



Nick Duigan MLC

Legislative Council

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Electorate: Windermere

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**Mr DUIGAN** (Windermere - Inaugural Speech) - Thank you very much, Madam Deputy President and thank you, fellow members. It is my great honour and my privilege to stand before you here in this venerated Chamber to give my inaugural speech. I am sure if you each cast your minds back you will recall that vague prickly, clammy sense of anticipation that I am feeling now. Much of my professional life has involved standing up and speaking in front of people but I do not recall any one of those previous occasions having me as keenly focused as I am right now, so thank you for that.

I must say it is very nice and comforting to have some friends and family and friendly faces in the House today so thank you very much for your attendance. I acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, traditional custodians of the land upon which we meet today and pay my respects to elders, past, present and emerging.

I take this opportunity to recognise and congratulate other returned members of the Council: Mike Gaffney, member for Mersey, who demonstrated how much his work is valued by the community, elected unopposed, and has incidentally broadened my grasp of the political vernacular. I had no idea that a 'skinner' was something to be so dearly cherished and I look forward to a glass of skinner celebration juice in due course. And, of course, our absent President, Craig Farrell, returned in the seat of Derwent.

This was my first experience of standing for public office and my first election campaign and, as members would, I am sure, agree, it is not for the faint of heart. So, my congratulations to all returning members securing a further term to serve the people of your divisions, and more broadly, the people of Tasmania. I extend that congratulations to new MPs in the other place, Dean Winter, Janie Finlay and Kristie Johnston.

While on that subject I publicly acknowledge the 18 years of service given by the outgoing member for Windermere, Mr Ivan Dean. As members are doubtless aware, Mr Dean was a determined advocate for the people of Windermere and I thank him for that. I have been told his will be big shoes to fill. Confusingly, I have also been told to walk in my own shoes, so, clearly there is some work to be done around shoes. What I will endeavour to do is give an authentic version of myself.

I live in the suburb of Newstead in the city of Launceston, in the division of Windermere, and have done for most of my adult life. It is my home, the place we have chosen to raise our family. In fact, my connection to the electorate stretches back some 171 years when on a calm January day in 1850, Captain John Duigan after, safely navigating the 1500 miles from London, England, ran his ship the *Phillip Oakden* with full sails up onto Hebe Reef in the mouth of the Tamar River. Fortunately, no lives

were lost. The ship was lost, but not before she was fully salvaged and one of my favourite possessions is Captain Duigan's sea trunk, which has made its way down through the family, and now sits safe from the elements in my bedroom at home.

Perhaps, no surprise, but the wreck of the *Phillip Oakden* heralded a career change for Captain Duigan. He went on to be signal master at Low Head, and in fact, tapped out the very first electronic message to pass between Tasmania and mainland Australia. Subsequent to that, you may be interested to know, he was the lighthouse keeper at Cape Wickham on King Island. Indeed, the TasPorts trading vessel that now services King Island, is named in his honour, Captain John Duigan. And I must tell you, as a person who grew up on Flinders Island, this is seen as a huge win in the very competitive world of inter-island point scoring.

I mention Flinders Island because it was there that I spent my formative years, the family having moved to the island during the never quite eventuating land boom of the mid-1970s. My parents raised sheep, cattle, horses, cats, dogs, wombats, wallabies and kids - myself and my two older sisters, Kate and Megan, both who have travelled to be here with me today, and I thank you. Mum said she would give it six months. She stayed 40 years.

It was Aristotle who said, 'Give me the child until he is seven and I will give you the man'. Well, Madam Deputy President, at seven I had a very severe case of the mange and was shoe-less. I was about as feral as any child would want to be. Growing up on a farm on Flinders Island was a great adventure. It was there that my love of fishing and the sea developed. It was there I earned my pocket money in the abalone boats, sheepyards, and shearing sheds of the island. It was also the place where I learned to fly. Aviation has always loomed large in my life, not just because on Flinders the only way on and off is by light aircraft, but also, because my grandfather was one of the Duigan brothers, Australia's answer to the perhaps more widely known American siblings, the Wright brothers.

Again, it was a John Duigan, not the ship captain but a few generations down the line, who designed, built and flew Australia's first heavier than air, powered aircraft. It all happened on the family farm 60 kilometres north of Melbourne back in 1910. Now, sadly, the Duigans were not the first people to fly in Australia. They were beaten to that record only by a couple of weeks by the famed escapologist, Harry Houdini, who had shipped a French aeroplane out to Australia for the purposes of claiming the record, beating him by a couple of weeks.

