



Jane Howlett MLC

Legislative Council

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Electorate: Prosser

Ms HOWLETT (Prosser) - Mr President, it is a great honour and privilege to be elected as the inaugural member for Prosser. As I stand here in this historic Chamber, I am reminded of the significant responsibility entrusted to me and I pledge to work tirelessly to the best of my ability for the benefit of the people of Prosser and our great state. Few people get the opportunity to influence the lives of 520 000 Tasmanians in the way we, as members of parliament, do. The Legislative Council of Tasmania has a long and proud history of delivering for Tasmanians, and I look forward to working with colleagues for the benefit of Tasmania and, more specifically, the people of Prosser.

Mr President, I thank you, the Leader and fellow members for your warm welcome and support upon my election. I also acknowledge the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Nicole Muller and all the staff of the Legislative Council for their professionalism and patience as I have been introduced to the procedures and practices of this Chamber, allowing me to hit the road running in serving the needs of the people in Prosser.

Prosser is a large rural electorate spanning over 8500 square kilometres; it captures the Midlands, east and south-east of our beautiful state. I acknowledge the first inhabitants of our land, the palawa, their Elders past and present, for whom, thousands of years before European settlement, Prosser was home. Prosser's largest population centres are Brighton, Sorell and the southern beaches; its other major centres include Bagdad, Bicheno, Campbell Town, Swansea, Triabunna, Nubeena and Oatlands. The seat is named after the Prosser River, which flows through the centre of the division. Prosser has 22 500 constituents. Much of Prosser has been formed from Rumney and Apsley, with the remainder from the Western Tiers and Brighton areas. The seat encompasses the Glamorgan-Spring Bay and Tasman council areas, and incorporates large parts of the Brighton, Sorell, Northern Midlands and Southern Midlands councils. While some of my colleagues may justifiably call me biased, I believe I represent the best and most beautiful electorate of the 15 Legislative Council divisions.

Prosser is a broad electorate with diverse needs. Its primary industries consist of farming, fishing, forestry and vibrant urban centres. It also has very large tourism, racing, winemaking and spirit-making industries. We have Port Arthur, the most visited destination in Tasmania. We have Freycinet National Park, Wineglass Bay and the multi-award winning Saffire Freycinet. We have businesses such as the McHenry Distillery in Port Arthur, named as producing Australia's finest gin by *Australian Gourmet Traveller* in 2016. We also have very fine offerings at Redlands Estate in Kempton.

Prosser is home to three of Tasmania's finest authors - Nicholas Shakespeare, Rachael Treasure and Alice Hansen. Alice is building a house in Prosser, and it will soon be showcased globally on *Grand Designs*. Koonya is home to the annual garlic

festival, a unique food experience that celebrates all things garlic. The Falls Festival in Marion Bay and the iconic Freycinet Challenge are hosted in Prosser.

The community is equally diverse. We have farming families that have lived in Prosser for generations. In Sorell and Brighton, two of the fastest growing areas in Prosser, we have young families that have moved to Prosser for the fantastic lifestyle it offers. We also have people that have recently moved to Prosser from interstate and overseas. My vision is to see Prosser continue to grow, for its industries and businesses intrastate to become the most prosperous in the nation, and for our lifestyle to remain the envy of the world.

I was educated at Campania District High School, and I spent much of my youth working on the farm with my father. If I were not on the farm driving machinery, I was travelling around our state competing in equestrian events accompanied by an extremely dedicated and supportive mother. My parents have played, and continue to play, an important role in my life. It would be fair to say they have provided me with a solid grounding of what it truly is to give back to one's community.

My father, Colin Howlett, served as a long-term and dedicated mayor of the Southern Midlands Council. Most evenings, around the dinner table, conversations would invariably turn into the goings-on of the council and community issues and concerns. My Dad's passion for his community was the inspiration for my own political ambitions. Leaving school after completing year 10, I commenced and completed a trade certificate in hairdressing. At the age of 20, I built my first house in Sexton Court, Brighton, and I lived there for many years.

This period of my life was not without its challenges. My then husband decided he would leave Tasmania for Queensland, leaving me with the many challenges that come with being a single mother. However, I did not let that stop me. I created a distribution company based in Brighton and I distributed hair products throughout the state. During this time, I also went to university as a mature age student. However, with the competing demands of motherhood and running a business, I could not find the time to complete my degree.

After 10 challenging yet successful years, I sold my business and was invited to join the multinational company Procter & Gamble. I spent five enjoyable and rewarding years working at Procter & Gamble. Fortunately for me this multinational company has a strong belief in investing in its people, and I was extremely fortunate to undertake a number of executive development courses and travel the world, allowing me to expand my skill set.

