



Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP

House of Assembly

Date: 20 August 2015

Electorate: Franklin

---

**Ms WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Inaugural) - Madam Speaker, I begin by acknowledging that we sit today on the traditional land of the Mouheneener people and I pay my respects to the custodians of culture and country. I express my sorrow for all that has been taken from them and the other indigenous peoples of Australia.

I congratulate Madam Speaker on being selected as the first woman in the role of Speaker. In her remarks on the first sitting day Madam Speaker identified the challenges for women breaking through the glass ceiling and I am proud to be the first woman to represent the Greens in the seat of Franklin. I note with pride that the proportion of members in this House is now 44 per cent women, and I look forward to all our parties working to bring this up to at least 50 per cent at the next election.

In my speech today I will touch on topics that have divided Tasmanians for decades, perhaps even centuries. At the outset I want to state my belief that what unites us, both as Tasmanians and fellow travellers on this life journey, is much greater than anything that divides us. Having been elected, I commit to listening to my community and considering their perspectives, including those of the members in this House.

I would like to make special mention of my colleagues from the Greens who I am looking forward to working with, the member for Denison, Cassy O'Connor, and the member for Bass, Andrea Dawkins. I acknowledge the dedication of the former member for Franklin and Greens Leader, Nick McKim, who has served Franklin as its Greens member for 13 years. He has been a relentless advocate for the forests and a fearless champion of our party. I am also sorry that my time in this House does not cross over with the previous member for Bass, Kim Booth. His banter, determination and terrier-like attention to details will be missed.

The independent councillor, Liz Smith, has been my colleague and friend during my six years of serving on the Huon Valley Council. I acknowledge her hard work and determination in the defence of truth and in the interests of the community. I would not be here today without the combined efforts of many Tasmanian Greens members, especially those from the Franklin

branch. I want to pay particular attention to Rosalie Gorton-Lee, convenor Austra Maddox and Alan Taylor in this regard. The unpaid work and positive energy of these people and of many other local supporters is the base upon which I stand.

I am very proud to represent the electorate of Franklin, not only the more than 11 000 people who voted Green at the last election, but also everyone who believes the role of government is to ensure the just rule of law, the fair distribution of resources and the protection of our environment.

I cannot make this speech without acknowledging the two former Greens leaders, Christine Milne and Bob Brown, both towering legends of the environmental movement in this country and overseas. Their contributions to this state are numerous. I thank Christine for her vision of a clean and green Tasmania which is now front and centre of our state's branding in tourism and fine foods. She is a battler who had the foresight decades ago to map our state's future in renewable energy.

Bob's special gift for working with people, combined with his unwavering dedication to protecting wild places, has resulted in Tasmania's international position as one of the unique treasures on this planet. The success of the campaigns to save the Franklin River and create the World Heritage Area of the south-west is testament to the strength of his leadership. I thank him and his partner Paul Thomas for their friendship and guidance.

The history of the Greens in Tasmania was born from the fight for the forests. My entry into politics is from a different background. My parents grew up in country Victoria. My father's first training was in forestry, but we moved to Canberra for his work at CSIRO. I am the eldest of five girls and was raised in an environment of security and love. I have learned that a person cannot take this for granted at birth and I have seen firsthand the stunting effects of children who were raised without love.

I was schooled in the Irish Catholic tradition. Fortunately, it was during a period of the church's history when the New Testament's teachings were dominant. I absorbed a strong sense of social obligation, the importance of a fair distribution of resources and a healthy disrespect for hypocrisy among the wealthy and powerful.

I was lucky enough as a girl in the 1970s to attend a Catholic High School that encouraged me to consider a role in life other than a traditional female role. My core personal values of social justice, sharing and equity and a belief in the strength of community inspired me to look with inquiry at the world around me, and ultimately led me to find residence in the values of the Greens.

I was not involved in the 1983 Franklin Dam campaign, but I did watch with excitement on the nightly TV the images of people massing together. I was occupied at that time with another of the great issues of our era - the threat of nuclear war and the danger of uranium contamination of ecological systems. In 1986 I participated in an awareness-raising campaign at the Pine Gap base in Central Australia to draw attention to our role in spying on neighbouring countries through satellite tracking systems and signals intelligence and to its links with nuclear weapon systems.

I was arrested during that campaign and spent two weeks in the Alice Springs jail. The seventieth anniversary of Hiroshima recently has reminded me that global peace is far from achieved and that nuclear weapons are still prolific.

