



Ms Meg Brown MP

House of Assembly

Date: 16 May 2024

Electorate: Franklin

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[2.33 p.m.]

**Ms BROWN** (Franklin) (Inaugural) - Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the First Nations people as the traditional custodians of the land of which we meet, and pay my respects to elders, past and present. I extend that respect to First Nations people here today and watching on the webcast or reading the *Hansard*.

I congratulate all members of this place on their election to the House of Assembly in the Tasmanian parliament. I thank all candidates for running in the last election. Running for political office and seeking to serve the public demands dedication, resilience and a great deal of courage.

I also thank the families, who often make tremendous sacrifices when offering unwavering support and adjusting to the demands of campaigning.

I thank Rebecca White for her leadership of the state parliament, particularly throughout the last election, and for her support of me. Even whilst running the state campaign, Rebecca found time to check in with me. She cared about each candidate and their well-being.

I congratulate my fellow member for Franklin, Dean Winter, on his appointment as the new state Labor leader and I look forward to working with him to achieve positive outcomes and to drive change for Franklin and Tasmania.

I also place on the record my appreciation of David O'Byrne for the opportunity to work as his electorate officer and allowing me first-hand experience to serve. I am grateful for the experience and trust.

I also congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your election to the position of Speaker. Over your career you have strived for fairness and to give Tasmanians the very best. With this in mind, I can confidently say you will be an excellent Speaker.

I also thank the parliamentary staff, catering and kitchen staff and the cleaners on their exceptional welcome and their professional guidance.

I feel truly fortunate to have lived in Franklin for most of my life. I went to school in Franklin, I work in Franklin, and Franklin is where I call home. One of my favourite things about the electorate is that every part is different but equally as beautiful. From South Arm and its stunning beaches to the Huon Valley and its rolling hills, each part holds a unique charm.

Recently, I revisited Tahune Adventures in Geeveston with Labor leader, Dean Winter. We were talking about jobs in our regional areas. Geeveston holds a special place in my heart because it was where fond childhood memories were made.

It was here that my grandfather insisted on taking out of town relatives to marvel at the beauty of Geeveston and, indeed, Tasmania.

I come from an immensely proud family history of Labor and union activism. My great, great grandmother, Mary Butler, was a founding member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) Hobart branch in Tasmania. My great uncle, Leo, was secretary and president of the Miscellaneous Workers Union in Tasmania, a union legend and president of the Tasmanian Labor Party. Most old school unionists have a grand story to tell of Leo Brown. As a matter of fact, I only heard a new one this week. My grandmother, Julia Brown, was a life member of the ALP; she was a strong willed and formidable woman. She and my grandfather, Rex Brown, raised their 13 children in the great electorate of Franklin. She lived in the same house on Resolution Street in Warrane for over 60 years. In fact, this is where I kicked off my campaign, letterboxing nan's old street. My Auntie, Carol, is a Labor senator and has always worked hard for the people of Tasmania. She is committed to equality and giving everybody a fair go. I am so proud to have grown up with her as a role model.

To my mum, Julie. She has worked in the party for 20 years, Madam Speaker, and like Leo, everybody has a story to tell of the legend that is my mum and how much she has helped them. She is the most strong-willed and determined woman I know, which is evident in my election to this place. She was with me every step of the way and you can probably see a theme forming of really strong-willed women in my family history.

Coming from a strong and proud Labor and union family means being steeped in tradition of resilience, solidarity and advocacy. It is about knowing the value of hard work and collective action, passed down through generations. It is feeling a deep sense of belonging and camaraderie within a community that fights for fair wages, safe working conditions and social justice. It is witnessing the power of unity to create positive change, both in the workplace and society at large. It is carrying on a legacy of standing up for what is right, even in the face of hardship, with unwavering determination.

Despite coming from a family with a rich history of politics, I never thought the political world was for me. After college, I decided to follow in the footsteps of my father and brothers and get a trade. I worked as a hairdresser for some years, managing salons, training staff and competing in competitions. Along the way I met many people and as the stereotype suggests, everybody confides everything to their hairdresser. Working in this industry, I was able to see everyone has a story to tell; work and life stresses, and for many, life is difficult.

I decided there was more that I could do, so I entered the world of politics to make a difference. As an electorate officer, I found out that I was wrong. For some, things were not just difficult, their circumstances were downright dire. Hearing their stories spurred me on and made me determined to always be making a difference. Over the five years of working as an electorate officer, I was able to work with the community to achieve positive outcomes.

During the election, I doorknocked a house and a young woman answered. Before I could even introduce myself, she called over her shoulder to her mum and said,

'Meg is here'. I assumed it was a relative that I had not met yet, because there are quite a few of us. However, it turned out, I had called upon a family who I had helped in the past when their circumstances were at their most critical. Although I had never met their daughter face-to-face, she remembered who I was. You never know what someone is going through and the impact you can have. Whilst I do not think of myself as a natural politician, it is moments like these I am reminded that I am on the right path.

Madam Speaker, as many in the House know, I love netball. I have been playing since primary school. I have played school netball as well as club and it has been a significant part of my sporting life. Along with Dani Shields, we saw that there were no established clubs on the eastern shore. After a few conversations, we founded the Eastern Shore Jets Netball Club in 2020. Our first unofficial meeting was just Dani and me in her kitchen in Mornington. However, our dream caught on and our committee grew.

