



Rebecca White MP

House of Assembly

Date: 8 June 2010

Electorate: Lyons

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Inaugural) - Mr Speaker, I have the honour to move -

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Governor in reply to His Excellency's speech:

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the members of the House of Assembly of Tasmania in Parliament assembled, desire to thank Your Excellency for the speech which he has been pleased to address to both Houses of Parliament. We desire to record our continued loyalty to the throne and person of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and at the same time to assure Your Excellency that the measures which will be laid before us during this session will receive our careful consideration.

The first people I must acknowledge and thank are the voters and communities of Lyons for their support. I will always endeavour to meet and surpass their expectations of me as their member of parliament. I pledge hard work, determination and an understanding and compassionate ear for all, no matter their circumstance or concern. My motivation to stand stems from my strong roots in the Lyons community, beginning in a special place called Nugent. It comes from seeing how well people can work together for a common cause and help each other in times of need. One of my favourite quotes comes from eighteenth century Irish philosopher and MP, Edmund Burke:

'No one could make a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.'

Every little bit counts and I know that simply by being here in this place I can make at least a little contribution. It is my very great hope that I will do more, but that is for others to judge.

I am fortunate to have grown up in a supportive and nurturing community environment. It is an environment I would like to see replicated across our entire State. We must work harder to include others in the things that we do, and that includes the hard things as well as the good. Unfortunately, too many still feel that they cannot ask for help, particularly in rural and regional areas where outdated ideas about the stoic bearing of burden still hold sway. Too many people who are physically and often socially isolated believe they must carry their burdens alone, and there can be a terrible price to pay. Admirable organisations such as Rural Alive and Well are working very hard to turn these attitudes around. Dedicated people such as John Jones are making a difference and deserve our support. They are getting out to our rural and regional communities and supporting people who suffer isolation and depression, helping them find their way back from despair.

I am most passionate about making sure our communities stay strong, particularly our rural communities, ensuring they share in the State's bounty to which they contribute so much. The development of places for people to meet helps foster a sense of community identity and breaks down barriers. Facilities such as the new child and family centres, LINCS, community halls, service clubs, sporting grounds and Men's Sheds are great examples of places where individuals can get together and forge community. These places are so vital. I think they are more important than some may realise. They give people a place to feel safe, to meet and talk about their day, to share laughter, stories and tears. We must also work harder to ensure that the less advantaged in our communities are not left behind. It is important to me that we treat everyone equally and that justice and a fair go apply to all.

Access to services in regional areas should be comparable to that which exists in the cities. Not every small town can or should have its own GP but every town deserves to have a GP close by. I know this Government is committed to the continual improvement of Tasmania's health system and I look forward to playing whatever part I can to help achieve these aims.

The National Broadband Network is a project with the potential to totally transform regional Tasmania. It will connect our communities and open up employment opportunities we have not even thought of yet. Importantly, it will improve access to vital health services and become an invaluable diagnostic tool. The NBN will also

improve education throughout our regions. It is very important to me that our youth receive a high quality education. The rollout of the NBN offers exciting possibilities that could enable Tasmania's young people to be at the cutting edge of information technology development. It is vital that we encourage and help every person to achieve their potential and I hope that the NBN can help facilitate this.

As a farm girl another one of my great interests is agriculture and identifying ways to help our farmers to remain viable and sustainable in a rapidly changing global economy. The opportunity for farms to diversify and embrace contemporary business management models will be enhanced further by the rollout of irrigation across Tasmania. Irrigation will provide certainty of water to areas where the climate and soil are very good but rain is unpredictable, creating new opportunities for farmers, regional economies and communities. Just imagine what might be possible in terms of productive output if the pipeline from the Coal River Valley could extend down through Orielton and Sorell to Forcett.

I am fortunate to live at Orielton and am proud to say that on a patch of ground less than two kilometres from where I live the very first crop of wheat was grown in Tasmania. This crop was harvested and shipped to England. In the early days of settlement Sorell was known as the granary of Australia. In those early times the soil was well regarded and utilised extremely well to produce food for the colony. But as we all know, the climate is changing. Orielton's rainfall has decreased and farmers now have very valuable soil but little to no water. If the irrigation pipeline can extend from the fertile soils of the Coal River through this region, the capacity to expand Tasmanian agriculture increases significantly. Demand for Tasmanian-grown berries and fruit is high and there will always be demand for crops such as grain. Imagine if we could supply Boags with all the barley and hops it needed, its beer could be processed and produced entirely with Tasmanian-grown produce.