My training as an epidemiologist has taught me the benefits of looking for the most upstream issues that influence the problems we need to solve. In the area of health, for example, we are confronted with sharply increasing rates of obesity, diabetes, cancers and immune dysfunction. There are multiple causes for these, not all of which are in the control of governments. One main driver is the unhealthy command that very large corporations have over our food chain. I wholeheartedly support legislation to alert people to the dangers of refined, non-nutritious foods, to improve food labelling and to remove the unfair impost of environmental health regulations on small food operators.

Tasmania, like the rest of Australia, is on the crest of a wave of social dislocation and individual isolation expressed in hyper-consumption and galloping rates of family breakdown, violence, child abuse and suicide. I commend the Government on its impressive program to tackle family violence. I think there is even more that we must do. We led Australia in our strong response to gun law legislation. The statistics show that if you remove access to guns in a society, you have fewer violent deaths.

What we see now is an association between family violence and alcohol. Alcohol is ubiquitously used in our society to relieve stress. However, perversely it often has the opposite effect and fuels violence. It is often the case that we ignore the ever-present and persistent threat and focus on new and unfamiliar ones. Alcohol-related damage is endemic in our community. We can strengthen our response to family violence as leaders by promoting moderation in consumption, limiting the proliferation of outlets that supply alcohol, restricting advertising and increasing support for recovery programs.

Our relationship with nature is well known to contribute to our level of happiness and to alleviate feelings of anxiety. I moved to Tasmania,

amongst other reasons, to connect with the wilderness. Peter Dombrovski's calendar images of dense greenness and unspoiled beauty spoke to me of places that were intrinsically special. They mean even more to people raised in mega-cities where pollution is the air you breathe, the ground underfoot is concrete and the food you buy could be contaminated.

The people of Franklin at the moment are living under the threat of two proposed developments that are environmentally, economically and socially unsustainable. People who have moved to the area in the past decade would be shocked to learn that a biomass burning plant has been approved and on the books for more than a decade now at Southwood. Burning biomass for large-scale electricity generation is an ill-considered idea for how we should use our native forests. The evidence from overseas is clear. Instead of cutting carbon emissions, biomass burning increases them. In one large power station in Yorkshire it was by more than four times. Biomass burning for electricity generation is far more expensive for the consumer than solar and in all cases has required significant public investment.

The second development I referred to was a proposed woodchip transport depot to be located on crown land at the edge of the Huon River. The overwhelming response from residents to this social and environmental disaster was 'no'. The recent proposal was rejected as invalid by the Tasmanian Planning Commission and I and others will strongly resist any attempt to revive it or to bypass the proper planning processes.

An excessive amount of subsidies have been given to the forest industry over the past two decades. These could have been spent instead on hospitals that employ nurses or teachers in the regional schools. From the recent review of Forestry Tasmania, we know it has had a long history of losing taxpayers' money. Despite promises to cut this support, in the past two financial years there have been cash transfers of \$65 million. This plan continues the model of governments leading the market. There can be an argument for this fiscal approach when we provide seed funding to kickstart new businesses for time-limited periods at the start of their growth curve. For example, this should be happening now to the renewable sector. In forestry, though, we should not be trying to create a market where one does not exist. The sector in its current form will not recover, given permanently changed market conditions and global expectations about the provenance of wood products.

Our forest history is powerfully symbolic within the community. The average Tasmanian believes forestry makes up nearly 30 per cent of gross state product, a quarter of the workforce and more than one-third of exports. However, far from dominating our economy, the record shows that forestry is now a very small contributor. At the end of 2013 it contributed 2 per cent

of gross state product, 1.5 per cent of employment and 5 per cent of exports. Jobs in native forestry were even fewer - less than 0.5 per cent. Propping up the industry works counter to our state's clean and green tourism and food industry strategy and jeopardises our current future ecotourism industry. Worse still, it perpetuates a state of paralysis in parts of regional Tasmania. My experience from the Huon is that this Government's inability to accept reality on this matter has a terrible effect on timber communities.

We need to celebrate the heritage that has been the forestry industry, just as we celebrate the heritage that has been the apple and pear industry. When Britain turned towards Europe in 1973, the apple export industry collapsed overnight. The Government funded the tree-pull scheme and orchardists were forced to leave the area or change tack and diversify if they wanted the money. This is the situation the forestry industry finds itself in now as the market for high-volume woodchips has withered. We need to help timber communities adjust to conditions where taxpayers' money is no longer used to subsidise industries without a future. The remnants of the apple industry have managed over time to use the land and people skills to branch into the highly successful industries of cherries and strawberries. Just as South Australia is coming to terms with the demise of its car industry, so we should be leading with the transition out of forestry in its current form. There is and always will be a market for high-quality wood products. The vision for the forestry industry has to be based in economic reality and have as a first principle the maintenance of biodiversity and the conservation of old-growth forests. It includes the complete exit from native forest harvesting, the refinement of plantation harvesting and a focus on using our native forest estate to generate carbon credits.

