

## Legislative Council Hansard – 29 May 2019

**INAUGURAL SPEECH**

**The PRESIDENT:** I ask members to extend the usual courtesy to the Hon. Emma Hurst, who is about to make her first speech in this House. I welcome into my gallery Sandra and Kevin Hurst, the parents of the Hon. Emma Hurst.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST (18:09):** I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which this Parliament meets, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and recognise their continuing connection to land, animals, water and culture. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I thank all my family and friends, and all the Animal Justice Party volunteers, staff and supporters for their work, support and dedication. I recognise my friend Paula Wallace, who was not able to be here tonight as she is picking up an eight-year-old dog named Buddy from a medical research facility in New South Wales. Buddy's is another life saved as a result of the Animal Justice Party's Right to Release campaign to get animals out of medical experimentation facilities. I thank Paula. Buddy, you are home now; you are loved.

I stand here humbled to be voted by the people of New South Wales to be a voice for animals in this Parliament. I am grateful for the trust bestowed on me to build a future focused on kindness and compassion. However, this is not my victory; this is not our victory. This victory belongs to the animals in this country who are currently in crisis: who are locked in cages, who are routinely subject to painful and cruel procedures and whose needs for survival are often ignored if there is money to be made. But this victory for animals is not about the cruel acts of humans; it is about the change we seek. This is our chance to make that change. I am well aware of the enormity of the task that lies ahead and recognise that it is the greatest of our generation. The road will be long and there will be challenges, obstructions and pitfalls. But with three representatives now elected to Parliaments in Australia on an animal justice platform, I have never been more confident that we will get there. We have shown that when we stand together for the animals, we win.

I will speak briefly on how I came to be here. I never aspired for a career in politics. In fact, as a child, I thought I might be different. When some might have seen a rodent, pest or dirty mouse, I saw something else. I saw a small, terrified animal whose heart beat against her chest as she cowered in a corner and whose life was as precious to her as yours is to you. I cared not for the labels others had given her. They were irrelevant to her ability to feel pain, irrelevant to her ability to feel fear and irrelevant to her ability to suffer. As it turns out, I am not so different after all. Many residents in New South Wales voted for the Animal Justice Party because they care about that little mouse as much as I do.

Like many children, growing up I developed a strong bond with a companion animal. For me that was my rescued cat, Flush. One day when I was a young girl I sat hugging a hen and noticed that she was purring. I realised she showed joy in the same way as my cat. I thought that if I could not eat my cat, I could not eat the hen. Many years later a simple flyer handed to me on the streets led me to discover that the egg industry macerates all male chicks and that male calves in the dairy industry are sent to slaughter. That night I went home and researched further. I still recall that night with great clarity. As I read about what happens in industrialised farming facilities it was like someone turned the lights on. Overnight I became vegan, and since that day I have been driven by a single, prevailing, powerful dream: that I will be part of a great movement of change that will see the cruel treatment of animals come to an end.

I began my advocacy career working at Animal Liberation while I completed my master's degree in psychology. We were a small but united team. We had setback after setback and defeat after defeat. At times we found ourselves disillusioned and disheartened as we attempted to move our message against the wills of powerful and wealthy people who profit from animal suffering and who use their influence to try to silence us. But we would not allow others to tell us "You can't" and we would not accept "You won't". We persevered.

On the night of 30 May 2011 the fight for animal justice changed forever. Never has the collective compassion of a nation been so clear. It was the night the ABC *Four Corners* program exposed the horrors of the Australian live animal export industry. Animals Australia documented the story of Australian animals and their fate in Indonesia. Dudley, one of the animals filmed, was an Australian steer who refused to move into the knocking box where he would be killed. Five men had a rope tied around his neck. They pulled and fought him, trying to move him up the chute. By the time they had him on the line he was exhausted. Dudley stumbled and fell on the ramp on his way to the knocking box. Workers jumped on his back and stabbed him with sticks to try to get him up again. They poked him in the eye and broke his tail. Each action caused Dudley to wince in pain, but he did not have the ability to get up. Eventually, six men dragged Dudley into the restraint box with the rope around his neck.

Tommy, another Australian steer, was taken to the slaughter line and left to watch his fellow cattle killed in front of him. We saw Tommy's eyes wide with fear and his large black body trembling in terror as he watched, trapped and utterly helpless. As workers pulled him down onto the kill floor Tommy knew and had witnessed his fate. His fear is something I never want to imagine. Those scenes left a wound in the hearts of all Australians—a wound that remains open to this day. Those scenes of violence opened up Australians' eyes not only to the cruel treatment of animals overseas, but also to the cruel practices in our own backyards. We saw expose after expose of cruelty filmed at our own local slaughterhouses, and of the common and often lawful cruel treatment of animals on many farms around New South Wales and across Australia. The veil of secrecy we had fought against was lifted and change was within sight.

