



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD
SEVENTH ASSEMBLY

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

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Monday, 16 May 2011

MR SPEAKER (Mr Rattenbury) took the chair at 10 am, made a formal recognition that the Assembly was meeting on the lands of the traditional custodians, and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Resignation of Chief Minister

MR SPEAKER: Members, in accordance with section 45 of the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988 (Commonwealth) I advise that I have received a letter from Mr Stanhope MLA, Chief Minister, dated 12 May 2011, in which he tendered his resignation as Chief Minister. I table the following papers:

Resignation of Chief Minister—Written notice from Mr Stanhope, dated 12 May 2011.

Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988 (Commonwealth), pursuant to paragraph 40(2)(b)—Notice convening a meeting of the Seventh Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory at 10 am on Monday, 16 May 2011, dated 12 May 2011 (Special Gazette S1, 13 May 2011).

Election of Chief Minister

MR SPEAKER: The next item of business is the election of a Chief Minister. Is there a proposal?

MR STANHOPE (Ginninderra) (10.02): I nominate Katy Gallagher and I move:

That Katy Gallagher be elected Chief Minister for the Territory.

MR SPEAKER: Is the nomination accepted?

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo) (10.02): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

MR SPEAKER: Are there any further proposals?

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (10.02): Mr Speaker, I propose Zed Seselja and I move:

That Zed Seselja be elected Chief Minister for the Territory.

MR SPEAKER: Is the nomination accepted?

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.02): Yes.

MR SPEAKER: Are there any further proposals?

There being more than one candidate proposed, the election of a Chief Minister will proceed by ballot. Before proceeding to the ballot, it is open to members to make

statements that shall be relevant to the election. The time limit is five minutes per speaker. Are there any statements?

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo) (10.03): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I wish to speak briefly to my nomination.

Last Friday I was chosen by my colleagues in the ACT Labor caucus to become the new leader of the Labor Party following the resignation of the previous leader and Chief Minister of the ACT, Mr Jon Stanhope. I thank my colleagues for the support they have provided and the faith they have placed in me as their leader.

In 2008, with the support of the ACT Greens, the Labor Party formed government here in the ACT. Since that time we have provided strong, stable and progressive government for the people of the ACT. I look forward to continuing to build on that record if I am to gain the support of the Assembly today.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition) (10.04): I will speak briefly. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, we are very good at counting in the Liberal Party. But it is worth saying why I have chosen to put my hand up, or why Mr Smyth has nominated me. Despite the fact that there is a Labor-Greens alliance in this place, we believe that there does need to be a very strong alternative voice, not just at the next election but right through the four-year term.

We take very seriously our responsibility to the community. We take seriously our responsibility to put forward ideas, and different ideas from the Labor Party and the Greens, on how we can lift the burden when it comes to things like cost of living for the people in the ACT, how we can fix issues like housing affordability, how we can fix our ailing health system.

We believe that the people of the ACT deserve better than what they are getting at the moment. Whilst we know the result today, we will continue to prosecute that case over 18 months in the lead-up to the next election.

MR SPEAKER: Ballot papers will now be distributed. Will members please write on the ballot paper the name of the candidate for whom they wish to vote and hold their own ballot paper for collection. The candidates are Ms Katy Gallagher and Mr Zed Seselja.

The result of the ballot is Ms Gallagher 11 votes, Mr Seselja six votes. Therefore, Ms Gallagher, the candidate with the majority of votes of members present and voting, is declared Chief Minister.

A ballot having been taken—

MR SPEAKER: Members, before we move to the adjournment, I would like to acknowledge Ms Karin MacDonald and Mr Bill Wood, former MLAs in this place, and welcome them back to the Assembly for this occasion.

Ms Gallagher, do you wish to make a statement?

Mr Hargreaves: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, can I also acknowledge that Mr Mick Gentleman is in the gallery.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you. Mr Gentleman, welcome also. Ms Gallagher?

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister), by leave: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank members for their confidence in me and support they have shown for me today. The people of Canberra, through their Assembly, have given me the greatest honour of becoming the seventh Chief Minister for the ACT. It is a privilege and a significant responsibility and one which I will carry out to the best of my ability every single day.

I come to this position after serving the people of the ACT in this place since 2001, firstly as a member of the backbench and shortly after as a minister. I have learnt much during this time and I think I come well prepared to take this next momentous step. That is not to say that I have all the answers or that I have nothing more to learn. I know that to be a good Chief Minister I will have to continue to listen to and learn from the community that I represent.

I must use this opportunity to thank the retiring Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope—the longest serving and most successful Chief Minister that the ACT has had, a man of great integrity, honesty and compassion, a true leader in every sense of the word. Jon has mentored me, supported me and encouraged me during my time in this Assembly. I thank Jon for all he has done for Canberra, for the Assembly, for the Labor Party and for all of us who will remain here to continue the unfinished work before us.

Today is a big day for me and a long way from the childhood dreams of a little girl from Waramanga. From an early age I was taught that in order to truly belong to a community you must contribute to that community. Canberra is my home. It is part of who I am. I have spent my whole life here—as a child, a student, a worker, a partner, a mum, and now as Chief Minister. I truly love this city and I will not waste the opportunity that has been given to me today.

