

## Inaugural Speech – Joan Rylah MP



Joan Rylah MP

House of Assembly

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Electorate: Braddon

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## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

**Mrs RYLAH** (Braddon - Inaugural) - Madam Speaker, I rise to formally second the motion.

Thank you for the opportunity to make my inaugural speech on opening day of the forty-eighth Parliament.

Firstly, I add my congratulation and endorsement regarding your election as Speaker. I wish to extend congratulations to all members on their election success, especially those who like myself are here for the first time. I congratulate Premier Will Hodgman and the team of Liberal members from the previous Parliament who collectively put together an outstanding policy platform and campaign which was instrumental in our success. I thank the Premier for his disciplined leadership.

I take this opportunity to thank on behalf of my electorate the former members for Braddon, Brenton Best and Paul O'Halloran, for their work and commitment. I look forward to the debates of this House. I seek positive change and a brighter future for Tasmania, in particular for the people of Braddon.

My path to this place has taken somewhat longer than many here present today. I bring to this role more than 30 years experience in business and agriculture and eight years as a teacher. My perspective may be different from many when they enter Parliament but mine represents a large and growing demographic who have experienced and seen the errors of past political decisions and the cost this has wrought on our region. I am energised, humbled and enthusiastically take on the responsibility given to me by my constituents.

Why have I chosen to enter and participate in politics in this state? Simply put, I am motivated to fight for that brighter future so that every Tasmanian can have a future living here, so that every community can have a future, most particularly so that every person in Braddon can have the services, infrastructure and opportunities they need and deserve. Many of you may not be aware of the depth of feeling many in Braddon expressed regarding the multiple threats to their existence over the past few years, be it the loss of their business enterprise, loss of jobs, loss of access to recreational land, or loss of family who have or will be forced to leave to find work, education or health services. Many of the actions in the recent past have left deep political wounds in Braddon. To put forward that Braddon be a place of social and environmental experiment is to grossly misunderstand the people who live there. For government to put obstacles in the way of duly made decisions, to shut down the sustainable and world-class industries of forestry and mining in the name of appeasement of a minority, does not sit well in Braddon, where private enterprise and Tasmania's wealth in large part is created.

During the recent campaign the word 'treason' came up more often than one would expect in a modern democratic country. That is the depth of feeling. There is much scepticism of the previous government and much building of bridges needs to take place in this term of government.

There is a completely lopsided economy in Tasmania, and this is often talked about. The people I talk to in Braddon understand the incredibly important role of private business. On the other hand we in Braddon often do not grasp that others in our State and country whose incomes are not dependent on enterprise, do not get it that every person needs to earn their living and must be given every opportunity to do so. Blocking, knocking and stopping people without valid reason is unsustainable. We all need to contribute.

The cost of this economic imbalance in Tasmania is human. These are the deep and weeping wounds being created in this magnificent place - tragic health outcomes, net migration, loss of services, loss of wealth. A place where the cost of living pressures produce poverty from people on fixed incomes, poor education, low participation rates and on and on. At the top in just about every measurement of social disadvantage we find this State and this region in particular.

Let me give you one example. The value of homes in Smithton declined by around 53 per cent during the forestry shutdown. As you know this loss is taken from the personal equity of the owners. Just imagine for one moment how you would feel seeing 53 per cent of the value of your asset disappear because the government

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of the day was making decisions that they euphemistically called an 'economy in transition'. Let me add, of course, there were no or few buyers or tenants for that property, be it agricultural or residential. There were no other options for these people. I hope that gives you some insight to the background conversations in regional Tasmania that I heard during the campaign and in the preceding 12 years.

Like Dame Enid Lyons, I was born in Smithton from a family of early settlers, and like her and many Tasmanians I have a strong sense of place, as Sarah referred to. For me, my place is in Braddon, especially those wild places, be it the islands - Three Hummock, Walker, Robbins, Hunter or Trefoil - where we holidayed with our kids, or where as a child I was out in my father's boat and exploring, or living at Woolnorth with our young family or as a teenager, riding down to Sandy Cape. I was 16 years old when I first rode alone from Redpa to the Arthur River, then met the King family and on to Temma Farm. A short stop at Temma to pick up Ben Fenton and Liz and on their piebald horses, the big draughts and the old Fergie tractor with our gear, before heading off down the track to the cape. This ride was done in just one day - a huge ride, arriving in the dark in driving rain and cold to the shack, having used the horses to pull the tractor out of the quicksand on the beaches and the huge piles of foam, and then for the girls to be allocated the 'bird cage'. That was the name for the more private bunk room but it was very cold.

