



Mrs Miriam Beswick MP

House of Assembly

Date: 21 May 2024

Electorate: Braddon

[2.57 p.m.]

Mrs BESWICK (Braddon) (Inaugural) - Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. As I stand here and look about this amazing historical Chamber, I am humbled and awed at the opportunity and the responsibility with which I have been entrusted. What a journey my life has been to come to this chapter and to stand before you. May I say congratulations on your election as Speaker and note that I have appreciated your encouragement over the past few weeks.

Over the past few months, and in particular since the finalisation of the count which confirmed my election, I have been asked many times, 'Why are you here? What has motivated you to politics?'. I have a strong conviction I am meant to be here, but providing a straightforward answer to this question is not simple. I am not aware of anyone in my family that has served in public life. However, I am sure if I look back an extra few generations, there would be. As some branches of my family have been in Tasmania for generations and there has been some fresh Dutch blood mixed in, there has been a clear legacy of caring for others.

Politics has been a man's business for a long time, and despite being raised by a single dad, I grew up in a kind of matriarchal environment. I am the third of four daughters. My mother is also the third of four daughters, and her mother is the second of six daughters, and each generation is incredibly close-knit.

On my father's side, my Opa died before I was born and my Oma, with her croquettes and her soup, is the glue which bonds us together. Having migrated to Tasmania from Europe after the Second World War, my Oma is the eldest Tasmanian in her family.

Suffice it to say that nursing and administration are the dominant careers modelled by those I looked up to, however at the age of 17, on completing a career test, the idea of a pursuit of a political career was planted. I had other dreams and God had other plans, but as the timing is right, the opportunity becomes available and with what may appear as doing a Bradbury over the last few months, here I am.

As I wrote this speech, I realised the effort put in was not just recent effort, but the effort of a lifetime. As I reflect on my journey, I realise that while my early aspirations diverged from political office, life's unfolding led me here. It was not a deliberate path toward being elected to parliament, but looking back I see a trajectory that brought me to this moment at the right time.

The Jacqui Lambie Network has a vision, which inspired me to put up my hand, of a parliament filled with people from all walks of life who serve their community and only their community, who ask people what they think rather than telling them how

they think, who demand the highest standards of honesty, accountability and decency, who cannot be defamed or demoted, corrupted or controlled, bought or sold: who are there to make big things happen for the little guy. This is a democratic ideal I can truly get behind.

I stand before you not because of a mere submission of an expression of interest on a website or a chance encounter with Jacqui Lambie. I stand here today because of years marked with honesty, integrity and hard work: years spent caring for those around me and serving them to the best of my ability in each moment.

I grew up in East Devonport and attended public schools. I was married at 18 and two babies later, we moved to the mainland, as many of my generation did, in pursuit of employment opportunities. After a time, I started a cleaning business in partnership with my sister and was astonished to be refused membership to the union due to my status as a business owner. I experienced the void of sole traders and small business owners, who are both employer and employee, who are unable to enter the debate for safety standards and minimum employment requirements simply because they fit both parts; despite being a huge part of the economy, in particular in the trades and service fields.

This spurred me to tertiary education, which developed my knowledge of politics and my skills in business management and strategic decision making. Through this, I have worked in not-for-profit and community environments, for government, in financial services, for utility companies, and supporting councils in regional services. Most significantly, as a business owner once again, in the family entertainment industry. This environment spans education, tourism and hospitality and is often overlooked for its contribution to Tasmania. Each opportunity I have had has broadened my outlook and grown me into the person I am today.

What is it we look for in our leaders and those who represent us? We look for people who have integrity, who care for their communities, who notice things around them: the big thinkers, the ones who dream and pursue their dreams, and those who consider the long-term effects of decisions and the unintended effects of decisions. Sometimes our leaders do not meet their expectations and those who voted for them. We have seen the results of this with a variety of people elected here today.

Friends and acquaintances have said to me, '...you would make a good politician. I could not do that, but you can'. Why do they say that? I cannot be sure, but I think this is because I notice the things and they frustrate me. When people are hurting, I want to help and when things are not working, I want to make them work. When government departments work in silos and make changes which affect other industries, I have been known to get very expressive.

Over the past few weeks, as my colleagues and I have been settling into our new lives, there have been several frustrations which remind me why I am here. So many stories of immature and embarrassing behaviour from those who were elected as the leaders of our state over the last 12 months. There are unanswered questions about how things work, which has stumped our colleagues who have never had to induct a whole new political party before. At one point, I nearly wrote this speech as a pithy soliloquy on the inefficiencies of government departments and correlating this to the frustrations of the Tasmanian people who want to see strategic planning, decisive action and

effective service delivery. I shall leave it to your imagination as to how that would have turned out.

