

## Inaugural Speech – Adam Brooks MP



Adam Brooks MP

House of Assembly

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### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

**Mr BROOKS** (Braddon - Inaugural) - Madam Deputy Speaker, there seems to be some anticipation about this inaugural speech, but I think back to my younger days where the experience was not quite as good as the anticipation. Whilst I will try my best, it might be the case on this occasion as well.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - Deputy Speaker, it is with great honour that I stand before this House and the people of Tasmania as the member for Braddon. I would like to thank all those who voted for me and to say that I am here to make a positive contribution to the future of Tasmania. This comes with a deep sense of responsibility and a need to continually improve so as to allow our proud State to fully realise its potential.

There are many people who have supported and assisted me in becoming elected. I would especially like to thank my family for their continued support. Without their support I would not be here today and for that I am truly grateful. My dear wife, Mel, who is in this House today, is not just my best friend, she is the one on whom I can always count to be there beside me. She is also the one to remind me where I can improve, the only way wives can. I would not call it nagging; I would call it consistent, constructive feedback.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - I also want to mention my daughters Chelsea and Georgia. Chelsea, who is in her unique teenage transition period, had a prior engagement and unfortunately cannot be here today. We all know that you need to pick your battles and we will just leave that one as is. I will, however, ensure I get a copy of this speech so she can watch it on the weekend and will not miss anything that I say. But Georgia, who is here today, has to sit through half an hour of my talking non-stop. In saying that, though, I should add that parenthood is one of the greatest experiences anyone can have and I am truly proud of both my children.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr BROOKS** - I also want to thank my parents, Roger and Ann, the wonderful Aunty Mary and my in-laws, Lynne and Warwick. I do appreciate everything they do and it is the crucial support of my family that has helped me pursue my goals. In saying that, I understand there are many Tasmanians without families and some who have suffered severe and personal injustices well beyond our own experiences. I am here to represent them as well and I believe if we can offer hope and opportunity then we help them overcome their past and achieve their full potential.

Also I want to thank my friends, some of whom are in the public gallery today alongside my family -or one anyway - and the others are at home or at work watching this online.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - For a change, that is all right.

Deputy Speaker, it is with great embarrassment, though my friends thought it hilarious, that my alleged - and I repeat, alleged - balding head is fairly apparent on TV. Mr Gutwein did not even know he was balding until he saw himself on TV when he first arrived here.

*Members laughing.*

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**Mr BROOKS** - I am hoping, though, that I bring more to the House than live comedy to my mates sitting at home. My campaign team, headed by Leon Perry - my only friend sitting in the Gallery - is committed to see change. I want to thank the team and that included, Leon, James, Cybil, Amanda, Tom, Melski, Yap Yap, Tony, Weedwacka, Jenko and Bigcat. I did have their Christian names in this speech, however, as I am second last in the inaugural speech line-up I thought I should make it more interesting.

Additionally, I wish to thank the hardworking Liberal Party members, the individual branches and volunteers who assisted not just myself but all Liberal candidates. This includes the members and volunteers who continue to support the party after the election.

I know that Tasmania is the greatest State in the greatest country in the world and I am privileged to live here. Unfortunately, though, I left Tasmania in January 1991 to seek adventure in the Royal Australian Navy, mainly because of the limited job opportunities the then Labor-Greens Government was offering on the north-west coast, especially for teenagers. As a 15-year-old, looking at the big picture, I felt my best option was to leave the State. It is our job as elected representatives to do all we can to ensure we do not lose the current generation of young people because of a lack of jobs or a lack of opportunity.

