



Alison Standen MP

House of Assembly

Date: 22 May 2018

Electorate: Franklin

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**Ms STANDEN** (Franklin - Inaugural) - Madam Speaker, I rise today to deliver my inaugural speech and begin my acknowledging the traditional people of the land upon which we meet today, the Mouheneener people, and pay my deepest respects to elders, past, present and emerging.

Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election and appointment as Speaker. I also recognise newly elected Labor members Ella, Anita, Jennifer and Jenna, who I know, like me, must feel humbled to have been elected on this, their first attempt. I congratulate all members on their re-election and thank my returning Labor colleagues and those from the other place who have been so supportive. I look forward to working with you all.

There are some moments in my life of which I am very proud - deeply satisfying moments. There are other deeply challenging moments that have placed a great deal of weight and responsibility upon my shoulders. There have also been moments of great reflection about what is, what has been and what could be - deeply humbling and motivating moments. As I stand here in this place today, in this moment I am proud, challenged, humbled and motivated.

To the people of Franklin, thank you for your vote. I consider it a vote of confidence but also of challenge, responsibility, humility and enthusiasm. I will always endeavour to do my best to meet and hopefully exceed your expectations.

Just over 5000 people placed their trust and faith in me and gave me their number one vote and I know that for some of those people it was the first time they voted Labor. I will work hard to deliver for those people and for all the people of Franklin that I am humbled to have been elected to represent. I promise to offer to those who seek my help, compassion and understanding without judgment of situation or circumstance and determination to make a positive difference.

I would like to share a story about two grade 10 students. One was very capable, with a great deal of support from her family, healthy competition from her peers, and many role models who believed in the value of education. She was consistently told she was a very bright student. In the schoolyard, approaching the end of grade 10 year, however, her mother was told that despite being very clever she could not possibly be given the science prize because she was a girl and, by implication, being good at science would not take her anywhere.

The other grade 10 girl came from a family for whom education was not so important. She wanted to do well but without a school bag or the right books, a quiet place to study and a role model to give her advice, encouragement and support, making her way through grade 10 was pretty tough. She loved science but was told at home it would not take her anywhere. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, 'To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.'

Madam Speaker, one of these girls is me and I have worked with the other. Since grade 10, I have had a fierce belief in the importance of a good education, the opportunities it presents and the doors it can open. I know the early years are the foundation, but relationships, role models, kindness and equitable access to education beyond those early years are also key factors in developing literacy and numeracy, and arguably in developing a healthy, kind, prosperous, innovative and productive society. No matter what a student's background, postcode, gender or history is, it is my belief that an interest and an ability should take you anywhere. This is the responsibility of an education system and of everyone in the community.

I have always said there are no hard jobs, only hard workers. I worked as hard in my first paid job as a teenage casual retail assistant as I have as a senior public servant or community leader. As I stand in this place I am uncertain what lies before me but I embrace the responsibility of my role as a member of parliament, I intend to work hard and I intend to take this opportunity to make a contribution to the lives of all Tasmanians, especially the people of Franklin and those most vulnerable and marginalised, to give them a voice and to make a difference.

Following a career spanning over 25 years I hope to bring to this role my experience, my hard work ethic, judgment and a willingness to accept responsibility for my words and actions. I have always admired substance over style but I hope I can bring a bit of both to my parliamentary career. Over time, I have also learnt the importance of being a good listener. I do not presume to come equipped with experience and knowledge to

tackle all the issues I expect to come before me. I intend to listen well and to have the good judgment and wisdom to weigh that advice carefully, anchored by my values and armed with a determination to act accordingly.

My father is a retired doctor who worked in the Tasmanian health system for many years, first on the north-west coast, then Launceston and finally Hobart. He worked hard. He worked long hours and was on many occasions the only specialist obstetrician and gynaecologist in the region and on-call 24 hours. I did not see as much of him growing up as I would have liked. Over his career he delivered around 10 000 Tasmanian babies and if I had a dollar for every time a woman has said to me 'your father delivered me', or 'my children', I would be a very rich woman.

