

Inaugural Speech

DELIVERED BY ANDREA DAWKINS MP



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(Please check against delivery)

Madam Speaker,

I would like to acknowledge aboriginal elders past and present and restate that the land on which we stand IS Aboriginal land - always was, always will be.

I believe supporting the Palawa people in rebuilding culture is a community responsibility. It will involve further land repatriation, not simply continued assimilation. The United Nations has categorically stated that it is convinced that control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs.

Madam Speaker, I was compelled to social activism at a young age when I became a vegetarian. An experienced small business owner and committed animal welfare advocate I put the two together and developed 'Fresh on Charles' as a hybrid social enterprise, multi functional hub in Launceston. Social enterprise is a form of direct action in which philanthropy is valued and community is advanced. The values of Fresh centred on animal welfare, local, healthy food, a vibrant, diverse offering of entertainment and it promoted a co-operative model. The venue was open to all and many of those who chose a values-based lifestyle and an understanding and examination of the ethics of modern life made it their second home.

Fresh maintained a strong connection to art and culture in Launceston. It supported the ongoing community success of Stompin' youth dance company, Tasdance and Junction Arts Festival, all integral to the cultural offering in Tasmania, all under strain of recurrent funding. Junction alone has won nine awards in recognition of its contribution to the local community and innovation in its activities on local, state and federal levels. Having presented 80 shows, 34 free events and 522 unique performances across the festival it delivers significant cultural capital to Launceston, engaging also non arts locals including community members from walking clubs, motor cycle clubs, scientists, local skate park users, the men's shed, sports clubs, seniors homes, school students and participation with the Migrant Resource Centre.

Madam Speaker in my seat the current changes to the Australia Councils funding model will exert significant pressure on the art sector's ability to deliver. The National Programme for Excellence with ultimate Ministerial authority wrests control from those who are experienced arts practitioners over to politicians. This represents an attack on artistic independence and with no criteria established for the new funding model, arts organisations are left in a state of limbo, stressed and stranded. If the NPEA focuses funding on forms of traditional western renaissance culture where are the arts innovators? How do we progress as a society, culturally?

Albert Einstein is widely credited with saying, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting a different result".

Are we really to expect the Forestry Industry is to support yet another run at the pulp mill in the Tamar Valley, in my beautiful electorate of Bass. The pulp mill saga brought a once strong and reputable company to its knees, in fact the failure of Gunns is reportedly the second largest corporate collapse in Australian history. The criminal and corrupt pulp mill process deprived the community of our democratic rights in an attempt to further the wealth of a very few people. The Greens want the Tamar Valley pulp mill buried forever but fear not if there is a sense the pulp mill is back on the table people will be out in numbers as they always have, as they always will to defend the valley they love and the forests that bring life to this earth.

Forestry Tasmania has failed at social, environmental and economic sustainability. I find it ironic that there is still a sense in the community that the Greens have focussed on a single aspect of the triple bottom line, that of the environment. There was a promise that FT had embarked upon a period of continuous improvement which would result in its ability to stand alone as a sustainable entity. It seems this possibility is still a distant hope as FT received yet another hand out in this years' budget.

If even a portion of the funds spent propping up the forestry industry had been spent on programmes eradicating the violence within families how much safer our homes would be.

Family violence is at epidemic proportions in Australia and I believe there is a role for strong female community leaders to be influential in turning this around. We must continue to speak out for increased funding, increased services and a change to the perception of the victim's role in this most deplorable of circumstances.

In Launceston there are hundreds of people working with an elder, former Senator Jean Hearn, on the Community Festival for Peace. 'Peace', in the context of this concept, is not only about the conflict of wars: it is about US as citizens of local communities and global societies DOING peace. At a community level, the Festival aims to celebrate the roles of art, diversity, education and sport in building community cohesion and goodwill between people. This festival was inspired when Jean was moved to action on hearing the impassioned speech given by the late-Governor Peter Underwood at his 2014 ANZAC day speech. The late Governor warned against glorifying war and called for an increased participation in the study and practice of peace.

Madam Speaker as an animal rights advocate I have despaired over the basic neglect of other animals in our society. I am not marginal in my views as 10% of all Australians share them. Animal husbandry has without doubt advanced the opportunity for human progression but where are we now? With the advanced technology we have employed to turn family farms into systems, we have lost sight of the lives of the animals involved in these systems. The brutal exposes from the live export industry, feedlots, sow stalling and caging chickens are the most prominent campaigns, fought and sometimes won by committed activists.

The use of animals in cosmetic testing is far and beyond the most unnecessary of tortures and more and more people are awake to the power of their ethical choices.

Hunting for food is one thing but hunting and killing for pleasure is beyond the scope of my comprehension in a progressive society and I question what prize is there when a person with a gun stills the beating heart of animal in the name of sport.