So off I went, Mr Speaker, as a 15-year-old bullet-proof boy, to join the navy and help Australia defend her shores. I soon discovered that I was not quite ready to defend Australia and I had a few years of learning the hard way that the navy was not a totally democratic workplace -

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - However I did learn some key life lessons. Some experiences were great, some were not. I do have warm memories and great friendships, but I also got the odd foot up the backside as you did back then. It is those experiences, though, that have helped to mould me into what I am today. I do wish to clear one matter up, though, and that was the reference made during the election campaign to drunken sailor spending.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - The fine people of the Australian Defence Force and sailors of all persuasions are not a bunch of drunkards who go around making a mess of things, and I have nothing but respect for them. However I did see during my eight-year career in the navy the odd rare drunken sailor and I can assure the House that I have never seen a sailor in such a state spend like some in this House did during the campaign, no matter how drunk they may have appeared to be.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - Suffice to say that when the navy and I parted company, neither party was overly traumatised by the separation. On leaving the navy, I then found myself working in the resources sector. This opportunity allowed me to live in remote towns, work in different places and experience life in the outback. With that and my naval career I have had the opportunity to live in five of Australia's States and travel extensively throughout the world. I still feel Tasmania is the best place to live and bring up a family because we have an enviable culture. The State needs to continue to expand and develop, but not at any cost. We need to protect the culture that makes Tasmania so special.

I have seen the impact of mine closures on towns first-hand and the impact of not having appropriate environmental controls. They are both equally devastating. We need to have long-term sustainability in our industries and that includes ensuring the decisions we make today take into account the long-term outcomes. In saying that we also need to ensure that we allow development opportunities to go ahead and not become bogged down with excessive red tape, overzealous surcharges and opportunistic obstruction.

All of us who serve this Parliament bring experiences from different walks of life and different backgrounds. I hope that the vast range of skills present in this House will take Tasmania forward into the future and allow us, through debate, to make important decisions that will have a positive impact. However, we also need to remember why we were elected. In my view, we are here to provide a better environment and lifestyle for those whom we represent. I am not here for the money or the perks and I am sure no-one in this House is.

I left Tasmania as a 15-year-old apprentice with little or no money seeking adventure and returned around 15 years later, so my kids - one anyway - could experience what I experienced growing up. Both of my parents, who are here today, are loving and caring people. My parents, being public school teachers, were not by any means rich or well-off, but my brother, sister and I were given an enriching childhood, with an emphasis placed on experiences rather than materialism. My public schooling at Meander Primary and Reece High were days I look back on with great fondness, although I am happy to concede I did not enjoy all the experiences while I was there - especially in English classes, when I would regularly question why I would ever need to know anything about public speaking. I probably should have paid attention then.

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*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - My point is that I am nothing special and when I left school all I wanted was a job. I did not go to university or a private school but I left Tasmania for adventure and a better road ahead. Many of my friends left behind had limited options and now many of them no longer live here. We need to make sure this does not happen to this generation and the next. We need to ensure we do not squash their opportunities and we need to provide an environment that encourages thinking, initiative and success and allows them to flourish.

When I returned to Tasmania I did not do so because the Government celebrates business, or continues to push an unsubstantiated, mythical claim of job creation. I returned because this is my home, and because of that I have based my business here. My concern, though, is that while Tasmania is the greatest place to live, it is not the greatest place to do business. Small-business owners in Tasmania are chasing a dream similar to mine. I wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition, Will Hodgman, for giving me the opportunity to develop the small-business portfolio to help the 120 000 employees working in the 40 000 Tasmanian small businesses.

Businesses start for a variety of reasons. I want to let the people in this House know, though, that just because someone has a business, this does not mean they are rich, loaded or evil. There are many small businesses which are supported by the partner or owner working a second job. There are many businesses out there which are facing closure. There are many business owners out there who have put their homes up for security for their dream and are on the verge of losing everything they have. Some will pay a huge price for chasing their dream. Some unfortunately will bear the consequences of the business failure, and tragically think that the only option is to take their own lives. It can happen, unfortunately; I wish it did not, but some see it as the only way out.

In saying that, however, one of the greatest traits Tasmanians have is resilience. Many have stumbled or fallen at their first attempt in business, or even in anything they do, but they have persevered and are now some of the most successful business people whom Tasmania celebrates. But business is about balance; employers need employees, and employees need employers. Many in business regard their employees as assets and treat them accordingly, as they should. It is a shame, though, that some want to return to the days of an 'us against them' mentality, and as long as the collective group wins it does not matter if the business goes bankrupt in the process. Absolutely do workers need protection, rights at work, minimum standards, a safe working environment and a voice, but business also needs the freedom to operate in changing markets and economies. It is about getting on so that everyone prospers, but also about rewarding effort.

