



Janie Finlay MP

House of Assembly

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Electorate: Bass

Ms FINLAY (Bass - Inaugural Speech) - Mr Speaker, I am grateful to be here today. I am humbled and honoured.

First, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, the Aboriginal people of Tasmania, for their time on this land and for their nurturing and care, and to acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging.

I acknowledge you, Mr Speaker, in your election to this position. I have, in the last week, observed your nature and your call to order across the House. I wish you well in your term here. I also acknowledge the time spent with my colleagues last week, when you welcomed us warmly into this place, to tour the Chamber, to go to the Museum, to your office and to show my colleagues points of interest in the House. Your approach and your welcome were noted.

As I join this place today, at the end of what has been a 46-year journey in Tasmania, a 21-year journey in community life, the last time I joined a place for the first time, my welcome was not quite the same. It may have been responded to with a 'Girly, young people are not to be seen or heard, so take your place, sit down and be quiet', and other such words. As an adult who has contributed much to Tasmania, it is with great honour that I be here today.

In this, my first speech, I will outline my journey to here and to share what I am hoping my journey forward might be. I will share a little about my sense of arrival and what it was like finding out about the history and traditions, and the expectations of being a member in this House, and how I will do my best to master and respect the traditions of this place.

I will give a brief overview of my love and feeling of Tasmania: what I see, where we are now and what I believe is possible for us in the future. Most importantly and most passionately, I will also provide a picture for Bass, the place I love and choose to call home, where we raised a family and where I have given birth to my boys, and where they make their home now, one of the best corners of the best places in the world.

I will also focus on the areas of responsibility that we each have here, that have been bestowed on me in my role here but also for all of us, no matter what side of the House, the areas of focus we should bring to this place.

I would love to set an expectation of the bold vision, the future and the positive nature that we can bring to Tasmanians, for Tasmanians. Often we are so focused and distracted by what is going on around us that we forget to be bold, to have a big vision and to be passionate and future-focused about what is possible and what the opportunities can be for all Tasmanians.

I will get a bit operational and talk about what people can expected from Janie, the member for Bass, how my office will operate, how we would wish to serve and what people can expect when they are engaged with either me or my office. Then it comes to the bit that sometimes we start on - a reflection on my campaign, thanks for the people who supported me to be here in this place, then I wrap up my time.

How is it that a lady from Launceston, now 46 years of age, finds herself in the Tasmanian Parliament as a proud member for Bass when, growing up, I do not remember one conversation about politics? I do not ever remember conversations about how things worked or why they went on, or us and them, or good or bad, or oppositions or governments. I grew up in a family where we focused on what was good, what was important in pushing ourselves and believing in all the things we could achieve. How is it, then, that I find myself here?

There are two milestone moments in my life that I believe set the pivots for today, the first being when my mum became ill and the second being the welcome I received when I was first in my other place of community service, at the City of Launceston.

I want to give a bit of a picture of Janie growing up and why I am hoping to be a strong contributor to the future of Tasmania, particularly to the community of Bass. Because I have had exposure and the opportunity to learn and many great teachers, either through challenge or through support in a whole range of areas, I consider myself a generalist with a passion for sport, a love of music, a commitment to and deep understanding of the arts, of the cultural strengths of our place.

My dad, as a musician, always expected me to do my best, whether I was playing the piano or the flute, or whatever I was doing. Having someone who pushed you all the time meant that you always sought to do better. When I wake up in the morning, the one thing I ask myself is what I can do today that will make something better. What, at the end of my four-year term, can I look back on and say 'we have made this place better'? I am thankful for the impression my father has left on me of 'you can always do better; there is always something more'.

My mum, an accountant and business manager, always had my back. She was my backbone, my strength, the person who always gave me the message to believe in myself. When you have someone in one ear saying 'you can do anything' and the other person in the other ear saying 'you can do better', it comes in line to be, for me, courageous, to be strong and confident, and to back yourself to always do a little better.

Whether it was through sport - and I have to say I was not sure where to go with this, but this place sometimes looks a little like sport. People maybe jest, they maybe laugh, they maybe think things are funny, where there is a competition. But one of the things I am hoping in my four years here is that, although I love sport and I am seriously competitive, and I potentially have white line fever, I may go to fire too quick. But I am hoping not to do that in this place. I am hoping that instead of being competitive as a team here, we can come together as a team in the best interests of Tasmania.

On my first day when we were sworn in, we attended a service. In that service, I noted the comments of the bishop, which I am going to weave through my contribution

today, where he said perhaps we can lead the nation by a new way of doing things. If we can lead a way where we can work together for the interests of all Tasmania and not just throw off shots across the Chamber, then while we spend our time here we can actually focus on and do as much good as we can for all Tasmanians.