The possibilities are endless and exciting. Imagine if Tamar Valley yoghurt could source enough fruit grown in the Coal River and Orielton Valley to fill its orders for its delicious yoghurt. Jane and Ashley Huntington's brewery, the Two Metre Tall Company at Hayes, is another great example of a local enterprise that has been proactive about growing and sourcing Tasmanian-grown fruits and crops to brew cider and ale. The *Weekend Australian* magazine calls it 'one of the most exciting small brewing companies in the country' and it is a credit to the owners who have applied such an innovative style of production.

There is certainly no shortage of demand for any food we can grow here in Tasmania but if the irrigation pipelines are to achieve their full potential, we must explain and demonstrate to farmers the benefits to justify the economic risk they take in purchasing water rights. The cost of water as an initial outlay can be frankly frightening. Without knowing what sort of return one can get, it is difficult to justify the cost and the risk. This Government has committed to help educate farmers about the opportunities out there as well as advise them of ways to maximise the return on their investment. I look forward to working with our farmers and making sure they have all the information they need to make informed decisions about the future of their properties.

Many farmers have diversified their businesses to cope with market fluctuations and I foresee potential for many more to embark into the field of agritourism. I would like to see opportunities for agritourism more fully explored and exploited. Agritourism can provide farmers with a reliable income, particularly helpful given the fickle nature of conditions they work in. It also provides wonderful opportunities for tourists, especially schoolchildren, to connect with the land in a way that so many people have forgotten. There would be many people in big cities - on the mainland and overseas - who would have little if any knowledge of where their food comes from.

Agritourism at its best would provide a holistic farm experience and those taking part could return home better educated about the land and keen to come back for more. Tasmania abounds in farms, fish farms, beef and dairy cattle, sheep, free-range pigs, orchards and more. Ideally schoolchildren would be key participants, with programs especially developed for them. It is truly exciting to think of the wonderful time children could have on a farm learning about and cooking the vegetables they pull from the ground and learning, as gently as needed, about the cycle of life so they can come to respect the origins of the food on their plate.

Agritourism will help to teach both children and parents about Tasmanian produce and the importance of identifying and buying local produce. It presents significant opportunities to keep our farmers on the land, to encourage new people into the sector and to strengthen our regional communities.

I think we have only scratched the surface of the possibilities that agritourism presents but some notable achievers include the Agrarian Kitchen in Lachlan, most recently awarded first place in *Australian Traveller* magazine's 'Best Gourmet Experiences in Australia' list. Rod and Severine Dunn have done an excellent job in developing a patch of land into the most productive garden and farm you are likely to find on five acres. The Agrarian Kitchen is an example of a simple idea executed beautifully. It connects people with home-grown food cooked on site to highlight natural flavours and textures.

Carringa Farm at Hamilton is an example of a working farm that does not compromise its operations for tourists but instead includes them in what it does. Visitors can stay on the property owned by Jane and Tim Parsons or just visit for the day and see shearing demonstrations, look at habitat revegetation, crops being put in or the

harvesting of those crops and get an understanding of what it is like on a typical day on the farm and where their food comes from.

Then there are operators like my father, Lindsay White, at Redbanks, who has moved away from the traditional farm model and converted the property almost entirely to tourism activities. Diversification of a traditional farm for tourism is a wise choice because tourism has a lot to offer Tasmania, but we must treat it with respect and not go down the path of so slavishly trying to cater for tourists that we lose the authenticity that makes us so very special and such an appealing destination in the first place.

On this note, I would like to see Tasmania capitalise on its very strong brand. We know that the Tasmanian name has integrity. Research shows that people view Tasmania with a sense of excitement and an understanding that our island is a very natural and authentic place. We can develop a brand around our unique and natural advantages to help promote our agriculture and our manufactured and natural tourism products. A number of producers in Tasmania would benefit greatly from improved labelling to help consumers better identify Tasmanian products.

Jane Bennett has made a name for her farm by turning a humble product, cheese, into something so exciting that people travel across Tasmania to visit the Ashgrove cheese shop. Visitors learn where the cows live and see how the cheese is made. They can taste all flavours, from wild wasabi to lavender, and wherever they live in Australia they can seek it out. Through hard work and canny marketing, Jane has created demand for a uniquely Tasmanian product and by incorporating agritourism with a strong brand, Ashgrove is likely to continue growing stronger each year.

I was pleased to attend the Campbell Town Show this year, a remarkable country-style show that is rich in agricultural heritage and still remains true to its origins. I found a stallholder there proudly displaying the Brand Tasmania logo on her produce. Valerie Haines owns Nanna's Farm Beauty Products and operates from Dodges Ferry in southern Tasmania, making a range of creams. I am pleased to find more people are recognising the value of the Tasmanian brand and using it to help promote their products and I wish her all the best with her business. Brand Tasmania has designed a brand that Tasmanian businesses can use to help consumers identify local produce. I commend the vision of those involved in this project as I feel it is a smart way forward for our State.