My dad made an important contribution to women's and children's public health services across Tasmania. He is an early adopter, a pioneer in his field, undertaking further study in fertility and laparoscopic surgery, setting up birthing suites with bean bags and baths; putting women and babies first. He introduced the first ultrasound service in the northern region using a Betamax recorder. At the time he considered it superior to VHS. He has never had much luck with technology. The dedication, passion and commitment he has for his profession and for teaching is profound. Around 20 years ago, he set up a specialist training program in his field in Tasmania that is so critical to building and retaining our future medical workforce. Most current Tasmanian specialists in his field have trained here. If it was not for him and his peers the model now would likely be a regional model, combining Victoria and Tasmania, and specialists from his field would likely train here and settle elsewhere.

My love of learning and my dedication to health and to helping vulnerable people comes from both my parents. My mother was a nurse and like so many of her generation made raising her four children the main priority over her career. The eldest of five children, money was tight and the only boy in the family was given the opportunity to attend university. My mum tirelessly volunteered in our local communities as well as later establishing her own small retail business.

In the 1970s she was one of a small group of dedicated women who made over 2000 Christmas puddings every year, which began as a fundraiser to pay the rates for the local scouts group in Burnie. I understand that tradition continues in Burnie today. My mum was always heavily involved in school parents and friends associations and fairs and she even ran the school canteen for a while. She has volunteered for numerous charities and bakes and makes sandwiches most weeks for her local church's charity shop. She has always been a doer and she does not have much time for talkers.

My parents taught me that if a job is worth doing, it is worth doing properly. Together they modelled hard work, both paid and unpaid, ambition, devotion to one another and to family, generosity, and a commitment to community. They gave me confidence and self-belief and taught me my core values of service to the community, hard work and compassion. My older brother was a bright student but he always said that 51 per cent meant 1 per cent too much effort. He is now a Qantas captain and also passionate about his motor sport. No doubt his attitude to precision has changed, which I am sure is a comfort to the travelling public. My younger brother struggled with learning. We wondered how he would make his way in the world but we need not have worried. He graduated from university with a prize, as a surveyor, and today he is a very successful businessman. My younger sister is a gregarious and creative type and none of us were surprised when she left school to take up a hairdressing apprenticeship. With numerous awards, she is well-recognised in her profession because she so cleverly understands customer service as a critical part of business success. Each of us approach learning in our own way but each of us found our way thanks largely to the value our parents placed on education and training. I am forever grateful for that start in life.

During my teenage and early adult years at university I became aware of instances and rumours of sexual assault, bullying and harassment. As a survivor myself, I am determined to use this time in parliament, through legislative change and leading social and cultural change, to tackle injustice in this area. I believe as a society we have barely scratched the surface of what is a significant and widespread issue. The #MeToo campaign and progress, thanks particularly to courageous women, especially in the sporting and entertainment industries, are leading important change. We are witness to an emerging awareness, zero tolerance and willingness to speak out against sexual assault and bullying and I am proud to add my voice.

I am proud to be elected to this parliament comprising an historic majority of women. I am also proudly the first openly gay Labor member of the Tasmanian Parliament. I am a proud feminist and I am aware that today I stand on the shoulders of community activists, people such as Rodney Croome who will be well known in the place, but also my Aunt Felicity, an alderman, mature-age university graduate, fierce feminist and lifelong activist. Equality and diversity are important to me and although in my lifetime I have witnessed important social progress - marriage equality comes to mind - since women of my age and older and LGBTI people are currently the fastest growing demographic for homelessness in Australia, clearly there is still some way to go.

Another of my lived values is for things to change, first I must change. I suppose I was in my mid-40s when I realised the voices of senior public servants and community sector leaders, like me at the time, are often effectively silenced.

These people are unable to criticise government through letters to the editor or opinion pieces. They are potentially conflicted, even in political association and they usually cannot contribute as experts and thought leaders in community debate.

I believe in representative democracy, that our state is best served when its parliamentarians represent the diversity of the community it is expected to represent. When the opportunity came for me to run for parliament, I saw this as a way for me to add my voice. To stand up, or even get out of the passenger seat and into the driver's seat. I hope to represent the large number of public servants and community sector workers in this state who dare not speak out against the government.

Working as an allied health professional in north-west Tasmania, I was confronted by the burden of preventable chronic lifestyle disease in the region. I began to understand that while diet contributes to overweight, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some cancers, there are many other contributors such as household budget, upbringing, physical activity and mobility, education and mental health. One profound experience demonstrated to me the value of prevention and early intervention for better health outcomes. For a couple of years I regularly saw in outpatients clinic a young man in his mid-twenties suffering an unusual and dangerous combination of anorexia nervosa and insulin-dependent diabetes. I weighed him every appointment and when I took his diet history he told me what he thought I wanted to hear. I realised the zero sum game we were playing when he was admitted to ICU in a diabetic coma and the attending doctor showed me his emaciated body days after one of our appointments. If only we had earlier had a specialist eating disorder service with a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting people like that young man.

