



John Ewart Tucker MP

House of Assembly

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Electorate: Lyons

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) (Inaugural Speech) - Madam Speaker, I first acknowledge Senator Eric Abetz and Senator Jonathon Duniam for coming along today.

It is with a true sense of pride and great honour that I stand before this House and the people of Tasmania as the new member for Lyons. This, indeed, is a very humbling experience. To become a political representative for the people of my electorate is truly awesome and I pledge here today, in the parliament, that I will not let you down.

My presence here is due to the retirement of Rene Hidding. Rene was a great advocate for Lyons and he gave 23 years of unselfish service to the community of Tasmania in many roles, including as opposition leader and as minister in the Hodgman Liberal Government. I wish him and Shirley well in their retirement.

I am a farmer and I am incredibly proud to say that. I am Tasmanian-born and bred and my family has been in Tasmania for six generations. I grew up on our family properties on the coastline north of St Helens. My childhood was shaped by isolation and distance, starting with my birth in Hobart at the time the Tasman Bridge collapsed in 1975. My parents and three older sisters had to travel many hours south in preparation for my arrival. My father, who was staying with family on the eastern shore, had to travel up to the Bridgewater Bridge each day and across the Derwent to visit my mother and me in hospital.

When I was a small child we had an hour-long drive to St Helens along a dusty and bumpy track. Trucks coming out to the farm had to shorten their axles to drive around the corners. This led to my mother homeschooling my three sisters until I, as the youngest, was old enough to attend school in 1981. By this time, the road had been redirected along a much shorter route thanks to a former Liberal government. We could meet the Binalong Bay school bus to then travel into St Helens. Our telephone line was nailed to trees from the exchange and was maintained by my father. We had diesel generators for electricity until power lines were finally brought into The Gardens in 1995 with the help of former premier, Robin Gray.

As you can imagine, my mother and father were resourceful and hardworking. We ran Spanish Merinos and I spent a large part of my childhood in the shearing shed or walking behind sheep with my dogs. Many a day was spent picking up rocks and wood off paddocks as we cleared land and improved pastures. Many Tasmanians grow up with a strong affinity to this wonderful state we live in. The connection a farming family has with their land can never be underestimated. With the popularity of the Bay of Fires region it is hard to imagine how isolated this place was, by today's standards of convenience, not that many years ago. The focus for visitors to the area is now the beauty of the place and the wonderful lifestyle we have. We easily forget the struggles

people had establishing themselves and the battle fought in maintaining these pristine environments.

I am extremely proud of what my ancestors have achieved over the generations. My great-great grandfather, William Stammers Button, was the first mayor of Launceston and the city's representative in the first elected Tasmanian Legislative Council. He was also a founder of the Mechanics Institute, today's public library. He was heavily involved with the formation of the *Examiner* newspaper in Launceston. My great-great grandfather, Thomas Tucker, and his brother-in-law, Thomas Heazlewood, were the first and second settlers to arrive in Scott's new country, now known as Scottsdale. My great-great grandmother, Jane Tucker, the first-known bride. My great-grandfather, William Tucker, was a member of the Ringarooma Council and a pioneer in leading prospecting parties from his home across trackless country to the new mining district of Waratah on the west coast. William Tucker owned a 50 per cent share in the Briseis Tin Mine at Derby when the company was sold. With these funds, a large stake of Winnaleah was purchased. As every member of the family was married, they received a parcel of land. Some of my relatives are there today, still farming in the rich red soils of Winnaleah.

William and Marion had six children; four daughters and two sons. My grandfather, William Ewart Tucker, was the youngest child. His eldest sisters were twins, Ella and Ida. One of the twins, Ella Tucker, trained at as a nurse at the Launceston General Hospital and as a midwife in Melbourne. She was one of the first Tasmanian nurses to enlist with the Australian Army Nursing Services shortly after the outbreak of World War 1. Ella was aboard the hospital ship, HMAS *Gascoyne*, at the landing of Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. In 1916, she was awarded the Royal Red Cross for her service to the Australian Army Nursing Service.

As a young man, my grandfather, known as Ewart, drew the short straw and was sent by his family to the east coast to sort out some business interests. This step ultimately led him to becoming known as a pioneer in mining, sawmilling, boat building and farming.

The local timber mill in St Helens was owned by the Tucker and Von Bibra families. Ewart brought the first bulldozer into Tasmania in 1928 after a trip to the United States to look at logging practices. This led Ewart into his next venture which was to own his own boats to cart the timber. Ewart owned the Arga Shipping Company which built two boats at St Helens to cart the Ansons Bay Timber Company products to the mainland. The *Arga* was the first boat built, otherwise known as the AK96, and was commandeered by the Australian Army for carrying supplies to New Guinea and other Pacific islands in World War II. Interestingly, Ewart had the rights to purchase the AK96 back after the war but as the *Argonaut* was built by then, the rights to purchase was sold to the Kauri Timber Company at Smithton.