The perception amongst some is that all business owners are rich. Obviously some business owners do well and are quite comfortable, but there are a lot who do not. I believe that the Liberal Party has understood small business, their employees and the need for a suitable balance. I am afraid, though, that there will be some in this House who are ideologically opposed to the concept of free enterprise and hate the fact that someone is, dare I say it, successful or, heaven forbid, wants to be successful. Just because someone wants to be successful does not mean they are bad or should be punished. Success should not be something to be ashamed of or embarrassed about in any area. It should be embraced, celebrated and welcomed.

I was fortunate enough to realise the dream many Tasmanians have of starting a small business. My business started on the back of selling pretty much everything I owned, including the family furniture, and putting all I had towards it. I then spent the next two years working away for over 12 hours a day, missing my children's birthdays and Christmas, to make my business work. After a few years I was fortunate enough to have built my small business to a level that allowed me and my family to return to Tasmania. I did, though, continue to work away for the following three years after moving here. Now I do not mention this for recognition. I mention this because there are many out there who have done the same. However, they have not grown their business, have not been paid and in some cases have lost their homes in spite of their best efforts. But some of these will return or have returned, and with their experience have made their dream of owning a viable business a reality. They have employed people and contributed to the economy in many ways.

We need to look after those less fortunate and the ones that need assistance. However, we cannot have these extremely vital social programs or good social security arrangements for those disadvantaged in the community unless we have a healthy economy. A healthy economy cannot exist unless governments free up business conditions to allow drivers of our economy, mainly small business, freedom to operate without stupid, vexatious and onerous regulations that governments love to impose on those who dare to do better for themselves and in return add great benefit to Tasmania. I also feel it is the government's job to set the conditions to allow business to flourish, not necessarily a hand-out but by allowing business owners to get on with what they know best. That is not filling in lengthy forms or being so bogged down by red tape or by the process so that they give up. We need to ensure Tasmania is open for business.

I entered politics for a variety of reasons, one of which was to annoy my father.

*Members laughing.*

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**Mr BROOKS** - However, I am pleased to announce that this reason was really just an added benefit. However, I must admit, as my father is a traditional Labor devotee -

**Government members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr BROOKS** - it is quite funny to see him up there today, proud but still really annoyed that I am not standing for the party opposite. Now, mum wishes I was over there with that lot - the Greens.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - In all seriousness, I have been asked by many why I would want to enter politics. To answer those questions, I want to set out why I ran as a candidate and what I want to achieve whilst I am here.

We need to change the direction we have been heading. It would be a massive understatement to say there could be room for improvement from the raft of issues that have raised their heads in recent years. It is just not good enough. I entered this Parliament because I feel Tasmanians need a government and leadership they can be proud of, one that understands that social policy is very important but it does cost money and that small business and business in general is used to fund all of this. Eventually we become uncompetitive and, as such, businesses close or move out of our State, as we have already seen. This costs jobs and in the end does not help the economy at all. We have the highest payroll tax rate of any State in the country. We seem to think that water, sewerage and land tax costs are an opportunity to rip the heart out of business, without any consequence. The result of this is that we see businesses move or become unviable. We need to set the right conditions. I am not by any means saying that there should be no cost or a free ride for business. Far from it, but we do not have to use it as the instant cash source to prop up governments.

Also, I believe financial restraint and financial responsibility is a non-negotiable must for accountable government. I cannot fathom some of the waste that has gone on. If I or many other business owners ran their businesses like this they would be either bankrupt or possibly in jail - but Mr Morris would let us out.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - I would give him a nudge and say I would not do it again.