This experience and many others like it, sharpened my commitment to public health nutrition to provide education, choice and opportunity for people to make healthier food choices and prevent chronic lifestyle disease. Rather than judgment, compassion and understanding, education and, importantly, better policies to foster collaboration, opportunity and provide resources are key to a healthier future for Tasmanians. I soon learned that working in the health profession was always difficult and complex. In the face of increasing demand and workforce problems there are never sufficient resources. Governments always seems to prioritise acute care over preventative health services.

I decided to complete a master of business administration to open doors beyond health and the public service. Although I have made a contribution in other sectors, I have continually come back to the public service because I have realised my values are deeply based in addressing inequality through universal access to strong public health, education and other services.

It is because of my compassion for people that I am also a strong supporter of safe voluntary assisted dying laws. It is time for Tasmanians suffering intolerable pain to be given the right to end their own life surrounded by the people they love. I acknowledge the work that Lara Giddings and Cassy O'Connor, together with community sector leaders, have progressed in this area. I put on record my support to continue it.

I am a determined, no regrets kind of person. Anything is possible with hard work, some good people around you and a bit of luck from time to time. When I became a single mother, the single part was not planned. I returned to the workforce as a full-time senior public servant within nine weeks of the birth. I remember dashing up to the childcare centre to breastfeed my baby during the day and the terrible pain of leaving him with old family friends when I had to travel and stay overnight in Canberra. It was not ideal for anyone, but it was necessary and we made it through, loved, supported and resilient.

At this point I acknowledge the support of my son's wonderful early childhood educators for the amazing work they do, not only to improve school readiness for kids like my son, but for all the times they provided support and advice to me. Pauline, Kerry, Alicia, Bianca, Simon, Sarah and Katy you are the best. I will always fight for appropriate wages and conditions to match your professionalism and the valuable role you play as educators and family support workers.

Madam Speaker, I do not regret returning to work so soon. It was the only choice I had if I was to support us. As fate would have it, it would lead me to the role of general manager of the Smith Family in Tasmania where I could help disadvantaged children and families get the most out of their education and create a better future for themselves. This is a role that affected me personally and deeply and would ultimately lead me to stand as a Labor candidate.

My experience has taught me that better community outcomes could be achieved with greater cooperation between not-for-profit organisations and also between agencies working with communities in high need. In various roles I have been involved in tackling entrenched disadvantage. Place-based models can work well and I note a collective impact approach in Clarence Plains is showing promising early progress.

When communities recognise the need for change and leaders take responsibility in the process, remarkable improvement is possible. In too many communities, well-meaning organisations duplicate services and

fragment the service system. For too long, well-meaning but patronising government and not-for-profit agencies, have done things to but not with communities.

In the town of Franklin, the Living Boat Trust and Wooden Boat Centre work literally side by side. These organisations promote tourism, protect maritime heritage, develop skills and training and, importantly, also build social capital. Community spaces like these and neighbourhood houses, men's sheds and the like bring people together and build confidence and relationships across the community. People and communities like these do not need a solution but advocates in parliament that can take their great ideas, secure the resources to allow them to grow and develop and find a stage to share and promote this great work so other communities can benefit from that passion, commitment and innovation.

During my campaign I set goals, surrounded myself with a small group of good people, dug in and worked hard. 'No regrets' was my mantra and I am so proud to be standing here today. Over the campaign I began to realise the privilege of connecting with people and communities across the electorate in this way. I realised that no matter the outcome of the election, I would be forever a better public servant.

Throughout my campaign I was honoured that so many people opened their hearts and minds to me to tell me their stories, their ideas and their concerns. Three stories stood out. First, an Aboriginal woman, a 67-year-old school cleaner, who works 20 hours per week and with her part pension manages a modest private rental at \$200 per week. When I came to her door she was looking after three of her grandchildren. She is looking forward to retirement this year, although she worries that young school cleaners do not look after kids and families these days the way she would like. Her landlord plans to sell her home and she knows she cannot afford to buy. Private rental properties are scarce and she knows there are many people on the public housing waiting list. She knows she will be forced to leave her home of nearly 10 years and she fears she will not be eligible for public housing. This woman represents the tip of an iceberg in terms of a major problem in housing and homelessness and cost of living today. I know of many others. A complex problem deserves a sophisticated response and I hope to contribute to solutions to address these significant issues.