Ewart was a very active community member in the north-east. My father would often say he employed the whole town of St Helens during the Great Depression and the following Second World War. He was also a councillor and warden on the Portland Council for a number of years. In his time as warden Ewart was instrumental in getting the St Helens aerodrome built in 1963 with the then Labor premier Eric Reece. This was the first aerodrome built in Tasmania under the local ownership plan.

Ewart was chairman of the Liberal Party of St Helens and a member of the state executive for many years. In 1980 he was awarded the MBE. Another of Ewart's sisters, Cora Tucker, became heavily involved in the family businesses in St Helens and, as a businesswoman in her own right, Cora gave parcels of land to the community so that the Medea Park nursing home and RSL buildings could be constructed in St Helens.

My late father, John William Tucker, has also been a huge influence in my life. It was his expectation that I contribute to our community that has ultimately led me to standing here today in Tasmania's 49th Parliament. My father was on our local council for over 30 years and was elected as warden a number of times. He was an extremely loyal and honest man who hated being lied to and he instilled these principles into me at a young age. Once he had made his mind up about something you could never budge him. His word was his word.

My father had a real passion for farming and taught me all about hard work, but also how to think, to not fight with nature but work with her. My father often talked of Eric Reece, especially on fire management after the 1967 bushfires in Tasmania. As a fire permit officer, dad always gave the applicant a month in which to carry out the burn, not a week, as was usually done. As he used to say, you need to pick the right day to burn and not rush - again working with nature and not against her.

My mother, Maureen Jessie Hope, died at 60 from cancer. She was a strong-minded woman with clear morals, a lot of pride and a quick wit. Mum was also determined that my sisters and I receive an excellent education. I attended St Helens District Primary School and boarded at Launceston Church Grammar School for my secondary education. Boarding taught me respect for my elders very quickly. I have very fond memories from my boarding days and lifelong friends who are like brothers from the boarding house. My glory days were winning the Head of the River in the under-15 boys four and eight in 1990. There is nothing like the teamwork of rowing - and then we beat Hutchins.

Members laughing.

Mr TUCKER - My tertiary education took me to Lincoln College in New Zealand and really set me up for success in farming by teaching me how to think. It is interesting that in this Hodgman Liberal Government there are now two Lincoln University graduates. I hold great memories of these days in New Zealand, as I am sure our Deputy Premier would also.

My wife Mhari and I have now been married for 16 years and she is my constant sounding board and my biggest critic. My four children, Elizabeth, Angus, Campbell and Posie, struggle to recognise me in a suit and are all wondering how long it will take for my hands to lose their farmer's hands appearance. My family are the unpaid conscripts in my journey into politics, but all understand the importance of contributing to the wonderful state of Tasmania.

Mhari received a Bachelor of Nursing with Honours from UTAS and is now heavily involved with Tasmanian Women in Agriculture. She has held the role of

chairperson on the local school association at St Helens and two weeks ago was involved in hosting the first International Women's Day Lunch at St Helens.

With Mhari's encouragement, I stood as a candidate for the Senate in 2016, an experience I thoroughly enjoyed. What a powerhouse of Liberal senators to hit the campaign trail with. I will always be indebted to Eric Abetz, Stephen Parry, David Bushby, Richard Colbeck and Jono Duniam for their encouragement and support. Eric has played a huge role in my political journey and I would not be where I am today without his help. I will always admire his honesty, loyalty, humour and wisdom.

I have been asked by many why I entered politics, especially with everything I have going on with my farming business. Politics was never on my radar in my earlier years, but while I have been writing my inaugural speech for today and putting together the political history of my family, it was bound to come out one day. I too want to make a difference. I remember talking to Mayor Mick Tucker and the Break O'Day Council general manager John Brown about standing in the upcoming 2018 state election, and John's comment was, 'You're doing it'.

Being a councillor on the Break O'Day Council has been a hugely rewarding role for me. I have watched as the outside workforce has been transformed from a group lacking confidence and self-esteem into one of optimism and unbelievable pride. Council equipment is being bought, not sold off, and we now actually have an asset replacement plan. We are keeping the hard-earned ratepayers' dollar in the community, not sending it out with contractors.

I am also proud to say that as a council we now take on apprentices. The older workforce is educating the younger workforce. I feel that the future in Break O'Day is exciting. We are building relationships with our schools that will lead to better discussions around what jobs will be in our community in the future for our children.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, I am and have been a farmer at St Helens all my life. I knew from a very young age that was what I would be doing. I remember sneaking off to follow my dad wherever I could and mum telling him off when we came home, as she had no idea where I was. I think she knew it was a losing battle. It is hard work but a very rewarding and challenging occupation.

My passion for breeding Angus cattle has brought me huge satisfaction over the past 20 years and perhaps selling stud bulls has played a major part in my political career. There is nothing like a trip to Flinders Island to meet with the bull-buying clients to get a robust discussion going around the needs of rural and remote communities.