We are at a defining moment. Australian people, regardless of their political beliefs, are making changes in their own lives to defend animals. People with different political affiliations are standing up, speaking out and demanding better animal protection laws. Animal cruelty is not a Left or Right issue. But, sadly, it is one that the Government has failed to respond to. This is why I decided to become part of this Parliament. I believe New South Wales can do better. I believe we can be a more compassionate Parliament. I believe that through cooperation we can move beyond the wounds of the past and build a pathway that advances peace.

As I speak millions of hens are being imprisoned in battery cages, female dogs are being held in squalid conditions on puppy farms and greyhounds are facing bullets to their heads because they do not run fast enough for profit. Somewhere a mother cow is crying for her newborn baby. She will cry out for him all night until her voice goes hoarse and she can no longer bellow. Soon she will be impregnated again so she continues to produce milk. Her little boy was sent to slaughter as he is useless in the dairy industry. Last year on a BBC documentary a dairy farmer broke down in tears and admitted that some mother cows cry for days when their calves are taken.

Somewhere a pig bites at the metal bars of her cage. She recently gave birth on the cold metal flooring. She cannot interact with her young because her cage will not allow such movement. She is more intelligent than the dogs we have in our homes. Given the chance, she could learn how to play soccer or video games and show us that she is capable of love and friendship. Instead she repetitively rocks against the cage bars that are creating welts on her skin. She has gone mad. Somewhere a chicken has just fallen, her legs too weak to hold her obese body any longer. They now splay out in front of her. She sits in the build-up of six weeks of faeces from tens of thousands of other chickens. The faeces will soon start to burn through her feathers and then her skin. She would stand to avoid the pain, but she is no longer able. She has been bred this way and she will be in chronic pain for the last days of her life.

I recount this miserable reality because I want to explain why the Animal Justice Party is in Parliament. This suffering is the reason the people of New South Wales elected representatives for animals. These are the stories the people of New South Wales no longer want to hear because they want us to work together to end this suffering. Today I implore everyone to work with me to change this. The world is changing already. Now it is our turn to ensure that government makes changes to protect animals too. Together we can change the future for animals. Together we can change the story for these cows, pigs and chickens and every other animal that is suffering today.

Let's free animals from cages, review the laws that are failing to protect non-human species and speak out against all injustice. The fate of each of these animals rests in our willingness to choose kindness over greed, respectability over indifference and to be leaders instead of being led. For the many people who speak on behalf of animals, we are powerful. Any industry that profits from the suffering and abuse of animals is terrified of us because we know the truth, we speak the truth and we have taken this truth all the way to Parliament House. My friends, you are the reason I stand here today—because so many of us stood up and spoke out, even when our voices shook, even when threats to personal safety came our way. This is a defining moment; the result of our standing together, not only with purpose but also with hope.

There are businesses that make money out of the suffering of animals. No-one wants to silence us more than they do. They have money, power and secrecy on their side, but the animals have you. They have people who will stand up and speak out against abuse. In this numbers game it is you who will ensure the animals gain freedom. Now we have a chance to change the world. If you feel the same urgency as I do, the same passion for change, and if you feel the same hopefulness, then together we will break down barriers and build bridges in their place. This is the moment. This is the time for change. Let's transform, let's dare to hope, let's dissolve the cages and shackles that have enslaved animals and caused them great harm.

I encourage you today to move past anger and, instead, join me in building this great movement of change. There is power in hope. There is power in who we are. It was hope that saw the women's movement win the decades-long fight for the right to vote. It was hope that ensured that civil rights movements gained equal rights under the law regardless of skin colour. It was hope that changed our laws recently so that civil marriage would be available, without discrimination, to all couples, regardless of sex, sexual orientation and gender identity. It is hope that drives us today.

I believe. I believe we can do this because I believe in you. We are guided by a powerful idea—one that sets a new course for this great country, one where equality and compassion extend beyond our own species and recognise that animals also have their own sentience, their own place, their own desires, and their own reason for existence. Our movement may be relatively new and our ideas of change may be considered idealistic, but the values we fight for—kindness, non-violence and freedom—are values that history has shown will always win. The Australian people showed how much they care about animals when they elected the Australian Justice Party's first politician, the Hon. Mark Pearson. Now, together, my friend, we will fight to end the cruel exploitation of animals.

My promise to the animals is this: You have all of me. The lioness in the circus, I see you. The pig in the sow stall, I see you. The mouse in the medical experimentation facility, I see you. The fish crushed at the bottom of the trawler net, I see you. I know your suffering and I will never be silent. I will push forward no matter what life throws my way because the cruelties inflicted on you must end, and I will do all I can to see that happen. No matter if you have skin, scales, fur or feathers, no matter your supposed financial worth or lack thereof, native or non-native, rodent or fish or cow or dog, I will protect you. I stand by you. I will fiercely defend you. It is our party that will keep that promise and we will never ever let you down. You have all of me. Thank you.