



Mr Vica Bayley MP

House of Assembly

Date: 15 August 2023

Electorate: Clark

[2.31 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - ya, nayri nina-tu kawinrika mina. mina kani mina takamuna milaythina-ta palawa. mina ningina takila nayri palawa ngini-tu. nara makara, pinina, luyiti, krakapaka milaythina-ta, lutruwita palawa rana pama, paliti pama.

Hello and thank you for listening. I acknowledge that I am standing on stolen Aboriginal land and I pay my respects to the old people who lived, laughed, loved and died as one with this land. On muwinina country I acknowledge the elders past. Such was the severity and swiftness of the invasion of nipaluna, the place we now know and love as Hobart and the electorate I represent, I cannot pay tribute to elders present. The muwinina are no longer. Some of the first to fall in a catastrophic transformation of this island, its first people and the culture they shared with the land, sea and sky since time began. Around the state, the same scenario of genocide, eviction, cultural erasure and the appropriation of land was repeated with a chilling, devastating effect. War was waged and proud, sovereign people were hunted, murdered, haunted and harried into a state of pure, undiluted terror for their fate and their future.

Those who survived, people already stolen or now dispossessed, were exiled off-shore under a treaty of peace that was dishonored by the powers of the time, the very crown that we now represent in this House. Such is the resilience, strength and perseverance of these people, the palawa/pakana survive today and the spirit of the mewinina, the claim to their lands and connection to their country lives on through the contemporary Aboriginal Community.

I pay my respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and elders past and present. I acknowledge your history, heroism, struggle and survival and recognise both your deep, ongoing connection to Country, and your enduring claim to own it once more. To those from community who are here today or listening online, I acknowledge and salute you.

For me, we in this place can never do too much to reconcile and repent because we can never fully repair the history that proceeds us but we are obliged to act with good faith, substance and credibility. There is perhaps just one thing worse than letting justice languish

and taking no real steps forward at all; pledging good intent and promising meaningful action but displaying and delivering none is worse than doing nothing at all. Despite the acknowledgement expressed daily in this Chamber we have not seen progress on land returns through this parliament for 20 years.

The private sector through donations for purchase or direct gifts of land has shown us up as having a greater sense of equity, fairness and justice when it comes to recent returns to land to Aboriginal ownership. We can and must do better. While in this place I will do what I can to undo the excuses, call out inaction, facilitate progress and help deliver land justice and the return of state-owned lands.

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With a 40 000 year history in lutruwita Aboriginal culture heritage is writ large on the landscape and lost almost every day. Legislation to protect it is acknowledged, by everyone up to the minister in his report to this parliament over two years ago, to be ineffective at actually achieving protection.

A development like the kunanyi cable car, proposed for a cultural landscape of immense value and with an impact that is well understood, can progress through a planning assessment and subsequent appeal without even triggering a credible heritage report under the act. On Robbins Island, an area of immeasurable Aboriginal and shared significance, a massive proposal to industrialise the landscape with wind towers and associated footings, roads and bridge and wharf is waived through its assessment against the discredited, ineffective act. We can do better and a new act and the rejection of commercial development on the wild cultural landscape that is the south coast are two key tests yet to come.

We are not closing the gap in health, education, incarceration and the many other measures Tasmania signed up to address so many years ago. Just this month, we have heard that the Government appears unwilling or unable to participate in transparent reporting on our state's efforts to address Aboriginal disadvantage. We must do better.

Over the last decade or more, particularly over the last two-and-a-half years, I have had the honour and privilege to work alongside Tasmanian Aboriginal people and support their efforts to manage land, own more, protect heritage, tell stories, build capacity and participate in the processes that we, as a state, impose upon them. I thank them for that opportunity and their trust in me. They have been some of the most interesting and empowering times of my working life and the kindness, adventure and generosity of individuals will never leave me.

I am humbled to have the Aboriginal community give me the encouragement, permission and honour to open this inaugural speech in palawa kani (the language of Tasmanian Aboriginals). To the palawa, in this new role, I commit to do all that I can to realise genuine, meaningful and measurable change in your lives for the treaty, justice, equality, self-determination and dignity that you deserve.

To you, in this House, I stand ready to work with you to achieve it.

I would like to take a moment as I enter the Tasmanian parliament to acknowledge my inherent and accumulated privilege. I am white. I am male. I am able bodied. I own a house and my mortgage is manageable. I have a tertiary education and I no longer have a HECS debt. I have a job, my health and mental wellbeing. I can afford to eat.

I articulate this not to express who I am; I make this acknowledgement in recognition that many of the people I represent, will advocate for and seek to assist do not live with similar opportunity, advantage and comfort. Unless we in here who share much of that same privilege can recognise and accept that we live under profoundly different circumstances to those we serve, it may be difficult, perhaps impossible, to exhibit the compassion and empathy required to properly listen, hear and act. Only action will make people's lives better - action on housing, health care and justice reform amongst other things.

