



Ms Cecily Rosol MP

House of Assembly

Date: 15 May 2024

Electorate: Bass

[3.29 p.m.]

Ms ROSOL (Bass) (Inaugural) - Madam Speaker, thank you. I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people, the original owners of the land we meet on today. I also acknowledge the Litarimirina people and the Panninher people, the original owners of the land on the banks of kanamaluka where I live and work. As a result of colonisation, these peoples did not survive.

I acknowledge the palawa pakana, the continuing custodians of lutruwita, and I pay my respect to their elders, past and present. I acknowledge their care for the land and waterways over thousands of years. I express my sadness and regret at all that has been taken from the Tasmanian Aboriginals since colonisation.

I stand here today as a white member of a parliament that was established on stolen land. I deeply feel the significance of this and commit myself to listening to Tasmanian Aboriginals and to being part of the work we must do to speak truth, reach treaty and achieve justice for Tasmanian Aboriginals.

Since being elected, I have discovered politics runs in my family. Twelve men on my mother's side, including my great grandfather, were South Australian members of state and federal parliament in the 1800s and early 1900s, while on my father's side, my great, great grandfather was a member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly for 40 years. It seems politics is in my veins, although I note my political ancestors were all male, largely conservative, and I am yet to discover the specific roles they may have played in the ongoing colonisation of the lands now called Australia.

I have a suspicion I will do politics quite differently from them. My affinity lies more with my convict forebear, Isaac Richardson, who was transported to Van Diemen's Land for his involvement in the Swing Riots. These riots were a protest against low wages and the oppression of agricultural workers by the church and rich tenant farmers.

My great, great, great, great grandfather's passion and willingness to fight for justice also runs in my veins. It may well be part of why I am here today, since the anti-pulp mill campaign awakened me to the power of protest and sowed the seeds of political engagement that led me to join the Greens.

Not that I set out to be a protester or a politician. From a very young age I just wanted to be a nurse, and that is what I became. I was amongst the second cohort of nurses at my university to earn a bachelor's degree, something I am incredibly grateful for because it gave me so much more than just a degree. I gained a whole different perspective on the world.

After a very conservative upbringing, university exposed me to alternative points of view. Health studies, sociology, human development, community development, feminism, and so much more stretched and expanded my mind. I probably did not realise it at the time, but I was living first-hand what my lecturers were fond of calling a 'paradigm shift'. I experienced the positive value of education and I passionately believe everyone should have access to public education that gives them the opportunity to learn, grow, and achieve their dreams.

It was education that set me on a parallel path of caring for the Earth, while I cared for people. My HSC geography assessment included creating a scrapbook of newspaper articles about what, at the time, was referred to as global warming. This was over 30 years ago and, even then, newspapers were awash with reports and predictions about the warming of our planet. I recall most of the articles focused on sea level rise over the next century, and I resolved to do my bit to care for our planet.

My resolution has held firm, and I have done my best to tread lightly on the Earth, as have so many others. Yet, despite all our efforts, carbon emissions continue to rise and our planet continues to warm at alarming rates. The effects of climate change that we are witnessing right now go far beyond the rising sea levels I worried about as a teenager. Global warming is wreaking havoc on ecosystems and habitats around the world.

It is deeply distressing to see constant news of floods, mass coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef, forests dying as a result of extended and repeated drought, catastrophic bush fires, increased disease and death due to rising temperatures, mass seabird mortalities, increasing numbers of threatened species including the Maugean skate, Swift parrot and Tasmanian white gum here in Tasmania, ever increasing plant and animal extinctions, people losing their homes as the sea rises to cover their islands - I could go on.

Just two weeks ago, I walked through usually lush, wet rainforest and noticed the desiccated lichens and mosses while, under my feet, dried up leaves crunched on a path that is usually soft and damp. At times I feel quite literally sick at the thought of all we are losing as a result of our collective self-absorption and pathological obsession with continuous economic growth and profit at any cost.

We are in a perilous, alarming situation, and yet we refuse to do the things we can to rein in our carbon emissions and reduce the destructive effects we are having on plants and animals and our very future. Those most affected by climate change are the ones who have contributed the least to the situation we are in.

Why are we so determined to carry on as we always have? Why do we continue to cut down old growth forests, pollute our waterways, chug carbon into the atmosphere when our actions are literally killing the planet? I put it down to the economic systems a select group of rich, powerful people have created to benefit themselves.

