

Legislative Assembly Hansard – 29 May 2019 – Proof

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Mrs WENDY TUCKERMAN (Goulburn) (16:34): I begin by acknowledging that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people who are the custodians and traditional owners of this land and I humbly pay my respects to their elders past, present and future. I stand here before you today very proud to be representing the people of the Goulburn electorate. The electorate covers all the communities along the Hume Highway from Berrima to Yass with the largest centre being Goulburn. It also includes Moss Vale, Robertson, Gunning, Murrumbateman, Binalong, Crookwell and all of our communities and primary producers in between, and importantly, the people of Boorowa, who gave me the confidence to enter politics and who have continued to support me and believe in my ability to make a difference for our communities.

The Goulburn electorate features heavily in the history of Australia and the State of New South Wales. From the first inland city of Goulburn to the historical towns and villages throughout the electorate, each with a rich and colourful history of our early explorers and pioneers and some of the most magnificent architectural history equal to anywhere in Australia, the electorate is home to some of the leading experts, researchers and practitioners in the field of agriculture whether it is producing the finest wool and beef in the world or producing an array of crops to feed the world.

Our landscapes provide a tapestry of colour and experiences for tourists, or simply a trail of the many award-winning vineyards or boutique products from the farm gate to explore. I stand before you as a newly elected member of Parliament who has been entrusted to represent this proud electorate: to ensure that the region thrives; to make a positive difference to the quality of life for our communities of today and those of our grandchildren; to realise the benefits that can be achieved through exploring and embracing the opportunities that being part of our great State of New South Wales can bring to our region; to ensure that our ideas are current and are keeping pace with our changing world and in touch with emerging generations; to ensure investment in regional and rural communities; to ensure the resilience of our communities in the face of adversity; and to harness the strength of agility and resourcefulness that is demonstrated every day in regional New South Wales.

In this, my first speech in this place, I wish to pledge to all my constituents that for as long as I have the honour and privilege to represent them in this place, I will always put the communities and people of this electorate first. I will dedicate the next four years and beyond to prove to my constituents that their trust in me is well placed, because for me, first and foremost, politics is about people and community. Millicent Preston-Stanley was the first woman elected to this House, in 1925, some 94 years ago. In the words of Millicent, "Women have a contribution to make to the life of the nation that only women can make". I am proud of being a female role model in my community. I hope to inspire, encourage and support young girls and women to chase their goals, to serve their community and, most importantly, to believe in themselves.

Throughout my journey to this moment, I, too, have been supported by some inspiring and talented women from whom I continue to learn every day. I congratulate New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian on being the first woman to be elected Premier by the people of New South Wales. I acknowledge the Premier's presence in the Chamber and thank her for her support since arriving in the House and particularly during the election campaign. I also acknowledge in the gallery today my predecessor, the Hon. Pru Goward, and the former member for the Southern Highlands, Peta Seaton, and also from the other House, the Hon. Natasha McLaren-Jones. I indeed have formidable role models to emulate and I look forward to their counsel as I make and establish my own pathway in this House.

The electorate of Goulburn, just like the State of New South Wales and the country that is Australia, is the sum of many parts. I acknowledge that every person I represent has their own aspirations and their own challenges. To me, it is important that every person has a voice and every person has opportunity. Having started my career as an investigator with the Australian Federal Police, I have engaged with people from all walks of life and have witnessed the best and worst of human behaviour.

My experience impresses on me the importance and strength of community: The mothers group that lends support as the new mum struggles with the demands of a new baby; the farmer next door who offers his ear and a shoulder to cry on as his neighbour struggles to keep afloat; the local football coach who hits the right spot with a troubled youth and sets them on the right path; the Rural Fire Service volunteers who risk their lives to save the lives and livelihoods of others, and those who support them. Individuals come together to create communities—individuals from many different backgrounds, experiences, skills and beliefs. It is this diversity within any community that creates its vibrancy, strength and opportunity. It is our humanity, our kindness, our joint values and aspirations that create a sense of community. I take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers across the electorate who provide social opportunities and raise funds for important community projects and people in need.

As the member for Goulburn, I will harness the sense of community that exists within my electorate to ensure that our strengths are identified and opportunities are created just as I have done during my years in local government. As a young mother of two, I became interested in local government and I was keen to represent my community as I thought I could make a difference. In 2004 I was elected to council, and three years later, in 2007, I became the first female mayor of Boorowa Council, a position I held unopposed for nine years prior to being appointed Administrator of Hilltops Council.

In my role as Mayor of Boorowa Council I was surrounded by many passionate community advocates without whom I would not be here. Progress can be made only when you are surrounded by a team that shares your belief in what is possible, a team that has the courage to create a vision that is greater than the here and now, a team that is willing to push beyond their size or stature to create new expectations in community leadership.