The declaration of a World Heritage Area in the south-west and the recent extensions to it is a great achievement by the many thousands of people in the Tasmanian environment movement. The United Nations World Heritage Area Committee has urged the Australian and Tasmanian governments to ensure that logging and mining are not permitted within the entirety of the property and that there is adequate protection of the outstanding universal value of the property.

I will oppose any attempts to infringe the boundaries of this region, including proposals for tourism development. We cannot afford to reject the international consensus on our World Heritage Area and the Tarkine or we risk damaging our tourism industry and our green brand. From the United Nations to CNN, these areas have been praised as unique in the world.

The declaration of the Tarkine as a national park is unfinished business. This cool temperate rain forest has over 60 rare threatened and endangered species of flora and fauna and houses ancient and present indigenous

cultural sites. I understand the immense importance of this region to the future prosperity of the Tasmanian community and the world and I commit to working during my time in Parliament to protect and preserve it.

As I stand here today, the extent of human interference on planetary systems is truly awesome. In his 2015 encyclical Pope Francis called global warming a major threat to life on the planet and states that it is most due to human activity. He embraces the science that shows humanity and the natural environment are in great peril. The president of the World Bank Group recently said that this is a make-or-break decade for action on global warming. If we continue on with our business of consuming planetary resources as we currently are, our grandchildren will be attempting to survive in a world of seven degrees above global average. We know it will be extremely difficult for people to function in a world that is even two degrees warmer.

Unexpectedly, the impact of climate change on ocean warming is most apparent off the east coast of Tasmania. The waters between here and New Zealand are warming two to three times faster than the rest of the world, the water is getting saltier and invasive sea urchins have already killed nearly 90 per cent of our great kelp forests. This warmer water threatens the long-term viability of the aquaculture industry. It is also the reason we can expect more extreme storms and tides along our already eroded low-lying coastlines. We need strong park borders to protect marine and land biodiversity and to give plants and animals the best chance to adapt to global warming.

The images of people flooding across the channel into Britain from drought-prone southern Europe and North Africa is likely to become unfortunately commonplace in future. In an increasingly crowded and inhospitable planet Tasmania will be an even more desirable place to live. To respond to these challenges, government and businesses need futurist thinking. We need 100-year planning for climate change, to prepare ourselves for migration and to equip ourselves with infrastructure and skills.

This is a real opportunity, for example, for us to develop a specialty in aged care, an industry that provides massive employment for both high and low-skilled workers. I do not believe we can stay neutral in the fight against climate disruption, for moral as well as self-interested reasons. The threat of climate change is an opening to innovate and lead progress towards the clean revolution - a clean energy, low-carbon economy. As leaders we need to accept that the fruits of our work may not be seen during our time in office but will be valued by those whose survival depends on us - our children's children.

Tasmania is blessed with the natural resources to go completely renewable in energy production. This is a priority for the planet and a marketable asset for us today. The launch of the Tasmanian branch of the Electric Vehicle Association last week - and I recognised the minister's attendance there - is an example of one such opportunity. With an investment as tiny as \$1 million we could create an electric vehicle-charging network across the whole state. This would be a huge attraction for tourists, as well as providing Tasmanians with the road towards freedom from the high cost of fossil fuel transport. At present we send \$1.3 billion out of the state each year on fuel costs.

I pledge to do everything I can during my time in this House to facilitate action on these issues, to move our conversations past denial or resignation about climate change to a position of hope and action. In my nearly six years as a councillor in the Huon Valley I have learnt that, despite the appearance of an irrevocable divide between my views and those of other councillors, we voted together on the majority of issues. There is far, far more that unites us as members than divides us. I believe we all share a sincere desire to improve the living conditions of our fellow Tasmanians and to work to make sure our children and grandchildren will live in as comfortable a situation as we do.

What I contribute to this House is the knowledge that these material conditions are fundamentally determined by the extent that our environmental systems function. We must have air and water free from pollution, the biodiversity of our foreshores, seas and forests, and land to cultivate food. I have an optimistic outlook. I see the seeds of a sustainable and happy future in the actions of people today.

I would not be here without the love and kindness of my parents, Brian and Patricia Woodruff, who cannot be here today, and their acceptance of whatever path I have chosen to follow in life. Most of all I thank my partner, Paul Gibson, and our daughters Mae and Tilda. They inspire and support me and are the testing grounds for all my ideas.

I realise, Madam Speaker, that I have been given an unusually long time to speak uninterrupted in this House and I appreciate that. I have enjoyed the opportunity and thank members for their attention and I look forward to working together on the challenging issues ahead.

**Members** - Hear, hear.