



Nic Street MP

House of Assembly

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Electorate: Franklin

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**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Inaugural) - Madam Speaker, I rise to give my inaugural speech today, knowing it is an extraordinary honour to be elected as a member of this place and that I join an exclusive group as the 776th individual to have served the people of Tasmania in this Parliament. My younger brother, comedian that he thinks he is, wanted to know if I received a cap with my number sewn on it like test cricketers. I believe that is not the case.

I have read a large number of maiden speeches delivered in this place in preparation for today. Before being elected I was working with the now Minister for Mining, Racing, and Building and Construction, Adam Brooks. I can assure the House my contribution will not be nearly as funny as his but I can also tell you it will not take up nearly as much of your time.

The first person I would like to acknowledge today is my predecessor, Paul Harriss. Paul gave 20 years service to the Parliament of Tasmania, along with 13 years service to the Huon Valley Council before entering Parliament. Paul is a kind and generous man and, regardless of ideology, I believe he has served the people of Tasmania faithfully and in dedication to his long-held beliefs. I wish him well in his retirement and I know his family are very much looking forward to having their father and grandfather available to them free of his political responsibilities.

I thank the staff and my former colleagues at Kingborough Council. The last four years have been a steep learning curve and I would like to thank them all for their patience and help over that time. I disagreed with all my fellow councillors at some stage but at different times I found myself supporting each of their points of view as well. The respect that currently exists between the councillors at Kingborough is as good now as it ever was in my four years there. I wish them well in their future decision making and I will be keeping a close eye on them as I am still a ratepayer in the municipality.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my new Liberal colleagues for their support and congratulations since the recount was decided. I would also like to particularly acknowledge my Franklin colleagues, Premier Will Hodgman and Minister Petrusma, along with Paul Harriss and Sue Bastone who were also Liberal candidates in Franklin in 2014. The Hare-Clark system is the most brutal system of election possible for party unity but we were able to work through the campaign for the betterment of the party in Franklin and I now consider them all friends as well as colleagues.

None of us get here without a great deal of support and assistance. I would like to thank my brothers, Christian and Lincoln, along with Tim, Lizzie, Bec and Clare, who helped run my campaign. Their time and dedication to help achieve my goal will always be greatly appreciated, as is the support from a number of other family and friends who volunteered their time and lawns and fences for the ever-present signs that are necessary. I would also like to thank the members of the Liberal Party who supported me personally, and also the party's campaign in 2014. We are a strong party at the grassroots level in Tasmania and it is great to see.

I have already mentioned my younger brothers, Christian and Lincoln, and I thank my sister, Lauren, for her support and friendship. She cannot be here today but I believe she is currently bludging on Coca Cola's time in Melbourne watching this, as unfortunately are a number of my friends in workplaces across the city. Along with mum and dad, who I will speak about shortly, my siblings are the most important people in my life. My grandparents had 24 siblings between them so a large and close family has always been a part of my life and always will be. I will not name all my grandparent's siblings but I would like to mention mum's sisters, Christine and Susan, and my uncles Garry and Byron, and dad's brothers, Glen, Ian and Steven and his sister Leanne, along with aunts Vicky and Enid because they have all played a role in me being here today.

It is often said society grows better when citizens work hard to provide more for their children than they received. It is an admirable aim but if I have children in the future the best I can hope to provide is an equal foundation to the one I was given. My mother and father's values and work ethic are without peer as far as I am concerned, as is their love and support. They will both hate I have mentioned them at all but I will say I am going to be forever in their debt for everything they have done for me.

The last family member I need to thank today is my nan. She is the only surviving grandparent but I am so glad she is here today to hear this speech. She is an extraordinary lady who is adored by her 14 grandchildren and

19 great-grandchildren and she is as much a friend as she is a grandparent to all of us. Nan is also the only Liberal voter out of my four grandparents and she has lived the healthiest and longest life. You can make of that whatever you will.

