



Josh Willie MLC

Legislative Council

Date: 25 May 2016

Electorate: Elwick

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - Mr President, it is with pride and great respect for this Chamber that I rise to speak on matters relating to the 10.5 per cent pay raise. Before I do, I take this occasion to deliver my inaugural speech.

It is with enormous respect that I also acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal community as the traditional and enduring custodians of the country on which we are meeting today. I acknowledge that they have occupied and cared for this land over countless generations and we celebrate their continuing contribution to the life of this region.

To be elected to the Tasmanian Legislative Council as a Labor member is a great honour. Craig, I am delighted to join you here in the upper House and I look forward to working with you over the coming years.

I am so proud to be here and I thank the electorate of Elwick for giving me this great privilege. It is a very humbling experience. I will endeavour at all times to work with determination, compassion and commitment. I thank members and the staff of the Legislative Council, in particular the Clerk, David Pearce and the Deputy Clerk, Sue McLeod for making me feel so welcome.

I also acknowledge the former member for Elwick, Adriana Taylor, and the contribution she made to the northern suburbs. As a community member I thank her for this.

Prior to my election I taught at a local primary school. Apart from the school community, I was unknown in the electorate. Many people told me the task I faced was impossible. However, on the doorsteps of the many homes I visited there was a prevailing mood for change.

My wife Holly and I reside in Elwick. Through the campaign experience I learned so much about Elwick's people. I learned there was a strong sense of community across the electorate, and a fighting spirit. People were looking for a younger voice in parliament, and debate that inspires and clearly articulates values. The people of the northern suburbs want to know what their politicians stand for. Many issues of concern were raised with me. I

will work very hard not to let down the people who have put their trust in me.

While these issues are very important to the quality of all our lives, I also make the point there is so much to celebrate about the Elwick electorate: its fabulous scenery, its enormous potential to attract more business and jobs, the diversity of its people and not to forget, wonderful places such as MONA, the Moonah Arts Centre and the GASP boardwalk.

At this point I acknowledge and thank the many people who supported my campaign. My presence in this Chamber is the result of a collective effort. I have a deep sense of gratitude for the time Penny Fried, Robin and Kathy Fox, and Danny Keegan gave to my campaign and their relentless door-knocking. They were supported by many other friends and members of the community - a group of people who are not necessarily political but wanted to offer their time and energy.

I also thank members of the Labor Party for their support: Terry Aulich, who led my campaign, Scott Bacon and Jenny McLeod for generously sharing their knowledge; present and past members of parliament, Labor staff and party members including members of the Glenorchy branch who helped join me on different occasions walking the streets of Elwick or to lend a helping hand.

Thank you also to my extended family for their support. Then, there is the unwavering support of my wife Holly and my mum, Jenny. Holly has been a constant source of encouragement and has kept my family life on an even keel in the chaos of the campaign. Holly and I are expecting our first child in October. She was incredibly stoic through the first trimester of pregnancy, which allowed me to be out in the community talking to people.

My mum door-knocked with me constantly and spoke to many people on my behalf. Her belief in me never wavered. Every day she said 'You can do this'. I am fortunate to have grown up in a supportive family. My parents believed in me and dared me to dream. I have learned that hard work accompanies opportunity. Mind you, I do not think my parents could ever imagine when they gave me the middle name Barton, a family name initially chosen by my great-great-grandmother for her son in honour of Australia's prime minister, I would end up in parliament myself.

I find myself often using the word 'learn' in this speech already. Both of my parents trained as teachers. Good teachers are always learners. I bring with me to this House a passionately held view that education is a lifelong process. I have much to learn in my newly elected position. I also know that education is one of the key concerns for the people of Elwick.

I know the difference that opportunity can make to a life. Like many others, my parents had access to university, only made possible by the Whitlam government's abolition of upfront fees and studentship programs. As one from the next generation I benefited in so many ways from the opportunity made available to my parents. I am passionate we have policies that allow all citizens to raise their educational standards, not just the lucky ones like me.

