

So-called 'bogans' want the basics, not racetrack bribes

SHANE
LOVE



Last week, West Australians were treated to an eyebrow-raising admission from former Labor premier Brian Burke, who claimed the new \$217 million Burswood racetrack was the Cook Labor Government chasing the so-called "bogan vote".

From where I stand, these are ordinary West Australians, hardworking people, many from regional communities.

They fish, camp, drive four-wheel-drives and (ride) dirt bikes on the weekend.

They also enjoy recreational and competitive shooting.

Here's a message for the Premier: the people you're trying to win over want to feel safe in their communities.

They want timely access to high-quality health care. They want well-resourced schools that aren't overcrowded.

And they want roads that are maintained and safe to drive on. They also want to be left alone to enjoy the great outdoors without being regulated and restricted into oblivion.

But what has Labor delivered to the very people it has labelled "bogan voters" and claims to be trying to win back?

A weekend spent under the watchful eye of bureaucrats and green activists.

A fishing rod gathering dust.

A locked gate at the entrance of a national park. And a system that makes it impossible for law-abiding citizens to keep their firearm licences.

Let's start with recreational fishing.

Labor blindsided thousands of families with a nine-month ban on demersal fishing.

No warning, no consultation.

Then came the South Coast Marine Park, more than 1000km of coastline locked up, stripping fishers and tourists of access and enjoyment. And on the horizon? Plans to triple the

size of Marmion Marine Park.

Fishing businesses are closing. Tourism operators are desperate. The Fisheries Minister is missing in action.

And for what?

Decisions not backed by science but by ideology.

Then there's off-road driving, another simple, popular pastime made increasingly difficult under Labor.

For years, the Government has ignored calls for proper legislation and infrastructure.

As a result, recreational drivers are blamed for damaged tracks and beaches while the Government refuses to invest in managing or maintaining those areas.

The same neglect applies to our national parks.

Labor has forgotten that its legislative purpose is to promote and facilitate recreation and tourism. Take the decision to ban visitors from the iconic Horizontal Falls, a move that will cost the Kimberley \$15m a year, 58 jobs and a piece of its identity.

Labor is locking West Australians out of their own backyard.

And of course, there's the firearms legislation targeting law-abiding owners, farmers, sporting competitors and recreational shooters, treating them like criminals. Labor's reforms do nothing to address illegal guns or gang activity.

This is a government actively attacking the recreational pursuits that define our way of life.

Regional communities, home to many of Labor's so-called "bogans", don't feel safe. Crime is rising and confidence in the justice system is falling.

Families feel vulnerable.

Businesses are being targeted. Communities are crying out for help. After 4pm, calls to local police stations are often diverted to larger centres hundreds of kilometres away, leaving residents without real-time support in moments of crisis. It is not just frustrating, it is dangerous.

The justice system is

buckling under pressure, and frontline officers are doing their best with limited resources.

Hospitals are overwhelmed, with long-promised upgrades either delayed indefinitely or quietly abandoned. Schools are bursting at the seams and teachers are facing a disturbing surge in student violence.

Meanwhile, roads beyond the metropolitan and South West regions are being blatantly neglected.

It is time the Cook Labor Government took a long, hard look at what truly matters to West Australians. If it wants to regain the trust of the voters, it must start by respecting their values and way of life.

Get the basics right. Because until the Government does that, no racetrack in Burswood, no matter how shiny, will bridge the growing divide between this government and its so-called bogan vote.

Shane Love is the leader of The Nationals