I would like to acknowledge all the past and present committee members by name, because without their dedication and determination, The Jets would not be here today. Dani Shields, Ash Moore, Karen Whelan, Courtney Kettleton, Liz Walker, Rachel Hellessey-Young, Tara Bond, Jess Direen, Cheyenne Ellis, Hayley Bromfield, Hannah Devine, Kristy Burgess, Landa Papi-Watson, Amy Greenwood and John Hickey, a very proud Labor man and everyone calls him Granddad.

Our first season rolled around and we went in to the hope we would form three teams, which is the minimum to form a club. We ended up pulling together five and four seasons later, we have now entered 22 teams, including junior sides to premier league. We have been incredibly successful, and I believe this is because we have always endeavoured to put our players first by creating an encouraging and inclusive club culture.

Part of my role has been managing our sponsors so that we are able to subsidise fees and union costs for our players. By our club putting so much emphasis on this, we have made playing netball more affordable for our community. We believe that anybody who wants to play netball should be able to play and is welcome at home with us at The Jets.

I am incredibly proud of what we have been able to achieve for our community. I could go on about The Jets all day. You may be wondering why I recount this story. Well, for a couple of reasons. First, because I have seen firsthand how important sport is, not only for our physical health, but for our mental health, fostering teamwork, discipline and resilience. It also promotes social unity, personal growth and creates lifelong friendships. Importantly, it is seen as the great leveller where people are judged solely on their skill, determination and dedication. It creates a level playing field, enabling everyone, regardless of background or personal circumstances, to play netball.

Second, it shows how I wish to operate in the parliament. I am somebody who is outcome-focused and driven by achieving results. I will prioritise action and decision that will lead to positive, tangible outcomes. My interests in parliament are deeply rooted in advocating for critical issues such as the prevention of family violence, access to justice, access to healthcare, to education, to quality housing and the issues around the cost of living. Equality and fairness are core values that guide my actions in

parliament. I will advocate for policies that dismantle systemic barriers and foster inclusivity in all aspects of society.

Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the many people who helped me during my campaign, without whom I would not be here today.

First, to the people of Franklin, thank you for putting your faith in me. I do not take this responsibility for granted and I pledge to always work hard to represent your voice through proactive engagement and advocating on your behalf.

To my partner and my rock, Michael, I am forever grateful for the love and support you give me each and every day. Your calming soul and encouragement have allowed me to push forward even through the toughest of times.

To my beloved children and the lights of my life, Finley and Evelyn, you are my purpose, my drive and my reason for always moving forward. Everything that I do is for them.

To my parents, Julie and Graham, and my siblings, Steven, David and Samuel, thank you for always being by my side and making me the person I am today.

To my sisters-in-law, Kellie and Christy, thank you for being the sisters I never had.

To my auntie Carol, thank you for believing in me and always providing sage life advice.

To my auntie Mary, thank you for your unshakable support of me. I know those hills in Geilston Bay were a steep climb to doorknock, but I am glad to have had you with me.

To my auntie Cate, thank you for being an experienced listening ear and your gentle guidance along the way.

To my dear friend Sophie, thank you for being my biggest hype girl and raising my spirits when things were not easy. I am so grateful for your friendship.

To my dear, dear friend and fellow candidate at the last state election, Ben, thank you for always being on the other end of the phone and your honest and unfiltered advice.

To my campaign team and many volunteers: team, we did it. I cannot thank you enough for your belief in me and the support you gave me. Every door knocked, every letter dropped, every phone called cold, and every street stall had a massive impact on our campaign being a success. Every volunteer played an essential role, and I am immensely grateful.

To Julie Collins, federal Labor member for Franklin, I am so grateful to have you in my corner. Your guidance, encouragement and knowledge have been a major source of strength for me.

I would also like to acknowledge my union comrades - Amy and the United Workers' Union (UWU), Robbie and the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU), Mick and the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU), and Zach and Richie from the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) for all their support.

To Nicole Wells, thank you for your hard work, frank advice and determination. I am eternally grateful for your strategic leadership and political knowledge.

To Pamela Anderson, Kirsten Livermore and the team at Emily's List, thank you for your support and endorsement. I am proud to say that I am an Emily's List member, as are many on this side of the House. I support the values of Emily's List that seek to positively impact policy to benefit women, children and families.

Finally, I would like to thank the Tasmanian Labor Party for pre-selecting me as a candidate and the support given to me at the last campaign. It is an absolute honour to represent the Tasmanian Labor Party, a party that represents equality, social justice and environmental stewardship, with a rich history of fighting for workers' rights and universal health care, and creating a fairer, more inclusive society. I am proud that one of the first acts of our Labor team will be our leader introducing the industrial manslaughter bill to the Tasmanian parliament.

One of my greatest takeaways from the election was the friendships formed. I would like to give a shout-out to Samantha Facy of Braddon. Sam, thank you for being a listening ear and a sounding board, even from the other end of the state. I look forward to one day sitting in this place with her.

Madam Speaker, I am ready for the challenge ahead of me. I would like to conclude my first speech to parliament by reflecting on a question I was asked while doorknocking. That was, what type of politician do I want to be? My answer was simple: to always be making a difference. You see, I truly believe in the people of Franklin. I believe that it should not matter what circumstances you are born into. Everyone should have access to the same opportunities, to live without fear of persecution for being who you are, to be able to work in safe, secure jobs, to have access to quality education and health care, and to always have a safe place to come home to at the end of the day. This is what I believe. This is what I will strive for every day to achieve. This is the type of politician I want to be. Let us do it.

**Members - Hear, hear.**