Students from my electorate are not any less intelligent but their educational opportunities are not the same without needs-based funding. Education is fundamental to gaining the understanding we need to contribute to our society. Lives are transformed and empowered when we learn. It is a tool of social justice. We need a vision of opportunity where no matter our personal circumstances, we can flourish and achieve. A commitment to equity should permeate all we do. Let us face it, education is a fundamental driver of economic development. Investing in education now is not only fair, it will pay dividends in the future.

Mr President, as I mentioned earlier I speak today with great pride but it is tempered with great sadness that I cannot share this moment with my brother, Jonathan, and my father, Michael, who have both passed away. Losing close family members at a young age had a profound effect on how I live my life and what is important to it. I know that we are all bruised and battered at times with life events that come our way. For me it is about learning to accept the hand that I have been dealt and understanding that from these times we learn so much about ourselves. I do not want to be defined by loss but how I have learned from this experience. This sentiment has taken me on a journey to where I find myself standing today.

I know what it is like at these times to be surrounded by supportive community members and have the love and guidance from a strong family, particularly my mum. We are incredibly close because of the difficult life circumstances we faced together. I know many in our community are not so fortunate. Growing up in my family has always meant that from a young age we had an understanding of social justice. As an adult, my life experience has galvanised a desire to play a role in striving for fairness for communities through the values of equality, respect for diversity and compassion. In doing this I am also honouring my dad's legacy.

These values should be the signpost that takes us into the future. I became a teacher to make a difference. I see politics as an extension of that and I must admit I am looking forward to being able to bring my two careers together on occasions during my time here working with visiting school children to explain our system of government. I believe we need to ensure that young people have an understanding of the process that affects their future. I guess

once a teacher, always a teacher. I believe the Legislative Council has an important role to play as its traditional title of house of review indicates. I think the diversity of its members is key to its successful function in reviewing and strengthening legislation.

In that sense I am pleased I can bring my generational view to the table but I also believe it is time to explore whether Tasmanians support reform to bring the House into the twenty-first century. Just because something has always been, does not necessarily make it right for a contemporary society. I believe people want MLCs who reflect contemporary community values. I see myself as more than a member of the house of review. It is my personal opinion that the periodic election cycle does not stimulate debate of major political issues.

It leads to voter apathy, low voter turnout and, in instances, incumbent members being returned unopposed. I believe that at every opportunity we need to advocate for the needs of our electorates. I need to contribute to the policy debate for better education and health services, support businesses and jobs, work for better public transport options and other issues of great concern to my community. It is our duty to remain relevant to the people we represent.

Another concern of mine is that the Legislative Council has the capacity to force a government to an election without facing an election itself. This has happened in the past and it would be farcical if it happened in the future. It is a systemic flaw that needs to be addressed in a proactive way. Labor supports the bicameral model but would welcome the establishment of an independent panel to consider reform of the Legislative Council. With greater accountability, I believe Tasmanians would have an upper House that reflects the twenty-first century.

I come to this Chamber respectful of the past but prepared to look to the future. A vision for and a commitment to my electorate in Tasmania as a whole will require courage, determination and hard work. Again, I thank the people of Elwick for putting their trust in me.

Mr President, I also come to this place being true to my values. When equality is one of the signposts to take us into the future I cannot in good conscience support the pay rise of politicians when the increase is so out of step with community expectations. During my campaign it was obvious that the people of Elwick do not begrudge politicians a small pay rise, similar to the pay increases of public servants in recent years. I am proud to be elected the member for Elwick and my constituents are appalled at the size of the pay rise. I am determined to give them voice in the parliament.

I will support the motion that disallows the parliamentary salary increase. I know that this may not be a position held by the majority of members but I urge members to support the motion so that the Government can fix the mess that it has created.

I finish by thanking honourable members again for making me feel so welcome. I am very much looking forward to working with you.

Members - Hear, hear.