At the age of 30, and during the 2006 Lyons state campaign, I met an extremely dashing man named Sergei, who would later become my husband and father to our 10-year-old daughter Penelope and son Dimitri. Sergei and I were later married at the Campania Anglican church, followed by the reception and many celebratory drinks at the Campania pub. It is still one of my favourite pubs in Tasmania today.

My roots run deep in the electorate of Prosser, and I am privileged and honoured to be its first representative in this House. I am so proud to stand here today representing the dreams, hopes and aspirations of the vibrant community I grew up in.

I was fortunate to grow up in a household that understood not only the value of hard work, but also the value of giving back to the community. With Dad serving on the council, from an early age I learnt to appreciate the adage that all politics is local, as well as the need to put in the hard yards if you truly want to make a positive difference.

It is no secret I have been trying for many years to become a member of the Tasmanian Parliament. My detractors over the years have labelled me a serial candidate. However, I prefer to think of myself as determined. I am determined to represent the people and the community I am passionate about and love. I am determined to see Prosser prosper.

My political journey began over 12 years ago when I stood as the Liberal candidate in the 2006 state election. At that time, my only previous political experience was helping my Dad during his local government election campaigns. I campaigned the way Dad campaigned - in a true grassroots fashion. I went from door to door, not to talk at or to people, but rather to listen. I stood again in the 2010 state and federal elections, and I stood as a candidate at this year's state election. Along the campaign trails I have gained knowledge and experience, and there are friends who have been there with me from my first campaign to my most recent.

As with all of us, I am sure there is a campaign story or two. One I often reflect on involves a very dear friend of mine, Alison Eaton. Alison sadly passed away at Christmas time. She had early onset dementia. Alison was always a fantastic campaign asset as she could start a conversation with anyone, and she possessed an addictive smile that I believe won me a large amount of votes during many campaigns. This particular year, we were driving along Ansons Bay Road to a Liberal Party branch function when our car was struck with two punctures. We could not believe our luck. Here we were, three resourceful women stuck in the middle of nowhere with no mobile reception, two punctured tires, one spare wheel and only a bottle of wine between us. We had bought that bottle as a raffle gift for the meeting. In fact, the only argument I think Al and I ever had related to the rationing of that wine while we waited to hitchhike on the side of the road. Finally, we were able to hitch a ride to St Helens and from there we waited for Sergei, who at 1.00 a.m. drove from Birchs Bay to rescue us. Mr President, that was when I realised that this man was a keeper.

Each time I put my name on the ballot paper, I gained an understanding of the needs and wants of the community. Even though it has been a long journey, I have endured my fair share of defeat. Each and every campaign increased my desire to represent the community and be their voice in this parliament.

The creation of the new Legislative Council division of Prosser provided me with another opportunity to once again throw my hat into the ring, slip on my RMs and hit the pavement. I am very proud to say my team and I ran a positive grassroots campaign in Prosser. We spent every single day meeting with a diverse range of people from all walks of life, all of whom were incredibly generous with their time.

I am grateful to every constituent who took the time to discuss with me their individual concerns and aspirations of their families, businesses and community organisations.

I would like to see a time when our children no longer leave Tasmania to seek education or employment elsewhere. While the Hodgman Liberal Government has done a sterling job, there is still much to achieve and I want to be part of a team that delivers the turnaround our state deserves.

As Tasmanians, we deserve to have confidence and pride in Tasmania and in calling Tasmania home. I am tenacious, a fighter and determined. I assure the people of Prosser that I will use the determination and tenacity that put me here to fight for them every day.

I take this opportunity to thank my extremely dedicated and hardworking campaign team. What a team. Back-to-back campaigns across a six-month period were not easy and I could not have done it without the help and assistance of so many people.

To Brad Stansfield, Sam McQuestin, Ben Gourlay, Brian and Alison Scullin; my parliamentary colleagues; the Tasmanian Senate team; Young Liberals - in particular Ed and Johnny; Liberal Party members and volunteers, including Heath Michael, who first encouraged me to stand back in 2006, and Laura Eaton, Helen Quinn, Melina Gargalakos and Asimina Marios - thank you for being such supportive friends.

I thank my siblings Michele, Craig, Robyn and their families, and my wonderful in-laws Bruce and Penny. To the rest of our family and friends, thank you. To my husband Sergei, son Dimitri and daughter Penelope, thank you for believing in me and supporting me to run again, and, finally to my parents, thank you. Dad, this is for you.

Mr PRESIDENT - I congratulate the member for Prosser for her thoughtful, well-researched and well-presented inaugural speech. As she well knows, the courtesy of no interruptions has now ceased and when you stand interjections can flow as freely as the Chair will allow. We look forward to your future contributions, well done.

Members - Hear, hear.