We need to change the apparent carefree attitude that is blatantly shown by some when it comes to spending the public's money. There is no money tree and we need to treat the public's money as if it were our own and not waste it on poor policies or ridiculous half-baked projects. There is an all-too-often reference to politicians having their snouts in the trough. I am not mocking this morning's question time, however the consistent reference to put pork-based activities does not help us with the public referring to it.

I was bought up on the belief that a good education is paramount to the building blocks of someone's life. We need to invest today for Tasmania's tomorrow. This does not mean a botched implementation in the rolling out of a suspect or doomed policy. It means ensuring that not just the tools for schools, and facilities and teachers are available but also making sure that core services are available to the education system. It is making sure areas such as child psychologists, IT support, maintenance and learning support initiatives are not just mentioned in some feel-good political speech but are actually delivered to the schools which need them most. A good education gives the next generation a solid start. We need to ensure we do not short-change our children because we will need them to continue to develop, build and innovate this beautiful State with intelligence, integrity and confidence.

Last year I was touched by the tragedy of suicide. Tasmania has the second-highest suicide rate of any State or Territory in Australia and it is so tragic when young people see suicide as the only way out. We need to continue to work, educate, offer hope and a hand up, and to help develop a feeling of self worth to thereby see some light at the end of the long, lonely tunnel. It is a sad day when any Tasmanian takes their life. It has a devastating effect on families, friends and everyone. We need to ensure we provide services in areas such as mental health and develop programs that assist people to nourish their dreams and aspirations. It is about giving people hope, not a feeling of hopeless abandonment. To help me work more closely in this area, this year I will be attending a course designed to help people deal with and understand suicide. This course is one step towards understanding one issue. It is a vital issue and I would ask all members of this House to learn more about an issue that faces or confronts them.

With an ageing population we need to ensure the provision of appropriate health, aged and respite care. I understand there are some blurred boundary lines between Federal and State responsibilities, however this is no reason to ignore our obligations. Health is an area that affects us all and we will all need some sort of care in our lives, some more than others. The people of Tasmania deserve adequate and world-standard health care. Now all we have to do is deliver it. It was, though, refreshing to hear the announcement by the Health

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minister on Tuesday about the Orana Respite Centre. It was the right thing to do and I am pleased that it only took the Government 45 minutes to accept my motion and agree to my suggestion.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - Additionally, preventive health is the key to reducing the weight on our health system. I know I mentioned weight there and, yes, I accept I probably need to lose a few kilos - all right, probably more than a few. I am happy to talk about this because I know there are a lot of people who struggle with their weight, like me. The experts say it is all about a balanced diet and regular exercise. Yes, I admit it, I love food, especially the food I probably should not have - and, Mr Speaker, afternoon teas like the one on Tuesday do not help!

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - I am not by any means throwing stones at glass houses, but we all need regular exercise - myself included - and we need to get on with an exercise regime sooner rather than later. I was thinking for my regime I need to do something, but probably not bike riding with the Premier. Nothing personal, David, but I think you already have your biking buddy. I could do the Burnie 10 with Will, but I think he looks a bit fit and buff to me. So I was thinking I could do a walk, but not with my friends from the Tassie Hawks anymore - but I have their tie on, so we will be right.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - We understand the Hawks are not there for photo opportunities. But all jokes aside, we need to be active. I mentioned this in my speech because, yes, I need to be active as well and if someone wants to go walking, if they have a group and want an extra, I am happy to tag along. No Hawks, of course, but I will be there. My point to this is that it has to start somewhere and while I am not saying I am the master of all things starting with exercise, far from it, I do know how people feel if they are carrying some extra weight and it has to start some time, so why not today?

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr BROOKS** - Some in this House may be aware that I am actively involved in surf lifesaving. For those who are worried, whilst I still do patrol the beaches of Port Sorell and Hawley, I wear shorts, not budgie smugglers.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - I reckon it is kinder to the other beach users.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - In saying that, when I sunbake people throw a bucket of water over me and say, 'Don't worry mate, we'll get you back out there'.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - Surf lifesaving is one organisation that not only provides a healthy environment that teaches safe practice but it also saves lives every year on Tasmanian beaches. I would compel all Tasmanians to be aware in the surf and to teach their kids surf safety. In saying that, it was great to see that all sides of this House recognise the crucial role surf lifesaving plays in Tasmania with the announcement of significant packages for surf lifesaving infrastructure improvement. I would like to see this funding provided as soon as possible, as some clubs are in dire need of improved facilities and there are many surf lifesavers out there looking forward to these funds helping the clubs.