Although I had a short break for raising my children and having a great experience in small business, the last 21 years for me have been in local government. It is a great proving ground and place to develop and learn the cross-section of needs in a community, whether it be in business, whether it be in family. That time has been wonderful for me. My local government colleagues would say it prepares us well for this place. There is also much more to learn but to come here with that background I think is useful.

I am grateful that I can bring some of my experiences on boards. I have been a passionate leader of the Launceston Tornados for a number of years. I thought local government was tricky but then I got into sports administration. Having spent a week in this Chamber I think we can step up that level of trickiness in all of the different chapters that we have in our lives.

Having been involved in sport and music, having been in local government, having had award-winning small businesses with cafes in commercial real estate, one of the things that I wish to bring here is my approach and my general understanding of how a community operates and bring that real experience into the conversations and the exchanges that we bring to this place.

I reflected on the words of the bishop. I have a lot to learn but I think I know that when we are in parliament, the serious and important things happen here. This is where we make the structures and the rules and the laws of Tasmania. There is nothing more important than that. However, it is a small part of the role that we have. Being in, understanding, hearing from and learning about and working with our community is equally if not more important.

I have my children here today; Dave has his children here today. I want to always bring to this place the little message on my shoulder that says you know, we may not have an audience in the room with us but we have the State of Tasmania looking down on us when we are here at work. I hope that we can do that in a positive way. I do not think having attacks across the Chamber befits getting the best results for Tasmanians.

We attended the service on day one when we were sworn in. Before we got to the point where the bishop spoke, the President of the Legislative Council, the honourable Craig Farrell, read Romans 9-18. I want to read it into my speech today because I want to refer to this whether it is every time we come to parliament, or when I am feeling lost and I am not really sure what is important. It says:

Love must be real. Don't go for evil but hold onto what is good. Love each other, give each other honour, do not be lazy, work hard, serve with all your heart.

Heart is really important:

Never be lacking in zeal, but be joyful because we are to have hope. Be patient when trouble comes. Share with people who need, bring strangers into your home. Wish good for those who do bad things to you; wish them well. Be happy with those that are happy and be sad with those who are sad. Live together in peace with each other. Make friends with all. Do not think you are smarter than others, and if someone does you wrong, do not pay them back with wrong, try always to do what is right. Do your best to live in peace with everyone.

It was so important that it was a reading in the service; it was so important that it was the topic of the sermon from the Bishop that it is something that we should all reflect on regularly. I would suggest bringing it to attention to the House from time to time. You can turn up to the service but if you abandon it when you arrive in the place, I do not think that serves anyone well. The bishop went on to explain it by saying that there are so many issues in Tasmania. People today have said of all the economic good that maybe suggested there is so much sadness and so much hurt, so much challenge in our community and people living without. More and more people who are not accustomed to it, living in challenge in our community. We have to do something about that. We have to support people in our community to have the basics of a good life. If we cannot do that here then that is the challenge for our community over time.

The bishop said it is not particularly profound insight to suggest that we will not solve these problems by pretending that one party or another has a monopoly on solutions. He went on to say:

We're going to need to bring our best selves, all of our best selves, all of the collective wisdom and energy of all of our minds, both sides of parliament, both Houses together to tackle these issues.

The creative solutions that we are going to need if we want to make real progress will require all of us to work together. He said:

It is possible that we could do something different here. We could employ this ancient wisdom and lead the nation by a new way of doing things, fuelled by this good.

I sat in that service; it was my first day. I was so excited. I had finally made it after - and people may laugh, but it is true - three attempts at election at different levels. I had arrived. I was sworn in; I went to the service and I thought: 'This is amazing, this is exciting'. I am persistently positive. I am persistently future focused and I want the best and for us to do better all the time but then when I sit here for a week and it is just fun and games, I question whether we could be putting our effort and our energy into doing things better.

For me the Tasmania that I love, that I want to both protect and to support, to thrive for Tasmanian people, our communities, our families, our businesses, our industry; I love both the simplicity and the complexity, the local and the global of Tasmania. I love that you can pitch a tent on a beach in the middle of nowhere with no one else out and you can just have a great time, whether it is on your own or with your families. It is something that we have grown up and we love. A sense of adventure: I think that allows you in a place like this to bring in other thinking and to have exposure to different things. I love that we can do that here in Tasmania.

I also love in Tasmania that you can be in one of the smallest towns in the most remote region and you can take something to the world. There is not anything that is not possible by living in Tasmania. That is the Tasmania that I want to support; the Tasmania that I love to live in and that I will work hard each and every day to ensure is supported to grow and thrive.