I am sure all of us enter this place with grandiose ideas of what we wish to achieve. For at least the next two years there will be plenty of opportunities to speak and contribute to the debates of this place. I do not intend to list every issue that is important to me but I do think that today is an opportunity to at least outline some of the fundamental beliefs that have shaped my Liberalism.

I have a belief in the power and importance of the family unit. I have spoken about the importance of my own family and I believe that a solid family unit is critical in raising children who will contribute to the positive progression of our society. I also believe that families come in all shapes, sizes and orientations and that love, support and strong values are the corner stones of family life. As someone once said to me, family is defined by those inside it not by people external to it.

After a number of years in small business I have a belief in entrepreneurship as the basis of a successful and expanding economy. We must promote innovation and hard work as the fundamentals of success and the role of government should be to put the appropriate policies and settings in place and then get out of the way. We will never legislate or regulate our way to prosperity nor can government be the solution to every problem or ill that occurs. It seems to me that there is a worrying tendency towards legislating away personal responsibility. An idea that everything must be someone else's fault, normally the government. If the government gets the fundamentals correct and cares and protects those who are unable to do so for themselves then I believe that government is fulfilling the role to which it is best suited.

After spending more than 11 years running the family business at Blackman's Bay there are other values and experiences that you take away from that time. The one that stays with me the most is that external view of the community and the truth of what is actually happening are often a long way apart. For better or worse I have lived a fairly privileged life. I was educated in the Catholic system, then I went to university and then into the family business. What I saw in my 11 years at Bayview Grocer was that while Kingston and Blackman's Bay and their surrounds are externally viewed as affluent suburbs, there is still a level of struggle and basic existence from day to day that occurs. It often sits just below the surface. For better or worse we generally socialise and mix with like-minded people. For 11 years work took me out of my comfort zone in terms of who I dealt with and I am undoubtedly better for it.

Those in our community struggling to exist are looking for hope and leadership from their political leadership, not pointless arguments or minutia. The most enjoyment I received from my time on council was when we were able to make a decision or implement a process that made people's lives just a touch easier. It may sound trite but that is why I wanted to be a member of parliament; to deliver results for the people that have placed their trust in all of us. I am pleased to be a part of a Government that is working hard to do exactly that, but I also recognise that those opposite are working for the same outcome just with differing approaches and priorities.

I believe in the federal system of government with the division of powers between the states and the Commonwealth. In many areas of responsibility decisions are best made at the local level both in state and local government. After four years at Kingborough Council I am convinced now more than ever that there are too many locals making too many decisions. I believe there are opportunities to reduce the number of local jurisdictions in Tasmania without reducing the value of local representation which many feel is the critical function of local government. I also believe that this change needs to be initiated by local government itself and that the studies that are about to take place in the south of the state are a productive way to start this conversation.

As a brief aside, having sworn a note to Her Majesty last Tuesday in this place, I am not sure whether I should mention, but I am going to, that I hope I am in this place long enough to see new members take an oath or affirmation to a head of state born in Australia rather than from the hereditary line of a foreign family, no matter how high the esteem in which others may hold that individual.

I believe in the value of multiculturalism to Australia and Tasmania. I am firmly of the belief that we are a better society because of the contribution that migrants have made in the past and will make in the future. Now more than ever, as there is a race across the world to the bottom by appealing to some people's base fears and prejudices about immigrants, we need as an entire country to be better than that. Once all appropriate checks have been put in place and carried out, surely welcoming those who are looking for a better life in Australia and Tasmania is a position that we can all agree on.

One of the great ironies for me in the multiculturalism debate in Australia is that many of the people who most fear the effects of multiculturalism are also those who are least likely to recognise that what they fear happening to Australia now is the exact condition that was afflicted upon the indigenous people of Australia 230 years ago. There was a systematic attempt at genocide of an entire civilisation in this country that thankfully was unsuccessful but did indeed occur and caused lasting damage.