After a day's rest, riding on to the Interview River and the Pieman Heads and back again, looking for cattle with that grand old stockman, Ben Fenton. Then going out on the big fishing boats that came into the shelter in the bay when the big blow came in and living off crayfish and fish for nearly a week - breakfast, lunch and dinner - because there was nothing else fresh.

These are the experiences a place like Braddon offered young and daring people as I grew up. The mountains, the beaches, the heath plains, the wildflowers, the forests and the wonders of reafforestation. Guessing the ages of forests and looking for the evidence of the old tramways and mills, the fossicking, the tracks and the stories, the wind and the horizontal rain.

I love these places and what they offer, both for recreation and for enterprise, their beauty, their wildness and dangers, and I will pursue the unlocking of these places so that once again, responsible use through local custodians is not only possible but encouraged.

While my primary education was in Smithton, I was blessed with having a clever and extended family. One in particular I wish to mention today was my uncle, Dr Donald Martin. Uncle Don or 'UD', as he signed his cards and letters to us, was head scientist at the CSIRO in Hobart. He was a doctor of botany and a major influence on my life, creating in me a love of science and a desire to understand. I spent many holidays with my aunt and uncle, driving around what was then the brand-new Hydro roads on the west coast in the 1960s, getting punctures from incredibly coarse gravel and learning about the plants, the soils, hydro-electricity, clouds, physics and chemistry, and how to fill a tyre with buttongrass to limp back to the Hydro camp because you have already had three punctures on that day.

Uncle Don loved science and was enormously learned, but he loved to give and share his understanding on matters in a kind and non-patronising way. It was he who went from Hobart during, and again at the end of, the Second World War to England, by ship, with a mission to find and develop a successful way to ship our apples to England. That technique and later, when he led the breeding of apple and pear varieties, is what helped make Tasmania the major exporter it was, the Apple Isle. He was an innovator and was always looking for opportunities to apply his scientific knowledge and research.

Together with his great lifelong friend Claudio Alcorso, he worked collaboratively for over 40 years, growing vines, recreating a viticulture industry in Tasmania, as there was one here in the early settlement, as he always told us. They made wine, some great wine and advocated for cool, temperate vineyards in this state from early as the 1950s. We saw the vines and heard the problems of mould and onshore winds and later tested his successes and not so successful wines.

He took soil from what was valueless heath land at Montagu that my father had just bought. I am sure there was a plan behind this but I was not privy to these discussions. Through what I now know was test plots he showed my dad, and us, how adding different trace elements turned this land from useless into wonderfully productive land. This was the first time these acid sand plains were made productive in Tasmania and are now commonplace. It is this sort of land that today we are turning into new dairying land to help create the 40 per cent increase in production we seek to fill our milk factories.

One last story of this man's legacy in which I shared. Don legally introduced Pacific oysters to Tasmania, gaining the permits to import the stock and preparing the science to support their disease-free status and effect on the environment. I remember him talking of the importance of these issues of quarantine and disease. This was in the 1960s thus laying the foundation for the oyster industry of today. I was there when the first bag was tipped from dad's dinghy into Duck Bay. We went from location to location seeding the beds all carefully drawn on these old maritime maps. As kids do, I recall rather reluctantly eating oyster for the first time in my life. As Don predicted, over time and through natural selection these Pacific oysters would become some of the best in

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the world. Science, clever people and innovation can produce amazing opportunity. These were the lessons I learned but often these innovations take time to reach potential.

Living in Smithton meant countless unique opportunities. As a girl of 11 I went in a boat with dad and a young US marine to look for shellfish off the islands. Dad was open to innovation and Allen Hansen, now managing director of Tasmanian Seafoods Pty Ltd, was the young man with us that day. I was there when Al put on this weird thick suit and disappeared over the side of the boat. I know my eyes resembled those of a crayfish as I watched him dive and in minutes resurface with black-lip abalone in his hand. I did not understand the significance of this event but I remember that Mr Hansen was pretty excited. He had described to dad what sort of condition the abalone needed and dad had taken him directly to one of the best spots, even today, for this shellfish. All the talk at that time was about our export future being in Asia. With his scientific research and experiences in Vietnam, I listened to one very dynamic and fascinating discussion about opportunity and new frontiers. I salute Al for pioneering this multimillion dollar industry he created in Australia.