However, it is also the Tasmania where just a week ago I was speaking to a group in a local organisation that supports young people and their transition to work and when I asked them at the end of the time that we had together what their challenges were, each of them was struggling to find work at the moment. There was not one person in the room who did not want a job, who did not want to contribute, who did not have something special and unique to offer but they found it difficult to arrive at work on time if it was a trade because the buses did not run early. They found it difficult to secure their provisional licence because they did not have family supporting them for the hours to get up to get that or to go and have the time or the money for petrol in their car.

We have Tasmanians who want to contribute, who have a unique offering to contribute; they can make this place better but there are barriers. That is our role: to ensure that we know the places where we need to stand up and help but equally to know the places where we need to stand back and get out of the way of other people helping. At the opposite end of the scale where there is a young person wanting to work, there are mature, professional, well-experienced people who are running businesses, who are doing things with the opportunity to go national and global and they are finding impediments to value add; they are finding impediments to do better. Again, that is our job. We need to know when to step in and help out and when to stand back and get out of the way.

For Bass, home. I have been really fortunate for most of my life to have contributed in lots of different ways locally and to have served for the City of Launceston. I want to put on record my thanks to all of those people whom I have worked with, served with and who have supported me on my journey to arrive here. It has been the making of me.

My arrival: I mentioned your warm welcome, Mr Speaker, but my arrival there was a little different. I was once physically patted on the head and told that, 'Young people weren't important, it wasn't the focus of local government', and when I understood what it was about with roads, rates and rubbish I should come back and deal with something important. This is where I will have to test myself, when people challenge in a way that is disrespectful or inappropriate, and they seek to undermine or ridicule it is just a red rag to a bull to me. That is where I grow stronger and I just get better.

For me, in this environment, I thank Launceston City Council and the elected members I have worked with. Those who were there in the early days, that I refer to as my apprenticeship of fire, are part of the reason that I am here today.

Over the last couple of years, I had the delight of becoming more acquainted with the members of the West Tamar community through the election for the Rosevears

position in the upper House. I have to say that when you have the State of Tasmania and the electorate of Bass, and then you have the Tamar Valley, it is just one of the most incredible places with the great businesses and the people that are either on farm or in workshop, or the community organisations that are supporting their community.

Just last weekend, a community activity was seeking to raise funds for a playground at Beauty Point - an unfunded playground that the community really wanted - and they said, 'We're going to fund it ourselves'. This community have almost fully funded this playground through trivia nights and cocktail parties. It goes to show that people do not always want us to fix stuff for them. Sometimes they just want the support to be able to go out and do it for themselves. We need to find that balance between doing the things that are important where people need a hand and finding ways to support people to do things for themselves. I think all of the communities of the West Tamar have been incredible and over these next four years I want to get to know more about what is important in West Tamar.

As this election was called quickly, I did not have a lot of time to introduce and intentionally go out and connect with the communities of George Town, Dorset and Flinders Island, but with Dave, my trusty, supportive driver, we clocked up thousands of kilometres across this region over the last couple of months, intentionally going out and meeting people where they would be. In the election campaign, there was a long weekend and for someone who was endorsed not right at the beginning of the campaign, time was short, so visiting all of the pubs, markets, Men's Sheds and the community houses, we met some fantastic locals all around. I commit over this next four years that the way I do things will be to get out into the community and meet people, hear from them and find out what is important, and I will either bring it to this place or through the other work we do in our electorate seek to make things better each and every day.

One of the first ways I am going to do that is that at 46 years of age and having always been a Tasmanian, I have never been to Flinders Island, but in the first week of school holidays we are fixing that and taking my boys over for an adventure and getting to really understand and find out about that place.

To the people of Bass who have elected me here, thank you. I will do everything I can possibly do to work on myself to be a better member and to work for the community, for the community to improve, whether it is for an individual who needs support with something, whether it is support for a family, whether it is support for a small business, whether it is for a world-class industry, I take it as my responsibility each and every day to get to connect with, learn from and act on behalf of everybody who lives in and is an elector of Bass.

I find myself on this side of the House, which is pretty exciting. This all happened very quickly for me and I could not be happier to be the Labor member for Bass, to be here with my colleagues and my team, to have sat through these last couple of weeks and to have experienced the campaign over the last couple of months together. I do not know whether everyone knows this, but I am an only child. There are not many in my family and now I have a family. It really freaked me out and has been a bit overwhelming because everyone is so amazing and kind.

I met Dave first and he has a massive family, so that made it all better. For me, as somebody who has been independent for a very long time and has always done things on my own, to know that there are people out there who care, want to help and want to support, that we could get in and do things together has been extraordinary and I love it. I could not be happier. Thank you to everybody who has helped me get here and find my home and my family on this side of the House.