Over the last 50 years, neoliberalism has taken over the way we do business and turned animals, trees, and so many other natural resources into commodities. The intrinsic value and beauty of nature is forgotten as its worth is measured in the wealth

it can generate for big corporations and the super-rich. Acting on climate and protecting the Earth inconveniently gets in the way of profit making. Neoliberalism is killing the earth.

Neoliberalism is also destroying our connections with each other. Once upon a time we valued each other, cared for one another and recognised we were only as strong and healthy as the least amongst us. Of course, we still care for those close to us, but on a broader scale there is a growing fragmentation, polarisation and breakdown of society.

Neoliberalism has tricked us all into believing that if we work a little bit harder, extract ever more resources out of the earth to make a few people richer at the top, life will be better for us all. That is simply not the case. Trickle-down economics is a crock. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and inequality and division in Australia grows ever wider. This is more than just an idea. Real people are carrying a heavy burden of pain as a result of our broken economic system.

Nursing, counselling and fostering have all been eye openers for me, highlighting the suffering people experience under the weight of inequality. Again and again, I have seen firsthand the impact of poverty, disadvantage and trauma on people's lives. We have a crisis in mental health, but beneath that lies a crisis of injustice.

Our toxic, unfair economic system is resulting in people living in situations that directly impact on their sense of safety and wellbeing. When people worry desperately about their future due to climate change or do not have secure housing, cannot afford food, struggle to pay bills, do not have transport, wait lengthy periods for healthcare, are affected by violence or discrimination, do not feel valued in the community, when people live with circumstances of disadvantage and stress, they naturally become anxious, depressed and angry. Society is broken, people are broken and this can directly be linked back to an economic system that is broken.

I have been speaking in broad theoretical terms, but this theory is grounded in my experience working with people over many years. I started my career as a registered nurse in Newcastle before doing what many young Australians do and heading to the UK to work and travel. This was a time of personal growth and fun for me and expanded my worldview, and left me with deep curiosity about the world and gave me a respect for diversity.

I returned to Australia in 2001 and came to Launceston to study at a Bible college there. My studies instilled in me a deep sense of hope and the belief that all things can be transformed and that all people can and should have the opportunity to live their best and fullest life. Eventually, that led to me studying counselling with the goal of supporting people to become their best and fullest selves.

My study has taken me into varied roles and workplaces. I worked as a school chaplain in a low socioeconomic community for nearly 10 years. It was there that I learned about intergenerational poverty and trauma and witnessed the limiting effects of disadvantage on people's growth and opportunities. Often disadvantage was compounded by the stigma people experienced because of their post code. The needs I encountered were enormous, but resources were incredibly limited. It was

heartbreaking to see children's development and potential being negatively impacted while so little investment was put into addressing the issues they faced.

I moved on from school chaplaincy and became a counsellor in what was then called a child and family centre, again in a low socioeconomic community. At that stage I was working with parents, supporting them around their own trauma so they could better meet the needs of their children. Again, the intergenerational effects of trauma and poverty were evident.

Along the way I became a foster carer with my husband. We cared for children in a respite and emergency capacity before becoming full-time carers. This was the hardest thing I have ever done and took me close to breaking point, but I was also witness to the difference a safe, secure home could make in a child's life.

More recently I moved into private practice and supported people with a wide range of problems and I found myself coming across the same issue over and over: a lack of safety and security. This is at the core of most people's distress. When we come from a place of stability and safety, it is very difficult to understand the impact of trauma and it is so easy to judge the behaviours of people who do not know the safety or stability we do. However, we know from research that children's brains are literally changed when they experience sustained trauma in the form of abuse or neglect. Their brains are measurably smaller, and they do not develop the brain pathways that are needed to regulate emotion and manage behaviour.

Counselling people with trauma and fostering children has taught me to respond to people's behaviours from a place of compassion, to explore the reasons behind the things they do, and to attempt to address the deep needs they are expressing in their actions. In practice, I have supported many people to understand themselves better, to see their situations differently, to regulate their emotions, to change the way they think and to improve their relationships. I have taught deep breathing and mindfulness, communication skills and self-compassion. All these things are positive and useful, but all of them place an emphasis on self-improvement and individual action when so much suffering and distress is caused by societal problems.

For too long, people have believed their problems are their own fault, when the real problem is far bigger than them and their individual choices. It would make more of a difference to people's lives if we address the structural, systemic issues affecting them, and did more to help people experience emotional, physical and financial safety and security. For that reason, I hold the stories of so many people in my heart and mind today, and I am motivated by their experiences. I am here to make a difference for them and for the many other people living with similar circumstances. I am here for people, and to be part of the work we need to do to challenge the all-pervasive economic system that is crushing people.

