



## Kenneth John Bacon

House of Assembly

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Electorate: Lyons

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**Mr KEN BACON (Lyons - Inaugural )** - In opening I must say that it is a great pleasure as well as an honour to be able to speak for the first time as a member of this House. I would like to congratulate all of my elected colleagues and thank sincerely the small group of close friends who worked extremely hard during my campaign with me, in particular members of my family, my three daughters, Tabatha, Terri and Lisa and my wife Lynn, who was there throughout the campaign ensuring that I received that extra encouragement and support when I most needed it. As you all would know it gets very daunting out there the first time on an election campaign. I am sure that I am no different to anybody else in the House in that if you do not have the support of the ones closest to you then it is almost impossible to keep up with the demands placed upon one as a member of parliament or any organisation which is dedicated to oversee and protect the interests of the people of Tasmania.

I would also like to place on record my gratitude and the thanks to the people in the electorate of Lyons who helped me and those who voted for me and who are responsible for my now being a member of this House. I take that responsibility seriously and hope that they will not be disappointed in my performance during this term of office. And, of course, I should thank those people who the media would have you believe were not really sure of which piece of 'Bacon' they were buying when they gave their vote and along with those people I really have to thank the person who authorised the union smear campaign. Even though at the time it had a devastating effect on my family members, including my elderly mother and father, I have to say thank you because I certainly could never have afforded that type of media exposure on TV and it was the one area in which my campaign was lacking.

*Government members laughing.*

Mr Speaker, when one decides to participate as a candidate in an election for office, be it for parliament or as a secretary of a trade union, one has certain expectations relating to that position and in most cases as in mine people are obviously driven by the belief that they have something of value to contribute and particular directions they wish to pursue in order to achieve the results and goals they aspire to. In my case I am proud to say that I have dedicated the past sixteen years of my life to helping hundreds of Tasmanians in their time of need or financial difficulty. In many cases it has been the family home or car that I have been able to save as well as ensuring that the family involved has been able to continue to put food on their table each week and stay together as a family unit. Much of that heartache and frustration is never seen by the decision makers whether it be in government or some other institution.

Mr Green made reference to the Burnie dispute. I was there too for three months and let me tell you it is a humiliating experience to be locked away in gaol for trying to protect the rights of Tasmanian workers to bargain collectively. Having been born in the State, just across the way, whichever way it is - in fact in Battery Point – I have to say I am passionate about Tasmania and even more passionate about the protection and wellbeing of its people.

For that reason, before I embark upon a certain direction or embrace a new idea or policy, I ask myself a number of questions, or one could say put in place certain principles, the first being: have I communicated openly, not selectively, with all the people that will be affected? Have I addressed the social justice issues involved? Is this direction or new idea simply changed for the sake of change? And last but not least, is it good for our island State of Tasmania and more importantly is it good for the people of Tasmania?

I am not naive enough to believe that everything is so simplistic and that those principles will if applied solve every problem we have. However, when one lives in an island State as unique and beautiful as Tasmania, one must address and consider our island status in every decision we make. I believe in recent times these fundamental principles have been ignored and that is why we now have had a change of government.

We are having difficulty in Tasmania keeping families together and living in Tasmania. I know personally of 25 truck owner-operators who have been forced to leave their families in Tasmania and are now operating on the mainland. That is not acceptable and it has happened because we cannot provide enough jobs or work in Tasmania, particularly for our children and equally for those persons who have been made redundant in recent times or have lost their employment for whatever reason.

Although there has been some success in attracting new businesses to Tasmania we need to attract more new business ventures to our State, but in doing so to ensure that both the large and small Tasmanian businesses prosper and expand. I would suggest that we will not improve these situations unless we in the first instance address the basics, the issues which are hindering small businesses in this State, which are a barrier to ongoing confidence and business growth.

Small businesses, many of which are owned by Tasmania companies, I believe employ the majority of people in the State of Tasmania and those persons and the people they employ contribute substantially to our economy. The fact is if they do not earn money they do not spend money. So what protection and guarantees can be given to our small Tasmanian owned businesses and what assistance can we give them? We can simplify complicated procedures and abolish a lot of the costly red tape which continually confronts them and which is becoming more and more a barrier to employment opportunities. We can ensure the scales of justice are balanced and that the large employers in Tasmania who are here only to capitalise on the many resources we have treat our Tasmanian companies

fairly by way of introducing fair and just contractual arrangements which will enable them to pay their employees a reasonable wage; enable them to replace their equipment and keep pace with new technology; give them the incentive to be innovative and the confidence to grow their business and expand their interests.

We can ensure that the Tasmanian businesses receive a fair share of the available work in our State and that we the Government play a responsible role in that we do not with a population of 417 000 people - I think that is declining of course - overservice particular sections of our industry to the disadvantage of the people who have chosen to live in our State and provide the many necessary services we need.