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One of the truly greatest privileges I enjoy is being part of a loving, healthy and vibrant family - some of whom are in the Chamber today. To my wife, Steph and children, Claudia and Jimmy; thanks for your love and unwavering support and for being the anchor upon which I have swung over many years. I am lucky to be part of a family who shares my passion and they have been with me every step of the way. My children have grown up in the places I help defend and protect. As toddlers they camped on the shingle bend of the Styx River. Now, they dive in the waters needing relief from fish farmers and we walk on kunanyi to celebrate, commiserate and connect. Steph is a longstanding and committed part of the movement and its activism. We share the same soul and work together for a viable, vibrant, hopeful future for our children, this state and the world. Whether it is campaigning in The Styx, nights negotiating over forests, international trips to the World Heritage Committee or more recently time spent on truwana (Cape Barren Island) or at Wybalenna, their patience with me and support for my work and their resilience in my absence has been stoic.

My parents, Andrew and Marg, have given me every possible support growing up. As the daughter of a university professor and stay-at-home mother and son of a Mercury journo and housewife, my folks both worked hard and sacrificed much to provide for my brother and me. Always aspiring to be a farmer, dad left school at 16 to go jackarooing and eventually worked as a stock agent across the south of the state. Mum taught home economics at TAFE and together they bought some land at Sorell when I was four. That became our home and it is still theirs. I have an older brother whose role in my life, like many siblings, has been double-sided.

Simultaneously, Tone helped teach me what I did and did not want to be - don't get done for underage drinking; do play hard on the footy field but do it with fairness, humility and good humour. Today, he is a rock-solid man, great friend, and important supporter. Thank you.

My childhood feels defined by drought and day upon day of what could sometimes feel like a drudge: stumbling behind a trailer, picking up rocks and sticks for newly cleared land; pacing the boards, sweeping up after shearers and penning up sheep or pressing wool in an exercise that appeared to be endless - such are the school holidays of a farm boy.

Now, decades on, I can appreciate that if that felt like toil, it was nothing compared to the commitment of my parents. Starting with nothing, 21 per cent interest rates, drought, dust, weekend work and humble family holidays, I know that so much of who I am today comes from a lifetime of watching two of the most honest, modest and hardworking humans this State has ever known.

Thank you, too, for accepting my journey. We have not always agreed and I just could not be me as the property valuer or school teacher that I trained to be in those past lives. For a country boy from a conservative sheep-farming family to shift over time to become a volunteer and then paid greenie and now a Greens member of parliament could be confronting and challenging to comprehend and accept. Accept it and embrace it they have and I now know that they sit here today, understandably perplexed at how it came to pass but overwhelmingly proud that it has done so.

I joined the Greens at the height of the 2020 Black Summer bushfires. On that note and before I go on, I pause to acknowledge the death, destruction and suffering on Maui and across the northern hemisphere these last days, weeks and months. Climate chaos is real and we Greens stand in solidarity with humanity and future generations. To those affected, we offer our deepest condolences, and all our strength and a commitment to take action. May we be spared this summer.

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In 2020 I joined the Greens. I worked for decades at the Wildness Society, which is necessarily apolitical, and then had a tilt at the upper House as an Independent, so did not step easily into the party political space. However, in the wake of a narrow defeat in the Nelson election, I received a long and articulate letter from one of Tasmania's most eminent thinkers and writers. 'Sorry, but not sorry', said James Boyce of my defeat:

Our democracy operates under a largely party-political process. The scale and the urgency of the change that needs to occur is such that the best option for us is for you to join a political party and help make it happen. The Greens are the only party with a policy platform and necessary independence from vested interests to be able to work on this change.

At that time, James told me what I already knew but just had not yet admitted to myself. The world was burning, change was too slow, we must do our bit. I am of Tasmania and the lower House in this parliament is where I agreed I should be. The Greens is my home and so here I am.

I come to the Greens in full recognition that I am standing on the shoulders of giants. To past leaders and elected members, thank you. To Bob, Christine, Peg, Nick and others, now I am here I can fully recognise your bravery and vision and the absolute imperative to use the political process for good, to protect the things that matter, to improve people's lives, to avoid mediocrity and deny discrimination, destruction and deceit. To important party founders I offer my thanks for your commitment and foresight, people like Patsy Jones, Melva Truchanas, Peter Jones and Margaret Blakers, low-key, high-impact and utterly dependable volunteers that have built a party to be part of a movement.

Tasmania has and can continue to lead other jurisdictions to do better and achieve an ambition where all children's inheritance is improved by our actions - true intergenerational equity.