In truth, our parliamentary staff and Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) and everyone who has been here these last few weeks have done an amazing job in welcoming us and making us feel accepted and part of this community.

However, there are things I am here for. I am an enhancer, a true team player; I love to hear ideas and grow them. When someone sparks an idea, I want to see it and make it work. I can recognise when things are about to derail, am quick to pivot and make necessary decisions in order to correct the projection. I have a creative outlook and I am willing to work within the system whilst questioning if the system is working at its most effective. I am willing to think outside the box, not just for the sake of it, but in order to affect the change that is needed.

I am a truth delver. I can spend hours researching a question to find out why. Finding out why took me to university as a mature age student. Finding out why helps me burrow into the mud to find the real problem in order to develop the solution. Without the why, we do not move forward: we add band-aids, we waste money, we make poor decisions and we do not get the outcomes we need.

Do we need to spend more or do we need to investigate and make sure what is being spent is used really well? Can we create efficiencies? Can we make nurses', doctors' and teachers' jobs easier and free them to do what they love? If we are going to build it, are we choosing the cheapest option or the best option?

Are we delivering value for money? Are we duplicating past success? Are we looking to innovative solutions? Just because we did it that way before, are we sure we need to continue doing it that way, or is there a better way? Do we have the money to do that, or do we need to prioritise and plan for it later. When we have considered, when we have the information, let us do the right thing and implement it well.

These are the reasons the people of Braddon have chosen me. They have recognised the lady who kept rearranging her business to fit more in, to create a funds basis for their families to enjoy: the wife of the Santa photos in their pictures, the mother of their children's friend, the woman who cried or cheered when they told their stories, the one who worked 80- hour weeks and a second job to keep her family fed and the doors to her business open. The one who walked the road of disability and tragedy and is continuing to do so: the one who can empathise with them and what they are going through, who has ears to hear and has pushed through the anxiety and the fear to stand here today.

What do I promise Braddon in return? I will take the time to scrutinise bills and legislation and consider the effect on the people of Tasmania and its environments, whether physical, economical or social; its future in the short and the long term; base my decision on the merit and the outcomes expected with an open mindset to benefit constituents from all walks of life. I will be accessible; keen to discover the views of others through discussions with organisations, groups and individuals. I have really enjoyed this; learning so much from people around our island and our region through discussions I have had through the campaign and the last few weeks. I look forward to

this being an ongoing process, enabling my decision making to be a true reflection of the electorate I represent. Hopefully this will continue to be with a smile on my face.

Madam Speaker, as I read through others, mostly very long, maiden speeches, with their lofty language and their pompous ideals, I struggled with where to start on this one. Yet, here I am, presenting you with a speech that is likely just as pompous and idealistic as theirs, hopefully just not quite as long. I have heard some lovely inaugural speeches over the last week and I encourage my new colleagues and thank them for their commitment to this House. I have a lot to learn to ensure I serve my community in the best way possible. I dream of a type of democracy which enables ease of access between the electorate and their representatives. I dream of politics that is not a game but a collaboration.

As I close, I turn to the act of appreciation. So many people have a part to play in me standing here today: my family, my friends, my church community, the people who have encouraged and mentored me throughout my life; the people of Braddon who voted for me; Jacqui Lambie, who dared to dream she could enable ordinary Australians to be a part of a new political landscape - that we can breakdown the walls of habit and allow fresh air in. Thank you to the JLN team, volunteers, and supporters. I would not be here without you.

I must say wobble boarding was a joy and I look forward to it in the future. I do. I enjoyed it. It was great. My husband has been calling himself a kept man for some years as he has had to put down the tools due to degenerative vision issues. I have never had anyone as proud of me as he has been in the last few weeks. My incredible children know what they are in for with their workaholic mother. They are content to share me with the people of Braddon. Luckily, they love me enough to tell me when I am failing and they need some time with me. Sadly, neither my father or father-in-law are around to see this, but other father figures have stepped in and I am so honoured to have them in my life. I have two of the most amazing mothers who I could not live without, so they better stick around a little longer.

The campaign trail has brought me new friends and new colleagues. To Beck, Andrew and Craig - the next few years are going to be amazing and I know our team is going to thrive. We will stand for integrity, honesty, openness and true democracy. Tasmania is going to be better for it, Madam Speaker. Thank you for putting your hand up to keep the order in such a diverse House and I look forward to seeing what we can all achieve together over the next few years.

Members – Hear, hear.