As a leader I will be tough but I will be fair. I will be hardworking, I will be honest, I will be compassionate. I will always act with integrity and in the best interests of the community I serve.

The government I lead will focus on the things that matter for Canberra families—health, education, community and municipal services—against a backdrop of responsible economic management which will allow us to provide support for those members of our community who are doing it tough. I will lead a streamlined, efficient and talented public service with a renewed focus on meeting the needs of the local community. We will tackle the challenges that come our way no matter how difficult or how contentious they may be.

Our community expects a government that will listen to them but also a government that takes the lead in the big policy debates and ultimately provides direction on the

best way through. We will maintain our reputation as the most progressive government in the country. We are proud of this title. We believe that you can lead discussions on important social issues and provide good government to the people of the ACT at the same time. It does not have to be an either-or situation.

This is truly an exciting time for our city. As we near our 100th birthday our future looks very bright and I will be very proud to play a small but privileged part in Canberra's history as the seventh Chief Minister of the ACT.

In closing, I would briefly like to thank all the people that have supported me to get to this stage today: my colleagues in the ALP caucus, the ALP staffers here, my own staff, of course my fantastic friends, and my fantastic family, who are with me here today.

Mr Speaker, this is at times an adversarial place, but I acknowledge that all of us in this place are here to make the ACT a better place. Today I extend a genuine offer to work with all members to improve the lives of the people of Canberra and to improve the city that we all call home.

MR SESELJA (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition), by leave: Firstly, can I offer to the outgoing Chief Minister my congratulations. I wish you well in your retirement. You clearly have been a significant contributor to the ACT, not just as Chief Minister but obviously before that as leader of the Labor Party. To lead your party for the last 13 years is a significant achievement and one that can never be taken away. So I offer my hearty and sincere congratulations.

You have been a formidable adversary, without a doubt—someone whom we respect. We respect your abilities. If we have often disagreed on a whole host of issues and approaches, there is no doubting the fact that we respect your abilities and we respect your contribution.

I wish you and Robyn all the best in your retirement and I hope that you will have a wonderful rest, having made a contribution to the people of the ACT over many years.

Katy, congratulations to you. It is a significant honour, not just to be elected to lead your party but now to be elected as the head of government here in the ACT. So my sincere congratulations go to you. It is a great honour. It is also a great challenge. We on this side of politics will be ensuring we keep you accountable every step of the way. We will be here to ensure that the people of the ACT are well served. Whether that is in areas like housing affordability, whether that is in infrastructure, whether that is in local services, it is now game on.

The test for you, we believe, will be how well you respond to those issues that affect Canberrans every day. We all have that task in this place but no-one has it more importantly than the head of the government in this place, and that now rests with you. So make no mistake: we will hold you very accountable for that and we look forward to that challenge.

In the end, the people of the ACT will judge that performance. They will judge your performance, our performance and, indeed, the performance of this government over the last 11 years. That is the task before us.

In closing, we look forward to that challenge, we look forward to continuing to serve the people of the ACT and we look forward to the next 18 months.

MS HUNTER (Ginninderra—Parliamentary Convenor, ACT Greens), by leave: I would like to thank Jon Stanhope for the significant contribution he has made over 10 years as Chief Minister and, of course, for longer as a member of the Legislative Assembly.

As we all know, 2½ years ago four members came into this place, and that was quite a new experience for the four of us. I would like to thank Jon for participating in those negotiations. We did come out with an agreement supporting Labor to be in government. I believe that that agreement has delivered significant benefits to the people of the ACT. I am not going to sit here and list all of those but there have been many improvements to areas of service delivery and so forth that really have assisted many people across Canberra.

To Jon, I have had a good, productive working relationship with the Chief Minister; that has been helpful at times. Of course, we have also had our stoushes here in the chamber, as it should be. We are a crossbench and we will continue to take up those issues that we hold dear to the government, as is our role in this place. Thank you for your contribution, best wishes for the years ahead and certainly I do hope that you get to spend some time with your family.

To Katy, congratulations. It is a big task. The job of Chief Minister is probably a lonely and a hard job. As you said, you have spent many years in this place building your skills and your knowledge of how it all works.

This morning we have again signed the parliamentary agreement—for it to continue. We will continue to have that agreement in place until the election comes in 2012. There are still items that need to be achieved under that. We look forward to working with you on ensuring that all of those items are progressed because they are of great benefit to many people.

Good luck with it all. I am sure, as we did with the former Chief Minister, there will be times when we disagree and we will take our cases to the floor of the Assembly. But best wishes also for the years ahead.

MR SPEAKER: Thank you, members. Before we proceed, I understand that the federal member for Fraser, Mr Andrew Leigh, is also with us in the gallery today and I welcome him to the Assembly.

Adjournment

Motion by (**Ms Gallagher**) agreed to:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Assembly adjourned at 10.19 am, until Tuesday, 21 June 2011, at 10 am.