I acknowledge those in the gallery who have stood by me through the many challenges and contributed to solutions that will ensure long-lasting benefits. To former mayor Chris Corcoran; former councillor Jack Ryan; previous general managers, Therese Manns and Anthony McMahon; and my former executive assistant Deidre Johnson: I thank you. My role in local government inspired me to aspire to the role of member for Goulburn. It is this role that will provide a great foundation for my success. I have always believed that the greatest form of respect is listening to what others have to say.

One of my proudest moments in community leadership was hosting more than 20 per cent of my community who had each given over two hours of their time to tell us about their hopes for the future, what they saw as some of our opportunities and challenges as a community. As the RSVPs began to build, I was taken aback. I always knew our community was proud, but at this moment, this lightbulb moment, I watched a community put their trust in me and my fellow councillors—a trust that we would listen, a trust that we would work with them to meet our challenges and rise to opportunities.

Over the course of those few hours, our community was not stuck in the mindset of roads, rates and rubbish. Surprisingly, there was little focus on our collection of potholes. Health, education and prosperity were high on the minds and hearts of all. Our community's aspirations were not unreasonable, nor were their concerns. Every level of government plays a part in the quality of life enjoyed by a community. I identify with the real outcomes of government services and infrastructure in contributing to the social and economic fabric of our community: library services that help build imagination in children, leading to creativity in adults; footpaths that are maintained to prevent falls and ensure the longevity of our ageing population; roads and bridges that connect our neighbours and provide a safe path for the transport of natural resources and produce to feed and clothe our country. As a Government, we must support our communities.

I want to ensure that we have adequate services to meet the needs of our ageing demographic and our most vulnerable. I will fight for a world-class health system that provides for the sick and infirm, to be delivered by the best skilled practitioners, and support and access no matter where people live. I am proud to be a part of a Government that, like me, wants the children in schools of the electorate to have access to quality educators and to be afforded environments that will afford them every opportunity. As the saying goes, our children are our future, and with a new generation just kicking off in the Tuckerman family with the recent birth of my granddaughter, Letty, it could not be more front and centre in my mind.

As regional and rural New South Wales endure the most debilitating drought, we must continue to ensure that our communities are supported. Our farmers and communities are doing it tough and many are volunteering their time and support by providing a helping hand, a smiling face or a shoulder to cry on. No greater than now is our resilience being tested. As a State, we must never forget the hand that feeds us. I will fight to ensure that the small businesses of my electorate are afforded world-class technology and connectivity just like in the city. It is no longer acceptable that due to inadequate services and lack of connectivity, our businesses cannot compete in open markets. Job creation through investment in infrastructure, as well as new and emerging technologies, are essential to ensure that our communities continue to thrive and remain relevant in an ever-changing environment.

I want the businesses of our communities to have access to the people and skills needed for them to grow and prosper, and an education system that provides and targets those skills. Our electorate is perfectly positioned with great opportunity right at its doorstep. As a Government, we must continue to work with local government in regional and rural areas to ensure the policy platform for incentive to attract new business and investment and business relocation not only from interstate but also within the State to our regional and rural communities. I support a sense of community across New South Wales that encompasses metropolitan, regional and rural New South Wales and acknowledges the importance of working together using our individual strengths to the benefit of the entire State.

The provision of safe, secure, efficient and sustainable water services and waste services is paramount to ensuring livable and sustainable communities. My career choices in life have always been to protect and serve the community, to help and protect the most vulnerable and to make a difference in the lives of others. Through this experience, I understand the work that our emergency service personnel endure and it is important to me that they receive the best support and equipment to do their job. None of this can be achieved by one person alone. As I stand here before you, I do so with a community behind me and a Government by my side.

I am a strong believer that it is not what is said but rather what is delivered that is important and I stand before you ready to take on this new life challenge, grounded in my community and ready to make them proud. As I take the next step, I do so with my greatest supporter by my side—my husband, Michael. It has only been your constant love and support, along with your genuine care for your community, that has given me the strength, time and confidence to put myself forward to serve as mayor and now member of Parliament. I am not sure when we first met as young police officers we would ever have expected to be in this place. It has not been without its challenges, but we have done it together. I thank you for the many hours and long days you endured during the campaign. We make a great team and I look forward to continuing our journey.

It goes without saying our greatest achievement together is producing two wonderful children in Thomas and Bradley and watching them grow into the men they are today. We are both proud of both of you and who you have become. As I said before, our family continues to grow with the birth of our first grandchild, Letty Maya Tuckerman, on 2 May. I was very fortunate to have a special bond with both my grandmothers, Kathleen Mason and Kathleen Porter. I admired their strength of character and loving disposition. I feel very blessed to be Letty's grandmother and I look forward to realising our own special bond. I admire Brittney who at eight months pregnant still managed to hand out voting cards on election day—now that is commitment. Thank you, Brittney and Katie, for your wonderful support. I look forward too many more grandchildren—too soon?