To Cassy O'Connor, whose resignation creates the space for me to step up, I say thank you. Thank you for 15 years of unwavering advocacy and using the mechanisms of this place, the platform it presents and the fierce green heart that drives you to achieve so much for our state. They are big shoulders to stand on but I do so knowing that there is strength in our system, our processes and our people.

Rosalie, you have the experience, compassion and conviction to lead the Greens into the future and I so look forward to working with you. I have much to learn and I can already see your patience, professionalism and perseverance in this Chamber and know it will serve me well to watch closely and absorb your experience and enthusiasm. Best wishes. I am thrilled to be here with you.

In the two weeks I have been here, the staff in our office have more than impressed me. Their knowledge, dedication and passion is, I reckon, unparalleled in this place and I look forward to working with you and say thanks for the support thus far. Political representation is a team effort and so to Dan, Steve, Jess, Tom, Alex and Sophie, I am pleased to be part of the team. While Alice is having a well-earned rest after providing long years of stellar support, her devotion to the Greens in this state is unquestionable and I very much looking forward to her return and finally working together.

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Members of a political party are its heart and soul. For the Greens, they are our volunteers, policy developers, office bearers and advocates. Members give us the grunt and substance we need to come into this House day after day and work for positive change. To all Greens members, thank you for your support, and to those thinking of joining, please do, we will not let you down.

Thanks to the voters of Clark. Thanks for your confidence and trust in the Greens and may it not just continue, but grow. Cassy topped the poll in Clark, and with a 35-seat parliament coming at the next election, there will be more Greens in this place. My commitment to you is to work hard to meet the confidence you placed in Cassy. At some point in the future, we will realise a second member for Clark, I am confident of that.

That brings me to this parliament and you, my colleagues in this House. I congratulate you on your respective elections and the positions you hold. I want you to know that my default disposition will be to work constructively and collegially to effect positive change. Of course we will have disagreement and debate, but I am a strong believer in collaborative politics and a power-sharing parliament.

As we head towards 35 seats, may the deception underpinning slogans about stable majority government be revealed for all to see. As a state that seeks to hold itself high on the global stage, to resist and reject a governance model so common and successful in many other jurisdictions is self-defeating and ultimately short-changing Tasmanians.

Attacking collaborative politics with self-serving political rhetoric that is anchored in fear and the vulnerabilities of the electorate is politically lazy and an indictment on all those who roll with it. A power-sharing parliament, born of the will of the people, established by agreement and underpinned by collaboration and commitment to core principles can bring positive and lasting change to the culture of politics in Tasmania, the transparency expected of government and the outcomes it achieves for our people.

Make no mistake, while delivering additional transparency, collaboration and some cross-Chamber consensus, the current minority arrangement is not exactly what I am talking about. Today's parliamentary circumstance is not the result of election. Majority government failed. Today's configuration is born of secrecy, disaffection, disillusionment and ultimately the defection of government members in a desperate bid to be heard. I congratulate those members for their courage. Walking away is never easy but neither is coming together, and as we head towards 35 seats I call on us all to do away with fear campaigns about minority, focus on your agenda and what you offer the Tasmanian people.

Do them a courtesy and grant them the freedom to vote based on policy, performance and principles, not orchestrated anxiety and a narrative that divides and dismisses. When they do, let us accept the circumstances they determine, and if it comes to pass, come together to agree on how we will work for their collective best interests. Tasmania is too good to defraud.

lutruwita/Tasmania is the best place on Earth, but it can be better. We have some of the tallest forests, wildest rivers, most spectacular beaches, best mountains and strangest plants and animals. Our underwater world, not seen by many and too often out of mind, mirrors the diversity and distinctiveness of that on land. We have one of the greatest expanses of wilderness anywhere, listed as World Heritage on more criteria than any other place on the planet.

To quote Chicano author Rudolfo Anaya and the advice in his seminal novel *Bless Me, Ultima*:

The greatest immortality is in the freedom of man, and that freedom is best nourished by the noble expanse of land and air and pure white sky.

So it is in lutruwita. Our people are proud, active and connected to each other and this place, and the noble expanse of wild nature and wide horizons fuel them and their desire to protect it, and protect it we must.

Perpetual growth economics and a push to privatise the common invites all takers to put up their proposals and roll over communities, all too often on the back of poor process and state secrecy. Noxious tailing dams, toxic cable cars, luxury lodges and caged salmon, amongst other things, threaten the very places Tasmanians hold dear in their hearts. That wilderness, so central to our identity and reputation, can be undermined and gifted for helicopter access to private huts, demonstrates that we still take our best assets for granted. The development at Lake Malbena would destroy wilderness values, proving we have much to learn and must hold tightly to the right to protest, just in case.