Second, there was the young man recovering from substance abuse but struggling without the fallback of a residential rehabilitation facility. Clearly, he was couch surfing and dependent upon his friends to keep a roof over his head but aware that too often youths in his position are drawn back into destructive paths without the proper support. I was struck by his openness and vulnerability. He so badly wants a better life and by the way highlighted for me the need for significant improvements in public oral health. So many people I spoke with obviously are suffering atrocious pain and suffering as well as expense due to inadequate preventative oral health care.

Finally, I spoke with three nurses in a week who had decided to leave their profession. One recent graduate felt so overworked and unsupported, first in the public system and then the private system, she had retrained and pursued casual work in hospitality. There is nothing wrong with working in hospitality but what struck me was the wasted investment in education and training for that young woman and for our state. As a former health professional, I am concerned that we need to do more to retain health workers, not just through competitive wages but just as importantly supportive conditions.

Throughout the campaign I was also struck by a growing concern about openness and transparency in government decision-making at all levels of government and in particular planning and development decisions. I believe people would like to see more genuine and timely consultation with the community on these decisions.

Madam Speaker, my experiences have shaped my values - hard work, no regrets, kindness, loyalty, honesty, respect for diversity and equality - but I have not lived my experiences alone and I did not run my campaign alone. As I mentioned, I surrounded myself with a small team who advised, strategised, organised and rolled up their sleeves with me.

To Rebecca White, for putting your faith in me - I am proud to have won this second seat for Labor in Franklin and to be a part of your team. To Lara Giddings and Fran Bladel, for your belief in me, mentoring me and walking with me on this journey, I cannot thank you enough. In fact, I owe a debt of gratitude to a great many Labor women mentors but I especially want to thank Julie Collins, Lorena Bromfield, Michelle O'Byrne, Carol Brown, Catryna Bilyk, Lisa Singh and my EMILY's List mentor, ACT MP Suzanne Orr.

Jane Atkinson is one of the most hardworking, committed and ethical people I know. I thank her for being my campaign manager, coordinating my field campaign and building a small but committed volunteer base to support me. Thank you also to Stuart Benson, Michael, Karelle, Gordon, Jarryd, Megan and all the hardworking people who contributed to the central campaign for their advice and encouragement. I thank Joe and Phil for their marketing expertise, and Josh and Harry, bright young things in the future of the Labor Party. I thank Stephen, Greg, Margaret, my other fellow branch members and the many ALP members who believed in me and our shared cause. Thank you to the many wonderful volunteers who pounded the pavements with flyers, joined me out doorknocking, made phone calls and put up posters. I thank friends and colleagues, many of

whom who had never engaged in politics before. Your time and effort were critically important and I hope each of you know that.

Thanks to Maddie, who spent the last couple of weeks of the campaign with me living in our house, sharing the doorknocking load and any other job I asked of you and keeping me focused no matter how overwhelming things seemed. Thanks to Neville, who drove down from Launceston most Sundays to letterbox and make, erect and check signs, and Carole for her unswerving belief in me. Thanks to my parents, who held fundraisers for me in their home, supported my family, doorknocked, letterboxed and dug in whenever I needed them. Thanks to my brother, who took a couple of days to travel from interstate to help out with letterboxing. I know all my family was in my corner. Thanks to my dear friends who believed in my campaign enough to donate their time and money and kept my feet firmly on the ground at the same time. You know who you are and I love you.

Thanks to my partner, Kate, for keeping things going at home despite working her own demanding full-time job. She also made time to lend her skills helping me with social media, drafting and editing the occasional speech and article. This was our decision together and she has never once doubted it or me. To my son, Nicholas, who is as proud of his mum as I am of him, I love you more. He always has the last say. I do not know who he takes after.

The campaign is over and here I am. Hand on heart, I will work hard, surround myself with good people and tackle the roots of inequality. I will fight for the people of Franklin for access to a good education, to a highly effective health system, for affordable housing, for career pathways and secure jobs. I will fight for a safe and kind society and wherever possible put good policy over politics with evidence-based decision-making. Finally to my year 10 science teacher, whose name I cannot recall now, I say never ever underestimate my determination.

**Members** - Hear, hear.