



GUY BARNETT

First Speech to the Tasmanian Parliament

Wednesday 7 May 2014

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Inaugural) - Mr Deputy Speaker, may I congratulate you on your election to this important position. If Madam Speaker were in the Chair I would be congratulating her on her election to the role of Speaker, which is a special honour that has many challenges ahead. I would like to congratulate all members in this Chamber on their election or re-election and thank them for their welcome to me into this place and state Parliament.

We are here because we believe in a better Tasmania, even though our visions of what this may look like and the journey to get there may differ. I would like to thank the parliamentary staff and the Clerk of the House for their welcome and assistance in settling in. I remember working in this place in 1988 and 1989 as senior adviser to former premier the Honourable Robin Gray. Although more than 25 years ago, I note that many of the faces in this Chamber are familiar to me. Only today I was advised that both the Clerk of the House and the Clerk of Papers have served this place for more than 40 years, a tremendous achievement.

This Parliament is certainly smaller in size than the Federal Parliament, and that was no more evident yesterday in our joint sitting with the Legislative Council. I sat at the back in the corner of the Chamber on a small red chair with a wall on my right and at my back. With one wrong move from the member from Braddon, Adam Brooks, sitting in front of me, I would have ended up in the lap of the person next to me, who happened to be the new Speaker of this House of Assembly. That did not occur and we stayed safe and secure, a very cosy environment indeed it was. I am sure that the smaller size of this Parliament will lead to a more hands-on engagement within the House and practical outcomes for Tasmania.

I also thank the Premier of Tasmania, Will Hodgman, for appointing me his Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for the Community Development Division of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It is a tremendous honour and a responsibility I take seriously.

I am honoured to stand as one of more than 560 members of this House of Assembly since its inception in 1856. It is a special privilege to rise and give one's first speech but it is more so to give a first speech a second time. However, I note that it is not unique in this Chamber, with two of the five members for Bass, Michael Ferguson and Michelle O'Byrne, having had the same privilege, and the new member for Franklin, Paul Harriss, doing so tomorrow. It is humbling to again have the responsibility to participate in such a decision-making Chamber.

People have asked me, 'Why go back into politics?'. It has always been a dream of mine since a boy to serve my community in Parliament. I am honoured to be living the dream. I know full well that dreams do not work unless you do. My aim as a member of parliament is to be working for my community, working in my community and with my community on relevant issues and for the right reasons. I have always said that those participating in the political arena must be prepared to lose whilst fighting for what they believe in. Alas, I lost my Senate seat at the 2010 Federal election and concluded in the Federal Parliament on 30 June 2011.

The Premier read at the opening of Parliament church service yesterday of Solomon's request of God for wisdom. It was Solomon who also wrote in Proverbs 16.9 that, 'In their hearts people plan their course, but the Lord determines their steps'. This was the case for me. The loss of my Senate seat and subsequent life change has made me a better person. I found anew that it is not what happens in life that is important but how one responds to what happens in life. This experience has grown my faith, opened new opportunities to serve and deepened relationships with my family. I trust that this experience helps me to be a more effective and wise member of parliament. With God's grace - and I fully expect to need a hefty portion of it - I look forward to working with my colleagues in this place and across Tasmania with great anticipation.

Government members - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - Today I wish to pay tribute to my wonderful wife Kate, who is here in the Chamber today, and my children Nina, Alice and Ben, Nina being in the Chamber today. I am very proud of all of you. Thank you for being with me on this journey of life and especially for your steadfast love, support and care. Kate has been my soulmate and the rock of our family over many years, particularly during my time in politics. In recent weeks we celebrated our twenty-fourth wedding anniversary with a special few days in the Tasmanian wilderness - a terrific time.

I pay tribute also to my mother, Lady Sallie Ferrall, who is in the Chamber today, and my late father, John Barnett, who demonstrated the spirit of enterprise and a can-do attitude. Dad saw solutions rather than problems and did what people said could not be done. My parents should take much of the credit for the inspiration and the values instilled in me and I thank my mum especially for her gracious, kind and consistent love. She has been and is a proud champion for her son's cause and I am profoundly grateful.

I pay a special tribute to Caroline Donaghy, my new and old executive officer who cannot, sadly, be with us today. You have been with me since my days in the Senate and your support and organisational ability over the years have been greatly appreciated. I also thank other family, extended family and friends for their support, encouragement and love on this journey. They have been there through the ups and the downs, the highs and the lows and have remained steadfast and true. To those dear family and friends in the Chamber today, I acknowledge you and I thank you on this auspicious occasion.