However, the Duigan biplane was Australia's first aeroplane. Its frame was made with local mountain ash, its spars were held together with the metal straps used to pack wool bales, the engine was a one-off built by J.E. Tilley Engineering in Melbourne - the same Tilleys that for more than half a century ran Tasmania's famous Birchalls bookshops. Neither John nor Reg had seen an aircraft in the flesh, but they keenly followed developments in Europe and the Duigan biplane eventually completed more than 70 successful flights. Most unusually, for an aircraft of that vintage, it did not end up as a smoldering wreck but survives to this day very deep in the bowels of the Melbourne Museum.

As you might imagine then in my family when it comes to flying there is some implied pressure. John Duigan went on to receive the Military Cross for his flying - for gallant and distinguished service during the First World War. He was a pallbearer at the funeral of Baron Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron.

My uncles, Brian and Terry Duigan flew with great distinction during the Second World War. My aunt, Sue, was an avid private pilot and my father, John, was an early pioneer of ultralight aviation. It was here in the lawnmower engine, rag and tube world of ultralight aviation that my flying career began. Inspired by my sister who had developed this training technique, at age 13 or 14, I would take off in a single seat aeroplane at one end of the paddock and then fly along a couple of metres off the ground before landing safely at the other end. All went well and I became reasonably practised at this skill and the height I flew along at incrementally increased - until one particular morning which will remain etched in my memory forever.

Our runway was a paddock bounded at one end by a row of large macrocarpa pines and at the other end the jewelled blue waters of Bass Strait. As I flew along ever higher, it suddenly dawned on me that I had not left enough runway on which to land. If I was going to come down it was going to involve tussocks, rocks and probably the sea. I was faced with a fairly binary proposition - throttle back and crash, throttle up and fly. Madam Deputy President, I feel there are parallels between that day and this.

I am pleased to report I did not crash that day. I completed not one, but two terrifying circuits. The first time around I climbed to about 1500 feet in order to clear the pine trees which I did - with 1400 feet to spare and again not enough room to get down. The second time I cleared the pine trees by about 30 centimetres and completed the landing about 20 metres up the strip. As I came to a stop I could see my father running down the paddock waving his arms in a fairly agitated state. I did not know what to expect. Was he furious at my foolishness or was he thrilled with my daring? He was beaming. He leaned into the open cockpit, shook my hand and asked me if I wanted to have another go now that I had the hang of it. He was a good man; an irresponsible parent, but a good man. I declined the offer, climbed out white and shaking.

I learnt some valuable lessons that day. First and foremost, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Second, and perhaps more important, it is a good thing every now and again - whether it is a conscious decision or not - to step outside your comfort zone. I come to this Chamber without a great deal of legislative experience, but what I lack in that area I believe is compensated by strong family foundations, by a long business and professional record, a connection to people beyond social and political lines and a commitment to the people of Windermere. They have handed me this responsibility and whatever my future holds in this place, I will act with the people of Windermere foremost in my mind.

While I am excited and genuinely humbled to be standing here today I must admit one of the most common questions I received as I campaigned around the electorate was - 'Why?' Why would I forsake what might be the best job in the world for one here in Parliament, in politics?

The answer to this question is multi-layered. It resides in jobs and opportunity, energy and the Tamar River, but above all it lies in Tasmania and her people. I have been extremely fortunate in my work life, as one of the people who has truly made a living doing what they love. I was a jackaroo who became a journalist, a journalist who became a fisherman - not just an ordinary fisherman, a professional recreational fisherman. The past 20 years spent travelling around Tasmania, mainland Australia, and indeed, on occasions, exotic locations overseas has been a joy. *Hook, Line and Sinker*, the fishing show, is now in its twenty-first year of continuous production and its sixteenth year as a nationally aired program, which I suspect, in the annals of Tasmanian television production, is getting up there.

I recall when we struck our first national broadcast deal. We sat down with the big city network executives who told us we could have the slot as long as there was not too much Tasmanian content in the show; remember - only 2 per cent of the population. It is fair to say we took that advice with the grain of salt that it deserved. Tasmania has always been the star of *Hook, Line and Sinker*. Last year, during COVID-19 we produced a series that had nothing but Tasmanian locations in it and it was one of our best rating series ever.

Television has been a wonderfully varied career - the cut and thrust of the newsroom, a decade spent working with the forest and wood products sector in every state and territory in the land. And of course, who could forget the children's TV wars of 1994, when TasTV's Boss Poss squared off against the northern rival, Howie the Yowie? Now, for any members who are not aware of the detail, our absent President has intimate knowledge of those TV wars. Sadly both those programs and many others have disappeared from our screens. A Tasmanian program is a rare thing. Whether it is TV, print or online, local voices are important and we are poorer for their loss.