Madam Speaker, this has been a brief summary of my family's history and my journey to this place, the Parliament of Tasmania. It now includes being a proud part of the Hodgman Liberal majority Government. For me as a Tasmanian farmer, this is a particularly exciting time, with the knowledge that the Government I belong to is investing heavily in major infrastructure such as the irrigation schemes earmarked as a potential \$500 million third tranche with the proposed pipeline to prosperity. Irrigation may not be a priority for city or urban folk but to farmers it is vital do-or-die component, especially in times of seasonally low rainfall and drought that can force even the most determined and dedicated farmer off the land. An objective like a \$10 billion

agricultural sector by 2050 may seem like a lofty vision to some, but to farmers and other primary producers it is a target for hope and endurance. It also means jobs and survival of regional communities.

Do not underestimate what government can do for the primary production sector and what enormous impact it can have. I am not just applying this to farmers but also allied sectors in the inland and aquaculture industries and the importance of biosecurity to our fruit growers. I firmly believe agriculture has a very bright future in Tasmania. I believe strongly in the Government's goal of achieving an agricultural industry worth \$10 billion by 2050. My family has been heavily involved in agriculture, forestry and mining for generations. I hold these industries dear to my heart and I believe they have a strong future as pillars of the Tasmanian economy.

I have seen our production on our farm double in the last five years and envisage production to triple in the next five years with the technology now available in agriculture. It amazes me that I can now see what is happening on our farm at any given moment by looking at an app on my phone. We can turn centre pivots on by phone or look at stock watering systems to see if there are leaks anywhere. Tasmania needs to be at the forefront of this technology.

Among our farm employees are two men over the age of 70, one who has worked for us for over 50 years. In today's society there is an emphasis on retirement. I do not believe it is necessary to retire and immediately step down from roles. Just slowing down in your role and completing the workload appropriate for your ability will be much more effective and be of benefit to all Tasmanians.

Having four young children and coming from a large family I truly believe in the importance of family. It is not only important to me but to the future of Tasmania. Our children are the future of Tasmania. We must continue our efforts to stop Tasmania's biggest export, our youngest and brightest children. I have personally seen the export of my three sisters to the mainland pursuing their careers. This is why we are so determined in the Liberal Party to create more job opportunities so they do not need to leave. We must foster and rekindle that 'can do' attitude in Tasmania, developing employment opportunities for our young. That is why people voted for a government that gets things done and keeps its promises.

I am also passionate about helping rural and regional communities to get the services they need, like the new ambulance stations, police stations and school upgrades throughout Lyons, as well as essential services like the new \$12 million hospital at St Helens. Tourists are flocking to many regional centres in Lyons because they want an authentic Tasmanian experience. That means business opportunities in more jobs that support our smaller towns. Whether it is investments in the Great Eastern Drive, the Midland Highway, Freycinet Peninsula, Esk Highway or Cradle Mountain, a strong economy and a balanced budget have allowed the Hodgman Government to invest in this infrastructure for visitors and locals alike.

Education is also vitally important and new schools and school upgrades are spread throughout Lyons. It is also fantastic to see that many of the regional communities in Lyons have embraced extending year 11 and 12 to our high schools. This is allowing many young adults to continue their education in their local communities until they are

ready to travel. This is the future, and the Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering it.

Just as importantly for many residents in Lyons, the Hodgman Government is putting downward pressure on the cost of living, those essentials like the cost of electricity, water and sewerage. We want everyone in Tasmania to share in the benefits of a strong economy.

In bringing this speech to a conclusion, I need to thank many people for their support, encouragement and efforts in getting me here today. I personally thank all those who voted for me and I am conscious of the faith they have put in me. I am determined to make a difference and will strive to serve every Tasmanian.

To Mhari and our children, what can I say but a sincere thank you. To my mother-in-law, Frances, and Shane, thank you for always being there for our family from bull sales to campaign trails. To our farm family, Cullen and Jenna, Syd, Rob and Anne, Shane and Belinda, Paul and Marlene, your efforts have been above and beyond. They were always noticed and hugely appreciated. To Mick Tucker, you have been a great mate and a terrific leader of our municipality. To Jane Howlett, a super smart lady and a real fighter for Prosser. A huge thank you to the campaign team, especially the Young Liberal Team who do such a fantastic job. To all those who erected signs for me and to those who were willing to have signs on their fence, thank you. David and Randy, you have been outstanding.

There are many influential people within the farming community who I am lucky to have worked with and I need to acknowledge them. A number of years ago I became associated with the Concerned Farmers Group. Those involved with this group include Colin Howlett, the late Don McShane, Allan Cameron, Peter and Mada Innes-Smith, Don Fish and Richard Bowden. I mention these people with respect and admiration. This was my first time at being involved in political activity and it shaped my early political career.

I re-state my pledge to the Lyons electors that I will not let you down and will work hard alongside Guy Barnett and Mark Shelton to represent your interests. It is a great honour to be your representative and a real privilege to be part of Will Hodgman's Liberal Government. This state is going places and I want to be part of the team leading an exciting future for Tasmania.

I will do all that I can to use my experiences in primary industry and local government to represent the people of Lyons properly and diligently. I will continue to listen and learn from them. Thank you for this opportunity.

Members - Hear, hear.

Madam SPEAKER - Welcome to Parliament.