To the Liberal Party and its members, particularly in the electorate of Lyons, I say thank you for this opportunity to serve. I acknowledge the enormous level of volunteer effort, especially from those members of my campaign committee - you gave and you gave. On behalf of Kate and my family, I say thank you. We are indeed indebted to you, to the people and families of the Lyons electorate; thank you for your support and I relish the opportunity to continue to represent you, the great state of Tasmania and the values that I uphold.

I also take this opportunity to recognise the service of the former Speaker and now retired member for Lyons, Michael Polley, for his 43 years of service. It was Mr Polley who presented me with the grade 6 book prize in 1974 at the Hagley Farm Primary School and it was on my first visit to Parliament - as a new member I was wearing my Akubra pastoralist's hat - and the Clerk of the House, Peter Alcock, greeted me and he said, and I quote, 'The last member of Parliament in this place to be wearing the same hat remained here for 43 years', so we will see what is in store but I do not think that record is likely to be broken for a long to come, if ever.

I am a fifth-generation Tasmanian, raised on a farm at Hagley in the heart of the Meander Valley. I studied law at the University of Tasmania before practising in Melbourne. I achieved my dream of working in the United States in the mid-1980s when I was an advocate for Australian rural and trading businesses in a Washington DC law firm. As noted, I worked as a senior adviser to a former Premier and then returning to Tasmania before establishing and managing an award-winning government affairs and public relations business prior to entering the Senate in early 2002.

The following nine-plus years in the Federal Parliament were some of the most rewarding in my life and I was grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Tasmania in that role and, upon leaving the Senate in 2011, I again worked in my consultancy business.

Being born and bred in Lyons, it would be remiss of me not to share something of the electorate that I represent and love. Lyons is vast and almost entirely rural and regional. It contains more than 50 per cent of this great state. It contains many of the state's most stunning natural wonders - Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair, the Hazards, Freycinet, the Bay of Fires and the Tasman Peninsula. It is a land of farms and forests, lakes, rivers and towns producing much of Tasmania's agricultural wealth. It abounds in history with World Heritage sites, including Port Arthur, Brickendon and Woolmers. It is truly a productive and beautiful place.

On 15 March this year, Tasmania stood at a crossroads: would we want to continue with the rolling crisis within the Labor-Greens Government, increasing debt and deficits, and more of the Greens' social reform agenda at the expense of top priority issues such as the economy and jobs? Would we support the jobs-destroying forestry agreement? The voters have answered those questions. The Tasmanian people spoke loud and clear and they said 'No' and voted for change for a brighter future. They voted for a growing economy, jobs for the future and stability for their children.

It was an emphatic victory led by Will Hodgman and may I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his leadership through the long years in opposition and now in his role as Premier of Tasmania. It has been a long and arduous 16 years. This state now has a Liberal Premier and a Liberal government. History has been made. Our Government has a clear mandate for change and reform. Tasmanians have voted for this Parliament to implement our plan and to do the things that need to be done to get this state back on track. A majority Liberal Government will help to remove the instability and sovereign risk issues of the past and encourage investment. Being responsible for our actions and accountable for decisions is an important principle that should be supported.

It is time to replace despondency and despair with hope and opportunity. There is a budget blowout which we now know to be in excess of \$1 billion over the forward Estimates - an irresponsible mortgage on our children's future. It is worth noting that when the Howard-Costello

Government came to office in 1996 there was a \$96 billion debt and it took nearly 10 years of hard work and wise decision-making for that debt to be paid off.

Red and green tape has been strangling our small businesses and our productive industries. It is time for Tasmania to have some can-do leadership with an unequivocal growth, development and jobs agenda.

We have plans in place to grow the forest industry rather than to close it down. It is right in my view that forest protestors who deny hard-working Tasmanians the opportunity to earn a living have had their day. This Government should not stand by and watch livelihoods be destroyed in places like the Fingal Valley, the Derwent Valley, Triabunna, St Helens, the east coast, Deloraine and Longford; it is wrong. I consider the challenges ahead for this Government to be as high and as challenging as Mount Ossa. There will be some very hard and unpalatable decisions to be made; there will be no easy option or quick fix, remembering that the path of least resistance is rarely the right path to a long-term solution.