I also acknowledge my parents, William and Pamela Porter, who are present in the gallery today. They are hardworking and loving parents who supported my choices and provided a wonderful childhood. My love of sport, hockey in particular, and my drive to represent my State and country was always supported by my parents. It was not till later I realised the sacrifice they made to ensure that I met my representative commitments and excelled at the sport I loved. From these beginnings to today, my parents have loved, guided and supported me and have been the most wonderful role models to aspire to. To my siblings, Stephen, Michael and Susie: Our upbringing together gave me a great grounding for tolerance, for fighting at the right time and getting away with it—skills that I continue to use to this day. To my parents-in-law, Ron and Norma, and to the whole Tuckerman family: Thank you for your love and support.

A big thank you to those family members who gave their support and especially those who travelled from interstate. Teresa, Trish, Catherine, John, Curly, Brad, Katie, Tom, Britt and Kurt Barton, thank you for your support every day and particularly during the election. Each member of my family holds a special place in my heart and I thank you all for your love. As I look to the gallery, I bring members' attention back to my immediate predecessor, the Hon. Pru Goward—small in stature but big in reputation and mighty big shoes to fill. She achieved much for the electorate of Goulburn and worked tirelessly for her constituents. She was accessible and listened, but, more importantly, she delivered. Pru, I am grateful for your support, guidance, endurance and strength during a difficult period. There were many who doubted and much was at stake, but Team Goulburn did it and my victory was also yours.

To all the members of my campaign team, led brilliantly by Damian Jones, who I note is also present in the gallery, and to the Hon. Natasha McLaren-Jones: I really do not know how to express my gratitude for the many hours of work you both endured to successfully navigate, guide and win what many pundits were telling us was the unwinnable seat. Thank you for your expertise and guidance. To all the members of my local conference who got behind me and worked tirelessly to ensure that I became the member—Nick Tyrrell, Grant Pearce, Peta Seaton, Frank Conroy, Graham Brown and the entire conference, members of Yass, Moss Vale, Goulburn and Bowral branches and the enormous contributions by the Young Liberals from New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory—this victory could not have been achieved without you. Thank you.

I particularly thank some very special people who went above and beyond such as Mr Jim Picker. At every turn, Jim, you were there. Val Henderson, thank you for your enduring commitment and dogged determination. I owe a debt of gratitude to the many pre-poll workers; in two weeks of rain, hail and shine—as you know, Goulburn weather is very unpredictable—you were there by my side. Grant, Jim, Irene, Val, Kerry, Faye, Jim, Daniel, Ken, Margaret, Jarvis, Nigel, Bob, Gordon, Frank, Lou, Louise, David, Alice, Trish and the many volunteers who manned the booths or scrutineered on election day, I am humbled by your support and contribution. Peta Seaton, thank you for your guidance and counsel.

Thank you to those in the campaign office—Lorraine and Val—and for those behind the scenes, particularly Amy Firmstone. Thank you for all your support. Thanks must go to the hardworking State director Chris Stone and the team at Liberal headquarters. Thank you to the Liberal Women's Council, particularly Mary Lou Jarvis. Your support is very much appreciated. I thank the many members of Parliament who visited the electorate and offered their support, the Hon. David Elliot, Don Harwin, Brad Hazzard, Rob Stokes, Andrew Constance, Sarah Mitchell, Matthew Mason-Cox and Jim Molan. To the member for Hume, the Hon. Angus Taylor and Team Taylor: Thank you for your support during the campaign. I thank my local team, led by the grand poobah Jack Ryan. There were so many community members that rallied and supported me during pre-poll and election day. I thank you. Special mention go to the Thursday golfers. In particular, I acknowledge the Labor voter amongst them who voted Liberal for the first time. I know it hurt. Your sacrifice has been noted and the precedent has been set; I thank you. To my good friends—you know who you are—my world is a better place because you are here. I thank you for your love and support.

Behind every good local member is an outstanding staff. I thank my team: Alicia, Cheryl and Paige. I am blessed to have inherited such a great team. I regard them all as part of my extended family and I am excited by what we might achieve together for the electorate in the years ahead. Gina Carey once said:

A strong woman looks a challenge dead in the eye and gives it a wink.

Go, Team Winks! For me, the essence of liberalism is giving people the opportunity to pursue and achieve their life goals, irrespective of their background and then give something back to society by ensuring that this opportunity is created for others. Once again, to the people of the Goulburn electorate: I am with you. I look forward to giving my all with you, building our strength and fostering a great sense of community that will take us forward. Thank you for believing in me.

Members stood in their places and applauded.