Politics is an expansion and extension of the work I have been doing with individuals. That is why I joined the Greens. They are a party who have long understood that politics and economics as usual, are not working well for us or the earth, and they have consistently challenged the status quo, and offered alternative, transformative ways of doing things. The Greens operate on the principles of ecological sustainability, social justice, grassroots democracy and peace and non-violence. Each one of these

principles forms the basis of our policies and provides the building blocks of safety and security.

Greens policies are all about ensuring people and the earth are listened to, valued and respected, and kept at the centre of decision-making. They are about putting economic growth and development into perspective, using our resources to ensure people have what they need, and not taking more from the earth than we need to. I believe they provide a pathway to better lives for all Tasmanians, no matter their post code or personal history. I am thrilled to represent the Greens in Parliament and to prosecute our policies on behalf of the environment and the people of Tasmania.

Standing as a new Greens member of parliament, I acknowledge those who have gone before me. Our party would not be where it is today without Bob Brown, Christine Milne and Peg Putt leading the way. They courageously stood and spoke up for our incredible wild places, and they were and continue to be bold, persistent voices on behalf of the people who elected them to do politics differently. They stood firm despite every effort to push them and the Greens aside, and their work laid the foundation that I stand on today.

More recently, Cassy O'Connor has been a fierce advocate for justice, our forests and so much more. With her leadership, the Greens provided an opposition voice in parliament that, again, meant people and planet could not be ignored. I have long admired Peter Whish-Wilson and Nick McKim for their tireless work in parliament. Thank you to them for showing me how to do strong, effective representation too.

I am the fourth Greens member for Bass. I recognise those who have gone before me: Lance Armstrong, elected as an independent in 1989 before joining with others to form the Tasmanian Greens in 1992. Later, Kim Booth and Andrea Dawkins were both Greens representatives for Bass, and they continued to give voice to Greens values. I stand on the shoulders of incredible people within the Greens movement. It is a privilege to have been elected to continue the work of the Greens in parliament with our wonderful, passionate, talented team under the leadership of Dr Rosalie Woodruff. I look forward to what we will achieve together for Tasmania with our increased numbers.

I want to thank my family and friends who have supported me and never stopped encouraging me, many of them in the room today. They have never stopped encouraging me through multiple election campaigns, helping build momentum to the point of being elected. In particular, thanks to my husband Frank, who is my biggest cheerleader and does a multitude of things quietly in the background that power me and enable me to be standing here. Thanks to Tyrone, my young man who delights me and fuels my passion to do better for all our children and young people. Thanks to my mother Dorothy, who has travelled from Newcastle to be here today and who lets me know how very proud she is, even though we see the world quite differently. That makes her support even more meaningful.

I am here today because of so many determined people who did so much incredible campaign work in this campaign and many others. Thank you to every single person who worked or volunteered, from the campaign manager and team to the doorknockers, letterboxers, wobble boarders and those who hosted posters. The Greens do not accept money from big corporations. Instead, we are powered by a passionate,

beating heart of people who care and bring their energy, tenacity, enthusiasm and hope to every single campaign. It was incredible working with all of you. Thank you for all your support.

Thank you to the people of Bass who voted for me. I am deeply honoured to be your representative in parliament and will work hard to be true to the things I campaigned on, as well as being a voice for you and contributing to legislation that will deliver more of the things you need to live healthy, full lives.

A comment on this parliament before I finish. Congratulations to each of my fellow parliamentarians on your election. What a kaleidoscope we are. By that, I mean what a colourful, wonderful collection of people and perspectives. Just as a kaleidoscope creates multiple patterns and beautiful designs, we have the potential to do that in parliament. My hope is that we will bring the best of ourselves into this place and create legislation and outcomes that are beautifully designed to benefit our people and our wild places. I am committed to doing that and I look forward to working with you.

I stand here today following in the footsteps of my forebears, a politician and a protester. I am not interested in business as usual. I am here to speak up for our forests and animals, to fight for the people of Tasmania to be treated with respect, to work for the safety and security of all Tasmanians. I am here for sustainability, justice and transformation that creates a future where everyone has the resources they need to live safely and well. I am here as a member of the 51st Parliament of Tasmania to make a difference for the people of Bass and Tasmania. Thank you.