



# Guy Barnett MP

LIBERAL MEMBER FOR LYONS

THE PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA - HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ADJOURNMENT SPEECH – THE LORD'S PRAYER

THURSDAY, 17 March 2016 [6.14pm]

**Mr BARNETT (Lyons)** - Madam Speaker, I support retaining the Lord's Prayer in the Tasmanian Parliament. It has meaning and purpose. Parliament and the work we do as servants of the people would be diminished if the Lord's Prayer was removed. The push by the Greens and specifically, Ms Andrea Dawkins, Greens member for Bass, to remove the Lord's Prayer is not supported. The Greens are entitled to their views. We live in a democracy and I am thankful for that. Likewise, I am entitled to argue in favour of retaining the Lord's Prayer.

In a letter to the editor in the Sunday Examiner on 6 March, Robin Smith of Newstead said:

*At its foundation and when I became a paid-up member, the Green Party was caring for the environment and showing concern for justice and the welfare of the needy. Now its focus appears to be social engineering and directing its energy against any expression of Christian faith.*

*The new Greens member Andrea Dawkins proudly asserts she is not a Christian and wants the Lord's Prayer removed from parliamentary protocol. If she thought about it for a moment she would realise it is a wonderfully inclusive prayer that many religions can accept and yes, tradition does have a place in our culture and we will be an impoverished society if the new Green philosophy takes over.*

*It is worth noting our first Greens member of parliament for Bass was a Uniting Church minister.*

It is undeniable that Jesus's teachings have had a great deal of influence in Australia in every aspect of our society and for our good - do unto others as you would have them do unto you; love your neighbour; that spirit of volunteerism, service and sacrifice. It is noted that nearly three-quarters of our welfare services are provided by Christian and faith-based organisations such as Anglicare, Centacare, Bapcare, Salvation Army, City Mission, World Vision, and the list goes on.

Removing the Lord's Prayer, in my view, would in one way deny our own history and the contribution Jesus's teachings has made to modern Australia and our place here in Tasmania. The daily reading of

prayers, and specifically the Lord's Prayer, is standard practice in most Parliaments across the states of Australia and the Northern Territory.

Based on the research I have undertaken, in the Federal Parliament, in which I served for nearly a decade, prayers including the Lord's Prayer are read in both the House of Representatives and the Senate and have been part of the running of the House since Federation in 1901. In our Constitution the preamble says 'humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God'. The prayer read in almost all Houses and Chambers at the start of each sitting day, and in many other countries around the world, follows the same form as that employed in this House--a preamble requesting a blessing upon the relevant Parliament and the directing of their deliberations for the welfare of the people, followed by the well-known words of wisdom from Jesus, popularly known as the Lord's Prayer, and quoted in the Bible, the world's best-selling book.

The practice and these words are part of our national heritage. It is recognition of our Judaeo-Christian traditions and foundations, a heritage claimed by 61 per cent of Australians who identify as Christian, a proportion more than 24 times larger than that identifying with the second-largest religion in Australia, Buddhism, at 2.5 per cent.

Research confirms that most Australians believe in God and pray at least sometimes. This goes deeper than heritage for many millions of Australians, with around 3.5 million Australians, or 15 per cent, attending church at least once a month, twice as many as attended all AFL, NRL, A-League and Super Rugby games combined per month - 1.684 million.

In the words of a petition put to the Federal House of Representatives in 2011:

The prayer acknowledges our shared community and common humanity under a caring God in a context of humility and respect.

It asks God to fulfil his just purposes for the earth.

It seeks from God the provision of our daily needs and requires, by implication, generosity on our part.

It confesses our need to be forgiven and to forgive.

It recognises the lure of corruption and our entanglement with evil from which we need to be delivered.

Finally, it places our lives and actions in an eternal perspective.

Russell Broadbent MP, in that debate in 2011, said:

*Even for those who do not pray to God, the recitation of these words at the beginning of the parliamentary day allows a few moments for quiet reflection on our shared humanity, our daily dependence on the good things of the Earth, our need to forgive and be forgiven, the temptations of office and the broader perspective against which our efforts much be judged. The Lord's Prayer reminds me that we are all accountable to something higher than ourselves, God.*

Earlier today in this Parliament we thanked God that no lives were lost during the recent bushfires. Even regarding our challenges of a lack of water in our dams, we make it clear that we cannot make it rain; a higher power is in charge. If nobody believes in the Lord's Prayer or that it has meaning and purpose, that Jesus' teachings have had little or no positive influence, then there would be an argument to remove the Lord's Prayer from parliament.

Some can fairly argue that, as MPs, we say one thing and do another. We can fairly be accused of being hypocritical. But the Lord's Prayer sets out a vision of how things could be and how they should be. I hope and pray that honouring Jesus with our lips will lead to honouring Him with our hearts and our actions in this place and wherever we go.

Madam Speaker, being led by you in this place on a daily basis, the Lord's Prayer is not a time that is wasted. Regardless of our background, the values, the views and aspirations of the Lord's Prayer are those with which we could all find agreement at least to some level. It is, in my view, standard practice in most Australian Parliaments and in many parts of the western world. It is part of Australia's heritage. The values and ethos expressed in the Lord's Prayer can be supported by all. Parliament would be diminished if the Lord's Prayer was removed. My hope and prayer is that this Parliament will continue with the practice of using the Lord's Prayer when we come together.