As a club president, I can say that all clubs appreciate the support from all parties. I also want to add that there are many volunteer and charity organisations throughout Tasmania and if it were not for the volunteers and organisers there would be many who miss out on help, support and facilities. I would like to encourage anyone to be involved in volunteering for something. It is one of the most rewarding activities someone can partake in and I feel we as elected members need to talk about the great things people do.

Tasmania relies strongly on its rural and agricultural sectors. We have great branding, fantastic products and within my own electorate we have an incredible rural and farming community. I mention this because we need to invest in tomorrow's farmers. We need to figure out what additional education they need. I would like to see work towards an agricultural-based high school within Braddon that specialises in quality education geared towards future farmers and best farming practice. It is areas like this where we need to be working towards a

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positive outcome, so that the farmer has the necessary tools and support to compete and remain viable into the future. This is one opportunity I feel we must invest in.

Our farmers also need help. We have a market that can produce world-class produce. We need to ensure we help brand and market these products, but we also need to protect the future of farming by making sure our producers do not just get the recognition they deserve but also the support they need. Each farm investment, crop sector and industry is different with different needs, but one thing is constant, and that is if we do not look after the agricultural industry then we will lose considerably more than a few carrots or cows.

Mr Speaker, Tasmania has unique benefits that allow us to maintain a competitive advantage over other regions, not just from an agricultural and rural point of view, but our renewable energy sources allow us to position ourselves as a quality market leader in this field. We need to harbour and promote our ability to develop industries such as wind, geothermal, hydro, wave and alternative energy power supplies and energy sources. Tasmania can use our highly-regarded employees and innovative businesses to continue to develop these key initiatives and help propel us to the forefront of these exciting new industries. We need to ensure that we support new frontiers in energy production and harness all of the available power sources within our fine State.

Our resources sector is in need of help. We will no doubt continue to debate the forestry and mining industries at great length. I will say, though, that both of these sectors are vital to Tasmania and Tasmanian jobs. We have seen lively discussion in the House and I look forward to adding my experience from working as an employee in mining and then later as a service contractor for the mining and manufacturing industries. As previously stated, we all bring differing experiences to the table and I am happy to assist the Parliament with my knowledge from these industries.

We have seen many inventions and initiatives come out of Tasmania from students, employees, the unemployed, businesses and inventors. It has been leaders of science and technology and those tinkering in the lounge rooms and sheds of Tasmania who have helped move us into unknown territories. We need to ensure, though, that these ideas are protected and those who are inventors have their work protected. Most do not have a suite of corporate lawyers or a platoon of government advisers at their disposal so we need to ensure our patent system is simple, legally watertight and that the relevant information is readily available.

Tasmania has been propelled into international markets because of outside-the-square thinking and people believing in their skills. We need to ensure we assist this asset and allow those with an invention the knowledge that the Government will support their legal rights. It is inventors like Chris Trewins, a constituent in Braddon, whose light-fitting replacement invention is up for a national award and a finalist in the *New Inventors* program. A local Tasmanian identified a solution and created it. There are many similar success stories and we need to ensure we continue with initiatives to support the development, marketing and export of these types of creations.

Hospitality is one of the greatest assets we have and I thank Will Hodgman for the privilege to be asked to be responsible for the shadow portfolio. There are opportunities for growth in the hospitality industry and, in conjunction with the tourism sector, providers can work together. In saying that, however, not all within the hospitality industry will benefit from the tourism platform. It is those businesses and employees that need help as well. It is about reducing red tape and offering better career options. We need to develop career paths, encourage long-term job prospects and work with the industry to identify training outcomes. I feel that if we can continue to support and assist those in the industry we can give them more career options. I would also like to work with the industry experts to see a long-term strategic plan developed for the hospitality industry. It is initiatives within hospitality that will again support the economy and support tourism.