To move forward, Tasmania must build on its strengths. Our plentiful land, productive seas, clean energy and spectacular natural beauty immediately come to mind. Agriculture already employs 8 000 Tasmanians on 3 400 farms and it is turning over more than \$1.6 billion a year. Investment in water infrastructure and other Liberal initiatives recently announced can more than double this output in a decade.

As a Hagley Farm School old boy and chair of the Friends of the Hagley Farm School it was a real pleasure that I co-announced the Liberals' commitment to establish a centre of excellence in primary industry education at the school. Initiatives like this can only build on our already strong agriculture sector.

We have 1 per cent of Australia's land mass but 14 per cent of its water. Water is liquid gold; let us make the most of it. Our island is surrounded by water; our booming aquaculture industry and the sustainable expansion of fish farms should be supported rather than opposed. As Australia's renewable energy state, we have the comparative advantage in a carbon-constrained world; let us make the most of it. We can do this in a raft of ways, including by exploring additional wind farms or another undersea cable across Bass Strait. Both our natural and built heritage is world-renowned. The establishment of appropriate ecotourism developments in our national parks and natural environment has world-class potential. This should be exported and I am excited by plans to grow our tourism sector to 1.5 million visitors by 2020. I look forward to seeing others enjoying the spectacular natural beauty which we are all privileged to live in.

These strengths are being held back by excessive legislation. There are 36 planning schemes in a state of 500 000 people, which is ridiculous and anti-development. Our government's policy for one state planning scheme is clearly the way to go. Reducing the cost of doing business is imperative and we will be doing this by cutting red and green tape.

Our greatest strength as a state is our people. Tasmania has among the highest rates of volunteerism in Australia and that is fantastic. The volunteer character is one of the great assets as a nation, especially in times of need and crisis. I saw this first-hand as a senator when I was helping out during the Beaconsfield mine tragedy and then the east coast bushfire crisis in the mid-2000s. Where would we be without our volunteers? Sadly, these volunteers are often undervalued and under-recognised. I remember that the first submission I wrote to the then Prime Minister, John

Howard, was entitled 'How Can We Help our Volunteers'. I am committed to seeing volunteers helped and supported by government wherever possible and appropriate. With National Volunteer Week next week we all have an opportunity to say thank you to our volunteers.

Small business is the backbone of our community particularly in rural Tasmania. It is the pre-eminent jobs generator, with 50 per cent of the private sector workforce in this sector. In Tasmania we have an estimated 36 000 small businesses employing one-third of all employees. The small business work ethic is supreme. Small business owners and operators have mortgages not only on their businesses but on their homes. They have their necks on the line. They cannot walk away from a wrong decision or an unsuccessful venture without paying a personal cost.

Mr Brooks - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - I hear a small business owner-operator and member of parliament say 'hear, hear' - and I recognise the member for Braddon.

They stand accountable for their actions and responsible for their decisions. This is a principle vitally important to all of us here. I salute the small business owners and operators of Tasmania and those who work with them. As a former small business owner and operator, I was proud to receive the Tasmanian Government and Telstra Small Business Award in 2000 and I understand at least in part the challenges faced by small business.

As the grandson of a World War I veteran and great nephew of a World War II prisoner of war, it is an honour to take on responsibility for Veterans Affairs and the Centenary of Anzac in this Government. I have a long history of supporting veterans and our Anzac heritage, including gaining long-overdue recognition for the Fuzzy-Wuzzy Angels of Kokoda, walking the Kokoda Track in 2008, and promoting the memory of Harry Murray VC, Australia's most highly decorated soldier and the most decorated soldier in the Commonwealth in World War I. He was a man from Evandale and we should be proud of him and his legacy.

With the support of the Tasmanian RSL I produced a book, now in its third edition, chronicling the stories of Tasmania's VC winners. Out of the 100 Australian VC recipients since the Boer War, Tasmanians have won an incredible 14. We certainly punch above our weight in Tasmania. Working with Garry Ivory, nephew of Teddy Sheean, and the Sheean family over the past eight years in the Senate and post the Senate to promote the memory of Teddy Sheean has been a real pleasure. To Garry and his family I say thank you and fight on in the tradition of Teddy Sheean.

It has been a pleasure working with the members of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Community Development Division, in my new role, especially in preparing for Anzac Day 2014 and the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli in 2015. Let me make clear that I know of no ex-service organisation or RSL that wishes to glorify war. The purpose of Anzac Day is a solemn one, to commemorate and acknowledge the service and sacrifice of all those prepared to place themselves in the way of harm and danger to protect the freedoms that make our way of life the envy of the world. Thank you to our servicemen and women and their families in the Australian Defence Forces -past, present and future.