I have been proudly appointed as parliamentary secretary to support the Leader in the areas of small business start-ups and the northern economy. That is something that I can get to work on straight away. It is a natural area for me to want to go out and support and I am very excited at what I can do in those areas. We have an extraordinary community in northern Tasmania in Bass and I am looking to get to work, not only in Bass but across all Tasmania in those areas.

What I would like to do now is put on the record a little bit about what people can expect in the operations of my office and myself as a member. I want to put on the record my thanks to Adam Barnett, who has supported me in the first four weeks of my term here, and to welcome Sarah Dickson to the crazy world of Janie Finlay, who has been recently appointed as my electorate officer. Just in the last week and a half she has excelled herself and makes me feel exceptionally comfortable that together we will be able to do great things, and for that I am grateful.

As I said, when you have someone who believes in you and pushes you really hard, you just know that there is no option than to seek to do better and be your best. I will work every day through our office to engage with and support community who needs it in the best way that we can. We will set standards of excellence for the way we operate and engage across our community and support the people in our community. I have committed to ensure that everything we do is the right, not the easy thing and that we will always operate with courage. We will always have empathy for the needs of people in our community and, for me personally, clearly, three campaigns down with masses of tenacity, there is no option ever to give up. To anyone in the community listening or watching us at any time, if it does not work once, you just figure out how to do it better and have another go. That has always been my approach to these things.

I want to now reflect a little on my campaign and the people who supported me to get here. To my dad and Dave, thank you so much for being there with me each and every day. It has been a long run. It has not always been easy. We have been going 24/7 for nearly three years to arrive here and I just want to say thank you. Dad, you have obviously been with me all the way through. It has been an incredible thing. You have taken that road with me and I could not have done it without you, so thank you.

Dave, with you and your boys out there always supporting me, thank you so much. To my boys, Zac and Augustine, you are my why; you are the reason I am here and the reason I push hard in the community. I know that sometimes that means I am not always around, but I love you dearly and if I can serve in a way that you are proud of, then I know I am doing a good thing. To my mum, who always believed in me, who is always with me and on my shoulder, whatever crazy idea I came up with she said just go for it, so whenever I question whether I can or should do something and I am not really sure, I probably will not do it as well as dad wanted but I know that I will

give it a crack and will do it better the next time, mum would be there saying, 'You've just got to do it, it will be okay'.

To all the Labor members, volunteers and everyone who came out and supported me, thank you very much. There are three people I would like to particularly thank. When I put my hand up and was endorsed as a candidate, Rod Scott, Ian Pattie and Fay Gervasoni, you guys were incredible. I could not have navigated or interpreted the world of the Labor Party without people there every day on the phone by my side. They doorknocked beside me all day, every day. I just want to say that you have made this transition for me so possible. I have the boys in the background who helped me out, Toby and Julian. There is not one person who has contributed without whom I could not be here, but to Toby and Julian, this will make sense to others at some point, but I did it.

I love to genuinely and realistically connect with people on the ground at the grassroots face-to-face. I am a face-to-face person. I am a speaker, not a writer. I prefer to walk down the corridor and speak to someone rather than pick up the phone. In meeting in community and being out with community, that is what I love, whether it is on a farm, in a workshop or in a café, just connecting with people is how I like to do it. Equally, I have acknowledged the power of social media and the benefit of being able to connect with more people I can physically or possibly connect with them, so Toby and Julian, thank you so much for making that possible to me.

In closing, Mr Speaker, I am really proud and honoured to be here to represent the people of Bass. I will not always do things the way everyone else does, and I may have expectations that we can do things that maybe we cannot, but I will not allow myself to not persist in attempting to always strive for excellence and do the very best we can. I will always bring myself to account and ask myself the question the bishop laid with us on day one: is it possible that we can lead the nation by doing things in a new way - being positive, finding the good, not allowing it to get negative, not being tricky and finding it as a competition, but rather by working as a team together in the best interests of our communities, in the best interests of our industries, in order that, as Labor says, we can be the equal of the nation, the equal of the world?

Why not, in Tasmania, can we not be the best? Why not in Tasmania can everyone not have a place to call home? Why not in Tasmania cannot everyone feel safe and loved and connected?

These are my things, while I am here in this place for the next four years, that I am going to strive for on behalf of all Tasmanians and the people of Bass.

I look forward to working with my team, and I am grateful for the support. I look forward to working with everybody, both here in the lower House and in the upper House.

As I take my seat I want to say thank you to everyone who helped me to be here, to everyone who will help me stay here, and to everyone who will bring to my attention the areas I can do better, and to everyone who will always have my back and say that you can do it.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.