Mr Speaker, you have heard me say that I believe Tasmania is the greatest place in the world and I really believe that. This is why I believe we should always be looking at new ways to promote our unique strengths to the entire world. Tourism, in my opinion, is one of Tasmania's greatest underexploited assets. In a world that is continually becoming easier to reach through various forms of marketing, travel and communications, the unique aspect of the Tasmanian tourism experience has so much still to offer. It is our role here to make sure that everything we do helps to protect our tourism asset. This involves protecting some key areas of our natural State and developing others.

We need to encourage tourism operators who want to invest here and we need to ensure we have skilled people to work within the sector. We have the best food, landscape and climate, yet we only spend minimally on tourism. The Tourism 21 plan is a good start. However, we need to work with other key partners to ensure we deliver strong tourism and investment growth.

Mr Speaker, the racing industry is an integral part of Tasmania, sporting and leisure make-up.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. I just let members know - and it would not come as any surprise to him - that the member approached me earlier today and said, 'Brother, I am going to go longer than 30 minutes.' As his father and mother have lived in my electorate most of the time, I am sure I can allow it to happen.



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**Mr BROOKS** - And voted for you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Absolutely.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr Bartlett** - So I don't have to move to extend.

**Mr SPEAKER** - No, the deal has been done.

*Members laughing.*

**Mr BROOKS** - I will hasten, Mr Speaker. The racing industry is vital, and I will add to this over the next few days in my statements on the racing industry. I do, though, want to briefly touch on veterans affairs. As an ex-serviceman myself I have enjoyed many discussions with veterans, and their personal gift and loss to this country is something we must never take for granted or forget. A very recent reminder of the price paid by some was the loss of Darren Smith and Jacob Moerland, who were killed this week serving Australia in Afghanistan. We cannot forget that there are many still in harm's way. We also need to protect and remember Generation X and Y servicemen who have also seen conflict, bled and died for Australia. It is important their acts are recorded, respected and not forgotten. This recognition is not intended to gloss over our World War II, Vietnam or other veterans, but it is important we ensure all are included. I also feel we need to look after those veterans because if it were not for the sacrifices they have made then we may not have the freedoms afforded us by the democracy we live by. It is this democracy, provided to us by the freedom we enjoy, that makes Australia and Tasmania the greatest place to be. It is the freedom of individuals to make their life choices as they see fit, and the freedom of enterprise which allows business to flourish and people to live a life that gives them true quality. We must protect the freedom and we must make sure we deliver the outcomes Tasmanians deserve. Key areas like health, education, child services, law and order and employment are all keys to improving people's lives. There are many more issues not contained within this speech. However, this does not diminish their importance.

I am here today as an elected member of Parliament to represent the people. This is something that humbles me. I am here by the will of the people. That is something I do not take for granted and I fully understand that the people who put me here can also remove me if I do not deliver. Whilst I have been fortunate to experience failure, success, triumph and setbacks, I have always had the gift of hope, ambition and a positive attitude. I do, though, know that not everyone has these advantages, and we have to offer hope to them. We need to retain our young people in Tasmania. How do we do this? We offer them opportunity in a prosperous, fortunate and innovative State where they see their future here, not interstate. We build ambition into them by allowing them to see how high they can fly. We lead them towards a positive attitude by allowing them to develop through encouragement. We have the resources, people and the expertise to do anything we set our minds to, but the people and our youth need leadership and it is up to all of us to provide that.

We can argue back and forth and we can score political points all day long. I am one of the new kids on the block, and I also know that Tasmanians need more from us. They need honesty, integrity and openness. They want to see a direction that allows investment, looks after our people, improves services, protects our State and environment, delivers jobs, encourages success and promotes free enterprise. The people of Tasmania elected us to deliver this, and my agenda whilst I am here is to do my best to deliver what Tasmanians expect and deserve.

**Members** - Hear, hear