We can stop attempting to deregulate almost every industry in sight and give that work away to others under the guise of fair competition. It is no wonder there is no confidence and small businesses are going bankrupt or selling up and leaving the State. But that is not to say that we do not need reform and competition. There is nothing wrong with competition as long as it is fair and built on a sound structure and employers are not forced to operate at less than reasonable industry standards which in the end have a negative effect on our economy.

The current tendering system which has crept into our State over the past four years driven by the TCCI, the woodchip companies, and now being embraced by our own Forestry Corporation, is destroying the livelihood of our many small business operators in transport. It has no base structure and it is a system which pits operator against operator on a daily basis until the rate of return for the capital outlay - which can be up to \$300 000 per truck and trailer - is so ridiculously low that the operators cannot even afford preventive maintenance, let alone repair serious structural damage.

When truck operators cannot afford new tyres and they are adjusting brakes right out to the last degree and are forced to put in many more hours than they should have to on our roads because of the low rates, then our public road users have a serious problem. A recent survey carried out in Tasmania by government authorities showed that more than 50 per cent of trailers were suffering from serious structural damage and were in need of urgent repair and a high percentage of truck chassis were the same.

We only have to look at the quality and standard of vehicles on our roads and unsafe configurations that are appearing since the attempt was made last year to relax transport regulations and make safety requirements and accreditation voluntary or self-regulated rather than mandatory.

Mr Speaker, this is not the type of competition we need in Tasmania. It is unfair, not fair. Let us not forget that every large truck owned by a Tasmanian supports an average of five persons, when one takes into account the immediate family, the people reliant on you and second-hand truck sales, the people who sell and fit tyres, the mechanics who do the repairs and

maintenance, the garage attendant who serves the fuel, the kid in the grocery shop - and the list goes on and on, particularly in their local community.

We must tap into the abundance of skills and talent that we have in Tasmania and encourage those persons to come forward and play an active role in our society and not place barriers and unnecessary cost structures in their way. For too long now directives and policies emanating from government ranks seem to be based around expensive mainland consultants. These consultants obtain their experience and so-called wisdom from everywhere other than from the people who know first-hand what it is like to live, invest and work in our island State. Those consultants, it would seem, are still blindly pursuing the deregulation and privatisation policies that have ultimately failed governments elsewhere in the world. It is time, I believe, that we finally and decisively put the failed principles of Thatcherism to bed and move on into and beyond the year 2000 with the support of the Tasmanian people. The only effective way we can do that is by developing a proper consultative process involving Tasmanians and ensuring that they are listened to and that they play an active role in the decision-making process.

Of course, Mr Speaker, there are many other extremely important issues beside the ones I have raised that need to be addressed and resolved. We all know that the world simply just does not revolve around trucks, small business and contractual arrangements, as I was continually informed when I was campaigning. Tasmanians living in the electorate of Lyons are most concerned about the lack of adequate numbers of law enforcement officers and the lack of adequate medical, hospital and education facilities, not to mention in some areas the lack of such basic services as banking and transport facilities. They are concerned that the younger members of their families are being forced to move into the cities or in some cases to the mainland. This is because of the lack of job opportunities and many who have jobs do not feel that they have any employment security. And, once again, the lack of confidence can certainly lead to lack of spending and that has a damaging effect on our Tasmanian economy.

The people of Lyons have raised with me their concerns about the drug problems in our schools and on our streets and the presence of homeless people living on the streets. Many of the elderly are frightened. They feel insecure and abandoned by the system and in general morale is at a very low level.

I would like to relate just a brief story, if I may, Mr Speaker. When I was out on the campaign trail I was coming down through Ouse and I knocked on a door and after some considerable time an elderly lady of 62 opened the door, after much rattling and banging around in the house. She explained to me when she got to the door that she was blind and I told her why I was there and apologised for knocking on the door. I asked her why she was left in her home alone and she said that her 64-year-old husband had had to go and get medical supplies for her. I asked her where he had gone to and she said, 'New Norfolk'. That would be well over an hour's drive each way for a 64-year-old man. I do not believe it is acceptable, Mr Speaker, in any aspect of life that

that lady should have been left alone in a house in Ouse where there were inadequate medical facilities.

Mr Speaker, although I have many ideas on how these problems can be addressed I know there is a huge cost involved and I do not profess to have all the answers. However, I am extremely confident that within the ranks of my colleagues in the Labor Party there is enough experience, talent and commitment to enable us as a government to take ideas and thoughts, such as mine, and mould them into delivering solutions, solutions that not only will improve and hopefully resolve these current issues, but through consultation develop mechanisms that will be embraced and supported by the people of Tasmania to resolve problems that arise in the future as well.

Mr Speaker, thank you for your indulgence and thank you to my colleagues in government and members of the Opposition and our Greens member, and I would conclude by again making the comment that it is a pleasure and a honour to be a member of this House representing the people of Lyons.

**Members** - Hear, hear.