At 12 I went to Friends School in Hobart and life changed dramatically. I was a boarder and only home four times a year. I might as well have gone to Mars as life was so different at school. Academic achievement and sport became challenges I relished. Sport, science and maths were my thing and the challenge of being as good, if not better, than my colleagues surfaced. Life was now my oyster.

A reality check occurred in my first year of matriculation. Returning to school after Easter by car, I was a passenger in a fatal car accident. Today I wear a yellow ribbon. Without a seatbelt I was seriously injured and suddenly my sense of being bulletproof disappeared. I learned much from this period as I struggled to keep up with my school friends and cope with the operations and issues of this accident. I became even more determined to succeed. I sort of accepted my physical limitations. I learned lots about compassion through this experience and to become humble enough to ask for help. My life took a new and different path.

I strongly believe that compassion for others is the glue that holds a community together. When parts of our society lose compassion towards each other then the glue that binds us disintegrates. I have seen this very clearly in recent years in Tasmania. However, when the compassion is re-engaged our communities create amazing outcomes.

My 28-year career in business, specifically investment advice, was full-on, exhilarating and very progressive. I was able to give to others, and I gained much from making the world a better place for people. Company directorships, management, senior roles in the fast lane of business in Sydney, roles on boards, all diversified my experience and knowledge. In 2006 another turning point arrived.

To understand what was happening in our lives my husband, Rod, and I sold our practice and set off alone with six horses to ride from Cooktown down the National Trail. We covered 3 500 kilometres with packhorses over nine months. It was hard work and my hat goes off to our early settlers. That way of life is enormously tough.

As we trekked down the Great Divide I saw enormous hardship in rural communities. I rarely saw wealth but there was amazing generosity. I saw more mental health issues that I knew existed. People in the bush going through unrelentingly difficult financial times suffer and much more needs to be done to support these individuals and their communities. We need to deliver frontline services as well as build the infrastructure that will be needed tomorrow. We all get to share in the wealth that people in our regions create. This experience led me to question the direction and future of Tasmania.

So to my vision. Our government must create cheaper energy to facilitate the growth of industry, advanced manufacturing and downstream processing of the commodities we produce so well from our mining and primary sectors in Braddon. We need to make power less costly so that people on fixed incomes can afford this essential service. This is my vision for our future.

I am pro-development and represent those people who stand on their own two feet, fiercely independent and stoic. I have great respect for those in a society who get it that money is simply the way we transfer value. Money is nothing more than this. It could be cowry shells or wallaby skins or Bitcoins. If you create something of value others will pay you for it and you and your enterprise is rewarded, and if you manage that enterprise well you will make a profit and pay tax. Money, profit and paying tax are not dirty words but they are the backbone of our economy. How much tax one pays has to again become the badge of honour, as it was post-World War II.

Where are we honouring our mining companies who pay us so much to the wellbeing of this state? Where are we recognising those hugely successful businesspeople and businesses based in this state for their direct and indirect monetary contribution to this state? It is unspoken and hidden, therefore these dollars are easily dismissed and counted as of low value. In my vision of the future these organisations, these people, should be duly recognised. After all it is their contributions to our state that allow us to live here. It should become an aspiration for many to lead the state in the way they do. I believe that success must be measured on how much

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you contribute to our state and nation and not how much you suck dry by putting your hand out. This is my vision of our future.

In years gone by the majority of people did not speak up because they believed commonsense would prevail in government. To them it was self-evident that government would do all it could to ensure private enterprise would proceed. Tasmania must progress and give its people, our children and our grandchildren, the chances they need to prosper. Therefore it follows that commonsense must now prevail and we must support private enterprise, innovative and clever people and grow our economy. This is my vision.

After contesting my first election I wish to sincerely thank my great team of helpers. I want to thank our party members who rallied and shared their support and time with me. As we all know, our party members are conflicted in this crazy, multimember Hare-Clark system. To all my supporters in Braddon for sign sites and the hundreds of ways you helped bring off this amazing victory of more than 58 per cent support in Braddon - four out of five Liberal members elected - my gratitude and thanks.

To Tony Rundle, Darcy Tronson, Sam McQuestin, Senator Richard Colbeck, Dennis Austin, Leigh Newman, Jenny and Ian Chalk, Brett Whiteley MHR and to Jane Lovell, I thank each of you for your personal guidance and insights. To my fellow members of Braddon here today and to Kyron, thank you for a campaign well played. I look forward to the change we can bring about for a brighter better Braddon and Tasmania.

**Members** - Hear, Hear