I believe that animals have intrinsic worth, beyond their dollar value as a commodity. But if we are to eat meat, farm humanely. I believe that animals have the right to a natural life cycle, that they should be in herds, on grass, not left on concrete slabs for the entirety of their lives. Factory farming has been exposed for its barbarism and its ability to devalue animals. The Greens want factory farming phased out and with it the high levels of methane the animals produce. Climate change is real. Climate change is exacerbated by methane which readily absorbs heat, making it more devastating than CO2. If we are serious about attempting to slow the progress of climate change we must address this issue.

Sustaining the economy is the job of all present today. I believe that the Tasmanian local food economy is a burgeoning area of growth and comes with great peripheral benefits. A community which has a close connection to its food is resilient and healthy. The growth of the local food economy has brought back the village to the heart of Launceston and my previous employer Harvest Community Farmers Market is the most consistent gig in town, gaining interstate and overseas attention and providing germination for small businesses.

The most notable of these being 'Garden of Vegan', a small business with significant impact. From a 3 x 3 metre marquee at Harvest Garden of Vegan has moved into a contemporary restaurant, employing around 20 people and serving over 200 meals a day. Their food is sourced from Harvest stallholders adding further value to their offering and keeping cash in the local economy. This is an example of how we can change.

The opportunity to test innovation is crucial to participation in the food sector. Without the confidence of an established client base there would have been no capacity to move into a bricks and mortar business.

Gastro tourism has become a significant contributor to the state as our fame for beautiful fresh food and exquisite cool climate wines, grows. Visitors seek the behind the scenes narratives and an authentic Tasmanian cultural experience. With that there is a need for more hospitality professionals and those who educate them, adding opportunity for this state to employ more people and become a leader in this sector.

Madam Speaker I would like to share with you a testimony to the strength of our local food sector. There is currently a crowd funding campaign launched to help Elgaar Farm re register its plant after difficulty with a government registration. The operators of Elgaar Farm, stymied by the constant bureaucratic road blocks in its path, used social media connections built through the local community to call for funding. In three days there were donations of over \$100k. Shocked at their success, totally underestimating the reach of the local food economy and the respect and generosity of their customers, the farming family now have a chance to rebuild. They haven't quite reached their goal but there is now hope that their iconic business will be again delivering their high end product to delis in Melbourne and Sydney as well as fronting up at Harvest very early Saturday mornings to service the local market.

My role as an alderman with The City of Launceston has given me insight into many of the challenges facing an economy in transition. Activating Launceston to make the most of its unique natural and built heritage has begun. Traffic calming, laneway activation and the mooted move of the University of Tasmania campus closer to the CBD will help to reignite the city. Place-making via the City Heart Project will make Launceston a prototype for this kind of revitalisation project.

The Greens have had an active role in securing funding for the TasCatalyst project, a contemporary co-working space for innovators, startups, and growing businesses. Tasmanian entrepreneurs from all industry sectors will have the opportunity to take their place in the exploding international innovation and startup scene, in the historic Macquarie house. These kinds of projects provide a valuable home to the creative industries so often touted as critical to the employment of those educated with 21st century skills.

Madam Speaker I will continue to rally support to end discrimination for our LGBTI community. Councils around Australia have taken an active role in applying pressure to the Federal government to allow the free vote on marriage equality. Greens Alderman Emma Williams and I brought a Notice of Motion to council on this matter. We were dismayed that our small contribution was considered too controversial for the male aldermen to support. After Ireland voted overwhelmingly in support of marriage equality Australia has arguably become the most socially conservative country in the post industrialized world. I do not believe this is a true indication of our values. For all campaigns where minority groups are not accorded basic human rights I will be a willing supporter. Discrimination must not be tolerated in our society.

I would like to acknowledge the huge commitment and the integrity of Kim Booth. He placed enormous faith in me as a support candidate in the last election and wish him a long and happy retirement. I spoke with him late last week. He was sitting upon a sand dune in Western Australia after a day in the surf. I asked him if I could call him back in five minutes as I was in a meeting and he said, “you better call back in five because I’ll be going back in ten and I can’t wait”. I could hear his grin and I hope he spends many, many hours in the surf and tinkering with his cars, whiling away his well earned retirement.

Nobody walks alone.

My story is no different. It has been years of collective passion and wisdom from a range of individuals which has helped me walk through these doors. None more significant than the late Deputy Mayor, Jeremy Ball. Jeremy was passionate about both the Tasmanian environment and the world wide issue of climate change.

It is that passion I will bring with me, along with my willingness to listen.

I would also like to thank those who voted for me in the City of Launceston council elections. May they trust in my predecessor and their ability to fill my niche in Council.

I would like to thank my parliamentary colleagues for the warm welcome I have received and I look forward to many spirited party room meetings.

I would finally like to acknowledge my daughters Lucy and Isobel for the deep reservoir of love I found in myself when they were born and to my loving partner Mark Kershaw for his unwavering support and optimism and for the big universe values he has brought into my life.

We are living, in my belief in the most beautiful and vibrant area of the world. I will be passionately supporting a sustainable local community that builds on our strengths. Our amazing environment, dynamic people and ideas will create a wonderful future for our children.

Thank you