While I am predominantly known in the electorate and around the state for my work in television, my first foray into the world of business, in my early 20s, was in fact in public transport - a school bus run which served families in Hillwood, Windermere, Swan Bay and Dilston. The business grew and more runs were added: Lebrina, Turners Marsh, White Hills and Upper Blessington, with all but one of my runs within the boundaries of Windermere. I can tell you from personal experience it is a great way to get to know an area and its people, to ferry the kids to and from school. I can also tell you that halfway up the White Hills hill is an inconvenient spot to replace the clutch plate in a Bedford bus.

The electorate of Windermere is, of course, diverse. From rolling hills of Relbia in the south to the coastal plains of George Town in the north, in rough terms a 60-kilometre-long by 30-kilometre-wide section of regional Tasmania that follows the eastern side of the Tamar River. It is rich in a variety of assets. To use education as an example, there are 22 schools, that is in the order of 6000 children receiving primary or secondary to year 12 education in Windermere. Along with the schools, there is the Alanvale campus of TasTAFE, the Newnham and exciting Inveresk campuses of UTAS and the unmatched suite of research and teaching facilities on offer at the Australian Maritime College (AMC).

The AMC holds a special place in my heart. A few years ago I enrolled in the business school at the college. As I travelled around the country making my fishing

show, I was able to complete a degree in maritime management and logistics. Tasmania is served by a long, complex supply chain. I believe it is useful to have an understanding of the mechanics of that process. Windermere itself has a number of industries which rely on the smooth running of those supply chains, for traditional beef, lamb and wool. It is one of the state's most productive fruit growing regions, traditionally apples and pears, and more recently cherries and berries. It is, of course, as I pointed out to the member for Rosevears, one of Australia's premier wine growing regions, Pipers Brook, Clover Hill, Bay of Fires, to name but a few of the nationally and indeed, internationally significant labels.

Madam Deputy President, Windermere holds the manufacturing, economic engine room of our state, Bell Bay. A tick under 60 per cent of all Tasmania's manufactured exports are produced at Bell Bay. It is and has been for generations a driver of employment and stability for the region. I can also tell you from personal experience the stretch between Bell Bay and Low Head represents one of the finest King George whiting fisheries anywhere in the planet, but that is another story.

Windermere is also among our most socially diverse areas. Much of my campaign effort was spent walking the streets and suburbs of the electorate knocking on doors and asking people to give me their time. It was in fact my favourite campaign activity. There is nothing like a good walk interspersed with some spirited conversations to keep you on your toes and I would like to thank those many people who did give me their time and share their thoughts and issues with me.

Health, housing, jobs and fishing were among the common topics. Often these were a general chat on the state of things, but at other times people would share with me their deeply personal stories. There is a gulf between the people that have the opportunity and wherewithal to enjoy the many gifts that Windemere has to offer and the people who have not.

Since embarking on my campaign, I have had the opportunity to attend a number of industry forums and events and almost without exception there is a common and emerging challenge of labour. The access to enough skilled people to fill the jobs. As an example, Master Builders of Tasmania forecast \$16 billion dollars in private and public construction works over the next ten years. To meet this demand the Tasmanian building and construction workforce needs to grow by 25 per cent during this term of government. That is 6500 well-paid skilled new job opportunities. The story is similar across community and aged care, tourism and hospitality, agriculture and health. Access to a suitably skilled workforce looms as one of the key challenges to meeting forecast growth. While this may be a challenge for industry, for the people of Windermere and the people of Tasmania, I believe it presents enormous opportunity.

While exploring the topics of opportunity in Windermere, I must mention the opportunities I believe exist in the realm of the fast-emerging hydrogen industry. As one of the very rare jurisdictions worldwide that enjoys 100 per cent renewable power, Tasmania is uniquely placed in this area and the potential is immense. If I may, I will use some of my maritime industry knowledge to illustrate the point. Currently, the global shipping fleet burns 350 million tonnes of fuel oil each year, but the industry has a stated commitment to halve omissions by 2050. To do this, it will require an alternative fuel source and hydrogen - in the form of green ammonia - is being locked



in as the lead technology to achieve this omissions reduction. This represents an emerging market in the hundreds of millions of tonnes and shipping is just one such example. Bell Bay currently enjoys three critical early adopter advantages; renewable power, abundant fresh water and a deepwater port. While these factors are in our favour, this will be a highly competitive space. To realise this opportunity, we will need to pursue it. It is my great hope we will see Bell Bay and the Tamar as key assets in Australia's renewable energy future.