It is true that one of the great prizes of life is the chance to work hard at work worth doing. In the nearly three years since my time as a senator I have had the privilege of being Ambassador for Diabetes Australia and Diabetes Tasmania - and I recognise Caroline Wells, CEO of Diabetes

Tasmania, and her team in the Gallery today. It has been a pleasure working with them and I look forward to doing so the future. I have been Ambassador for Motor Neurone Disease Australia; my father died of motor neurone disease. I consulted in the health and construction sectors, acted as an advocate for small business and wrote a book entitled *Make A Difference - A Practical Guide to Lobbying*. It has been a pleasure working with Sir Michael Hirst, former UK MP and now president of the International Diabetes Federation to establish the world-first Parliamentarians for Diabetes Global Network, with the inaugural forum held in Melbourne in December 2013.

Many of you will know I have type 1 diabetes. It was on my wife's birthday, 15 January 1997, following a month of suddenly losing weight, constant tiredness and insatiable thirst that I was diagnosed with type 1, or insulin-dependent diabetes, and had my first insulin injection. I started with a regime of five injections a day and up to 10 fingerpricks a day. Advanced medical technology now allows me to use an insulin pump and forgo the daily injections. The fingerpricks remain, up to six to 10 a day. I gained a whole new perspective on life, including compassion and a special empathy for those with disabilities.

I have a passion to help all people with diabetes and their families and those at risk, and that remains. An estimated 34 000 Tasmanians and 1.7 million Aussies live with diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is a global pandemic and sadly pervades every corner of the earth, with more than 100 million in China and 52 million in India. Western lifestyles have been exported across the globe and with it the obesity epidemic, which is a key contributor to the diabetes pandemic. Tasmanian has the highest rates of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and smoking in Australia, not a good record. Promoting healthy lifestyles is the way to go. This is particularly important in schools where I have had a role over the past 17 years in helping to increase the levels of physical activity and encouraging healthier food options.

Although not perfect, I have taken on the healthy living message and am a keen cyclist, squash and tennis player, trout fisherman and lover of the outdoors. With Diabetes Tasmania I initiated the Tasmanian Pollie Pedal, raising awareness and funds for diabetes. I recognise members in this Chamber who have participated in past years and I look forward to future times ahead. As the new state member for Lyons and a member of the Government I look forward to being part of the solution promoting a healthier Tasmania.

We should always fight to protect the things we hold dear, whether they be our families, friends or the freedoms that we enjoy today. People in this place are aware of my views on the importance of family to society. I am proud of my role in helping establish the National School Chaplaincy Program and legislating the definition of marriage in 2004. I believe in marriage between a man and a woman. It is a bedrock institution and one worth defending. Marriage is an umbrella under which children are nurtured and grow. Any child entering this world should have a reasonable expectation of having both a mother and a father. I respect the dignity of human life from conception to death and will stand for it wherever I can.

Mr Deputy Speaker, may I point out some of the history of the very chair in which you are sitting. This chair was crafted for Sir Richard Dry, the first Tasmanian-born Premier and Knight of the British Empire and the then Speaker of the Legislative Council back in 1851. His portrait is in the Long Room, which I am sure many in this Chamber would be aware of. As many members here are aware, I grew up at Quamby on a farm near Hagley, which was built by Sir Richard's father, an Irish political prisoner. From 1955 Mum and Dad started the restoration of this historic but then dilapidated home. As I have learnt more about Sir Richard I have appreciated his vision for

Tasmania. He played a major part in ending the convict era in Tasmania. He was a much-loved statesman and I am fortunate enough to own Sir Richard's desk. As I sit at his desk I hope it will help me emulate some of his wise and strategic decision-making.

In conclusion, I note that there is a high level of cynicism within the community towards our public institutions and politicians. This is a sad but sometimes justified indictment, so I embrace this as a challenge from Tasmanians and will strive, I am sure, with others in this place to see the cynicism replaced with trust. I have always admired William Wilberforce, a long-serving British MP who was instrumental in stopping the slave trade. He was motivated by his Christian faith and demonstrated a clear purpose to end the slave trade and a passion for this vision. He was proactive and worked in partnership with others to see this end. Although he was maligned and had many knockbacks along the way, over half a century he persevered. It is my desire to demonstrate these same character traits in my role in state Parliament.

Government members - Hear, hear.

End.