In this state we are now in the process of resetting the Government's relationship with our indigenous people. Hopefully the process is so successful that we eventually end up in a place where we do not talk about a relationship but simply a mutual recognition, a respect and an existence. We will all be better as a society if this occurs. The dual naming of some of our prominent natural assets is a small but important step on the journey.

As Tasmania continues to grow and change, it is the responsibility of every person in this place to be an advocate for Tasmania. In Tasmania's future I want to see an end to the north-south divide that has plagued so many areas of our public consciousness for far too long. We truly are stronger together rather than divided, as we so often find ourselves. It may seem an issue of insignificant consequence to some, but as a lifelong believer in the power of sport as something that runs through the fabric of communities and brings people together from all walks of life, I hope for the day when our state will barrack for the same AFL side, both a men's team and a women's team running onto York Park and Bellerive Oval in green, red and gold.

Tasmania can only improve and grow if we are able to provide opportunities for all who wish to live here. For too long there was a drain on our human capital to the mainland, not because people wanted to leave, but because they had to. A number of factors have halted this trend to a certain degree and that is obviously a positive. However, our lifestyle and quality of life will not be enough if we do not continue to grow and provide employment opportunities. An economy that is diversified and capitalises on our competitive advantages in tourism, agriculture, aquaculture, advanced manufacturing, resources and education can provide the opportunities that we need to take our state forward. I look forward to being a part of promoting these sectors and others.

Madam Speaker, I have never lived anywhere but Tasmania, specifically in Kingborough. This may lead some to criticise me for not ever expanding my horizons, but the truth of the matter is that I have never wanted to live anywhere else and I do not think I ever will. I love living near the coast, within an hour of Adventure Bay on Bruny Island, my favourite spot in the world to relax. I love being only a relatively short distance from areas as diverse as Queenstown, Coles Bay, Burnie or Bridport. Most of all I love that Tasmania is now being viewed for what it really is, rather than some of the negative stereotypes of the past.

I genuinely love the people of Tasmania and their attitude. Those of us already here know full well that it is the best place in the world to live and work. Whilst in the past we may have been reluctant to take ownership of our pride in this state, that is starting to change too. As more and more people choose to visit Tasmania I have no doubt that many will choose to come back here permanently because what we have on offer is unique. As this trend continues there is a balancing act that has to be achieved between the development and the protection of what attracts people here in the first place. There is no doubt in my mind that we have the ability to achieve this balance now and in the future.

The last issue I would like to talk about today is a personal one. Twelve years ago I was diagnosed as suffering from anxiety and panic disorder. It is a treatable condition and one I now have control over. Along with depression, it is a mental issue that affects a percentage of our population and although we are improving as a society, it is not spoken about openly enough in my opinion. We need to speak about it in the same way we speak about a treatment of an illness such as diabetes. Until we do, people will suffer unnecessarily in silence in a way that far too many people have in the past.

I am not speaking about it today for sympathy or because I want to be treated differently; in fact, to do so would be an insult to me. The hope is that the more people who speak about these issues publicly when they have the opportunity, the more we can break down the stigma attached to them. For me to not speak about it today would have been a wasted opportunity. I would like to commend the work of Beyond Blue and the local organisation Speak Up Stay Chatty, along with every other organisation that is working hard to raise awareness of these issues. I will do whatever I can in the position I now find myself to be an advocate for the work they do.

Madam Speaker, I want to finish today with a statement that may come as a shock to some people in this place, and that is that nobody is perfect. Having the ability to recognise an error of judgment and mistake and apologise is what makes us stronger as individuals. Nobody knows when they enter this place how long they will be here. Regardless of the length of time I am here I hope I am eventually judged on the quality of the contribution I have made.

I would like to finish by thanking those who put political differences aside to welcome me to this place. It is most appreciated not just by me, but also those close to me. I look forward to now being an active and involved member of the House.

**Members** - Hear hear.