I am absolutely passionate about Tasmania. With our beautiful coastline, our rugged, natural environment, our renewable energy prospects and the opportunities here, we have to promote our island State as the envy of the world. Our opportunities for renewable energy are significant and I do look forward to working in this Government to pursue the many natural advantages we have, whether they be in Hydro, wind or geothermal, to name a few.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful volunteers who helped me with my campaign and their extraordinary efforts that helped to see me elected in this place. I note with a lot of pride that quite a few of them are sitting here today, so thank you very much. I will never forget the assistance, advice and encouragement I received and I remain thankful to each and every person who spent a day on the doors, letterboxing, stuffing envelopes, manning street stalls, signing fliers and organising quiz nights. It was a mammoth effort.

I would like to personally acknowledge a few key people. Nicole Wells, I am in awe of your work ethic, your passion and your dedication. You gave me frank advice, you were patient and I could not have done it without you. Brian Mitchell, I do not think you sleep because I have never met anyone as efficient as you and whenever I asked for a response to something you were there like a flash. Thank you for being so available, so talented in your work and for always keeping me smiling.

Stuart Benson, we did it! You are so organised, passionate and very committed. Thank you for supporting me and giving up every one of your weekends for five months to help with the campaign. I hope you have had a few sleep-ins since. Kacey Johnstone, we went through a lot together and I will always value your friendship and sincerity - I hope we can always be friends. You are a sincere and beautiful person. We had a few wonderful road trips together and hopefully we can have a few more, but with less doorknocking! Zara Boarder, thank you for being so willing to help me. I admire your intelligence, your dedication and I hope we can always remain friends.

There is no doubt that my election was the result of an enormous group effort, led in the main by the dedicated members of Tasmanian Young Labor. I want to thank Claire Bugg, who was always there for me and available to help, Ben Coates, Rosie Hunt, Ben McKay, Tom Middleton, Brenton West, Simon Monk, Kester Takayama, Pat McConville, Matt Nesham, Rathi Balakis, Adam Clarke, Stuart Allen, Jason Wright, Martin Blackwell, Elise Jago, Claire Jago, Ariel Pascoe, Dave Burrows, Sarah Wickham, Dave Barrow, Elli Yates, Carla Drakeford and Sarah Cole - and that is not all of them.

Members laughing.

Ms WHITE - There is also a whole bunch of other people who got roped in too and I will list them all because they are very important and were a critical element for my success. Richard, Alison, Julie, Mary, Errin, Ceelia, Julie, Lin, Lara, Michael, Judy, Lyn, Karen, Shirley, Leanne, Ronda, Linda, Robbie, Darlene, Katinka, Fiona, Mayda, Jonathon, Tim, Tammy, Sharron, Rhiannon, Darren, Kevin, Anne, Ross, Peter, Gary, Kelly, Andrew, Roseanne, Iain, Mike, Brad, Frank, Kerry, Amber, Nadia, Karen, Chris, Sally, Shirley, Nigel, Michael, Narelle, Jamie, John and a special, special thank you to Vanessa - the next pair of stilettos is on me.

I would also like to thank three wise and thoughtful people who guided me throughout the campaign: Duncan Kerr, my former employer and wonderful mentor, who taught me the value of honesty and diligence; Senator Carol Brown who was always available for advice, who reassured me and supported me; and Fran Bladel, the former member for Franklin, an admirable woman who has encouraged me along the way.

My final thanks are to my family. My father, Lindsay White, my mother, Anne Pitney, their respective partners Jo and Andrew, and my younger brother Jeremy. My father and Jo are here today as well as my grandparents, Ethel and Peter Pitney. Thank you. All have been amazingly encouraging and supportive throughout the campaign even if they may have wondered at times why on earth I would get into politics.

Perhaps to answer my family's concerns I can say this. It is my very great hope that this Parliament can do things differently from in the past. I think we have made a good start and we are learning that the things that bind us together as Tasmanians are stronger than those that divide us. I hope that all of us here in this place can learn to work better together to help to progress our collective vision to improve our State. Where we disagree I hope that we can display the maturity to put aside our ego and seek solutions that are in the best interests of those whom we have been elected to represent. We may not, and should not, have to agree on every detail but I honestly believe each of us shares the common goal of improving our State and the lives of those who live here.

One of my favourite authors, Albert Facey, titled his autobiography *A Fortunate Life*. His disposition towards life was both pragmatic and optimistic. I think we in this place could do well to replicate his attitude and keep in mind that we are indeed fortunate and that each of us has an obligation to help every Tasmanian achieve their own fortunate life.