Another of my great hopes lies at the other end of the Tamar Estuary. For the past 40 years of my life the river has been a key reason for choosing to live in Launceston. For me and thousands of others it has been at the centre of recreation, sporting and leisure activities, early mornings rowing, Wednesday night sailing, summer days waterskiing and fishing. The river has been a pivotal asset to the people of Launceston and beyond. In its current state however, many of those activities have been either lost or seriously curtailed.

The Launceston and Henley rowing regatta was on 6 February 2021 - I believe the 180<sup>th</sup> running of this annual event - it was late in the program and my wife Amanda and I stood on the bank watching an unfolding drama. One of the boats, a single scull had midrace become stuck in the mud. At this stage it did not look like mud, there was a centimetre or two of water over the top of the mud, but not enough to float the boat. In the ensuing 20 minutes or so it took to organise a rescue, the boat was high and dry, 15 or 20 metres from the water's edge. The end result was a 15-year-old rower having to crawl through the stinky mud - her words - on her belly to the rescue boat. I understand there is no silver bullet and I am a believer in science above all things, but I also believe the Tamar is the heart of our city. For the Tamar, we can do better.

Watching from the bank, my decision to stand in the electorate of Windermere was galvanised on that day. Four-and-a-half months down the track and here we are. This has been anything but a solo pursuit. There are people I would like to thank. To my old friend, Tim Robertson, you planted the seed, you managed my expectations. It was a great comfort to have you steering my ship. I have great respect and admiration for our Premier, Peter Gutwein. Thank you for your strong leadership, your wise counsel and continued support. To another old friend, the Deputy Premier, Jeremy Rockcliff, who made time for me when literally there was none, thank you very much.

I felt embraced by the Tasmanian Liberal Party. My cards were stamped at a pretty young age when on the farm on Flinders Island Mum and Dad would fly off to buy their rams from Malcolm Fraser. We were then, and remain, a Liberal family. My thanks go to state director, Stuart Smith, state president, Rod Scurrah, party stalwart Dorothy Dehais, faithful lieutenants, Simon Wood, Steve Miller, Geoff and Leah Page. I value the guidance and wisdom of federal member for Bass Bridget Archer; Bass MHAs Sarah Courtney and Michael Ferguson; Lyons MHA Guy Barnett; and Senators Wendy Askew, Richard Colbeck and Eric Abetz.

I should probably confess that up until a couple of weeks ago my last visit to Parliament House was in 1981, with my grade 6 Flinders Island classmates. To the Leader of the Government Leonie Hiscutt; the member for Prosser Jane Howlett; and the staff of the Legislative Council, thank you for your warm welcome. I greatly appreciate it. It has been my privilege to know the member for Rosevears Jo Palmer

for many years as a friend and as a colleague, as a person of the highest integrity; a person, I am learning, of huge political ability and with a very solid sense of humour. I am grateful to the entire Palmer family including Andrew, who cannot be here today. I cannot begin to thank him enough for his warm generosity, for his time and energy.

I acknowledge my business partner, my co-producer, but mostly my friend, Andrew Hart, who has generously supported me through this transition. I cannot imagine a better person to work with over a long period of time. Thank you. To the world's best cameraman, Michael 'Wally' Nesham who captured it all, and to Sally Wilson, the genius editor who stitches it all together, thank you.

Thank you also to the Smith family - Harry, Jan, Raymond and Jacinta; the wider Duigan family - my sisters, Kate and Megan and cousins John, Jenny and Mick. Thanks also to my mum and dad who are sadly no longer with us. They gave me a great start, and I thank you for giving me that start and the confidence to have a go, as well as the humility to understand that it is better to have tried and failed than not to have tried at all.

Of course, my family - my girls, Millie, Imogen and Eliza. Unfortunately Imogen is not here today, she is dealing with not one, but two, year 11 exams. Madam Deputy President, you know things are good at home when your three teenage daughters agree to go wobbleboarding with you in an election campaign. Girls, you make me so proud, you often surprise me and I love to watch you grow. Finally, Amanda, my wife, my partner. I would not be standing here today without your strength, your continued love, support and belief in me. Thank you. I would not have done it without you.

Members, colleagues and friends, I thank you for your attendance. To the people of Windermere, thank you for your faith and Madam Deputy President, I note the Governor's speech.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT** - I take this opportunity to commend the member for Windermere on his inaugural speech. The manner in which he delivered it had a very good mix of humour, history and humility. He spoke about those important influences in his life and the matters of importance to the people who put him here. I am sure you will do a fine job in representing them. I am sure I can speak on behalf of all of us in saying that we look forward to your further contributions - which will not be uninterrupted.