, wind tunnels, cold and hot concrete and pelting rain: your support is an inspiration to me. Thanks to Stephen Morey for calculating and recalculating every single contingency imaginable for my possible election to Southern Metropolitan Region. To my extended family and friends: your kindness, generosity and warm wishes of support are much appreciated. To my mother, Susan Taylor, for your incredible devotion to others and your candour and resilience in the face of absolutely anything that life has thrown your way, and to my brother for triumphing over all challenges and always praising me at every milestone, thank you. Finally, I dedicate this inaugural speech to my late father, Robert William Taylor. May your memory live on in our hearts. Thank you.

Members applauded.