Much belittled and maligned, peaceful protest has been central in achieving the Tasmania we are today. It will clearly continue to be so. Aborigines reclaiming recognition and protesting ongoing injustice, everyday people lamenting the loss of Lake Pedder, protecting the Franklin, establishing World Heritage, saving forests, stopping pulp mills and cancelling canal estates, the queer community and its allies opposing outdated law and setting a standard that now has Tasmania proudly leading the world in equity and inclusivity: where would we be without it? Certainly not the vibrant, clean, compassionate brand that has wildness at its heart, culture at its core, a destination the world wants to visit.

Despite this and the undeniable urgency to take action on carbon emission, to stop burning fossil fuels, to end native forest logging, to protect and restore nature, Colette Harmsen today sits in jail for peaceful protest and Tasmania has led the country in establishing draconian anti-protest laws that belong in the bin. Shame on us.

Thank you to the protesters, past and present. Without you, the Tasmania we love would be lesser. And to pre-empt those, both here and outside, who might howl with faux incredulity, let me be clear about forests. The Tasmanian Forest Agreement was groundbreaking. It demonstrated to all the power of dialogue and what can be achieved when bitter rivals sit down in good faith. It offered a paradigm shift. To this day, a World Heritage extension stands and not one stick of the forest agreed for protection has been logged. They are not reserved but they have not been logged.

This alone is responsible for Tasmania's carbon accounts achieving net zero. The agreement was much more than a simple binary - logging versus reserves. It offered a new way of working and improvements to regulations, credible certification and an end to the public subsidies that have too long distorted the markets and taxed the public interest. Now all that is lost.

Dishonoured by industry, the agreement was turned over in a pyrrhic victory for ideologues and pure base politics. One industry signatory reneged its commitments and backed Tony Abbott's vain attempt to delist tall forests in the expanded World Heritage area - a central conservation tenant that was agreed.

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The agreement is no longer; torn up and trashed. The swift parrot pushed towards doom, millions more dollars flushed away, FSC certification a pipe dream and the dialogue now dead. The world has moved on so please spare us your lament. In a climate and biodiversity emergency, we must end native forest logging and transition workers and the products they provide into plantations.

Native forests provide diversity, water, carbon and communities for the swift parrot, masked owl, Tassie devil and a shot at a liveable future, plantations for wood products and fibre. That, today, is the binary.

Central to our celebration of place and the beauty and peace it beholds are the creatives. To thrive as a community, we must support them. Painters, photographers, dancers, song writers and authors, Tasmania has produced names now renowned as world class and too often more celebrated offshore than on.

MONA has arrived like the gift that keeps giving. It has transformed our economy, the art scene and our psyche. No longer content to be accepted as a backwater, MONA has affirmed that the eccentric, eclectic and exciting has a place on our island. It has cracked open stereotypes and taught us about difference, that we can be different and that difference should be celebrated.

Our creatives need support and more spaces to display. How does a young artist survive in a housing and cost-of-living crisis without proper funding support from the community? TMAG is esteemed but overstretched. It holds the state collection and an important place in our hearts, but it struggles with substandard funding and facilities. It meets our expectations, not because of resourcing, but the good grace of its staff and the commitment to our state's culture, science and stories.

I want to finish by celebrating the commitment of Tasmanian people. Not just the staff at TMAG working to meet inflated expectations with inadequate resources but people working across the state to make it a better place for others.

I want to especially celebrate volunteerism and the thousands of people giving time freely to their community. From the activists discussed earlier to volunteer fireies and community-based paramedics, to support workers in our prisons, on the streets and in crisis accommodation, to the carers, coaches and companions, I acknowledge you.

Volunteers epitomise the best of humanity, giving freely and finding their own way to derive satisfaction, recompense and reward from an entirely non-financial transaction that in reality has more value than money could buy. All power to you people, thank you.

To conclude, I have great hopes. I hope this place and this state will be as good as it can be, where we break down division, look for commonality and drive for consensus. I hope we can be as good as we want the world to believe we are, as we think we are. I hope we take action to achieve justice and equality, a treaty with the palawa, to protect what matters, to look after our community and to prioritise the things that will make a difference to everyday lives.

I hope we can demonstrate the compassion, capacity and courage to step outside of political comfort to make the decisions that matter. I put my hand up to be an MP in this place because over time something became clear - the decisions that affected so much I care about are made right here. They are made by so few on behalf of so many. If you have the ability and inclination to help make them, what is stopping you?

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If not me then who? In 1960 Donald Horne wrote *The Lucky Country* and the phrase went on to become synonymous with the land of plenty and a lifestyle to match. Sound like Tasmania today? The golden age was past premier Peter Gutwein's term. In an ultimate irony that was somewhat prophetic, the phrase was misunderstood and misused. In print Horne actually wrote 'Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second rate people who share its luck'.

Much has changed in 60 years, but much has not. Not everything in Tasmania is golden and not every person yet lucky. We will need a first rate system to change that. May we be part of that system. *Nayri nina-tu*. Thank you for listening.