

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

The PRESIDENT: As the Hon. Jan Barham is about to make her inaugural speech I ask honourable members to extend to her the usual courtesies.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM [5.21 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I acknowledge that this Parliament is on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and I offer my respect to the Elders past, present and future. I acknowledge that I am from the Bundjalung nation and the land of the Arakwal people and I pay my respects to those Elders, past and present, and the community members that I am proud to work with and to call friends. Today I speak in the House for the first time as one of six Greens members of the New South Wales Parliament. I acknowledge those members of The Greens who have served here before me. I congratulate all those who sit in this House. I have been privileged to work with my local Aboriginal community for over 15 years. Since 1994 I have had a close association with the Arakwal people and have worked in support of the long process that has led to the completion of three Indigenous land use agreements [ILUAs].

I congratulate the former Government and particularly former Premiers Carr and Iemma and Minister Debus on their commitment to the outcomes. I acknowledge also the long-term commitment of Ian Cohen. In 1994 he gave his word to support the Elders and he did. In 2007 I was honoured to be asked to officiate at an event at the Cape Byron headland where Premier Iemma acknowledged the finalisation of the Indigenous land use agreement stages two and three that advanced the negotiations with the State Government. This has achieved the return of land to the Arakwal people to secure their original house site, a site for a cultural centre and the ownership of a caravan park that will provide ongoing economic security. These outcomes were in addition to the delivery of the Arakwal National Park in Indigenous Land Use Agreement stage one, which created the protection of significant coastal lands just south of the Cape Byron headland and also created jobs that now have provided a working-on-country experience for over 15 people.

Jobs creation was a priority for the Elders as they knew that education and employment were the key to providing a more secure future for Aboriginal people. I sit as a community representative on the advisory board that was created for the joint management of the national park and I have held this position since its establishment. I make mention of the experience that was provided to me as a member of the board by way of cultural awareness training. I believe this is an exercise that would benefit many in society as a means to understand the Indigenous experience. The delivery of these agreements highlights how the State Government can take significant action to recognise Aboriginal people and improve the lives of the First Peoples of this country. I am now very proud to be The Greens spokesperson for Aboriginal Affairs and I look forward to learning more and offering my support to groups across the State.

I am honoured to stand here as a representative of The Greens having been a member for almost 20 years. I joined The Greens because they represented a world view, a global set of principles that define a better future, which later was encapsulated by the early slogan for The Greens New South Wales, "Our Future, Vote Green". The Greens are often misunderstood as many take the colour as a representation of only the natural world rather than of life itself. All aspects of life and society are our responsibility, hence the four principles of peace and nonviolence, social and economic justice, ecological sustainability and grass roots democracy. It is a political organisation that reflects my ideals and I am proud to have been involved in early campaigns and policy development. I have been a candidate in local, State

and Federal elections since 1997 and was elected to Byron Shire Council in 1999. In 2002 I became deputy mayor and in 2004 I became Australia's first popularly elected Greens mayor. In 2008 I was re-elected as mayor.

I am from the country, the far North Coast. I have lived there for over 20 years but I grew up in the Wollongong area in the southern suburb of Unanderra. I went to public schools and after matriculation moved to Newcastle to attend the university, but this did not suit me and I found myself spending more time attending architecture lectures and at art school. Growing up in Wollongong was an education in itself. It was a multicultural area and I watched people who lived in garages spend their weekends building their homes. I spent time in my neighbourhood learning of the world as I was invited into the homes of people of diverse backgrounds where cultural heritage was on display and the food, art and practices were shared generously. I innocently thought the world was like this—a multicultural melting pot. Later I was shocked at the lack of tolerance for others that was also a part of the Australian culture.

The industries that defined the area were mining and the steelworks. I was exposed to the fact that some fathers went to work and never came home. In the 1960s their deaths in the mines caused months of strikes in an effort to improve workplace conditions. I remember going to school and finding additional sandwiches in my bag. They were for sharing with those who did not have much, but nothing was said about this; it just happened. I also remember the shock of the fortnightly pay night when fathers staggered up the road late at night from the Leagues club at the bottom of my street. My bedroom faced the road and after being woken by the drunken rabble I watched the shadow play of violence behind the curtains across the road. The next morning I saw the women appear from the homes wearing large 1960s sunglasses and the kids at school with bruises announcing that dad had put all the pay packet in the pokies.

This was not my family situation. I was lucky; my family was quiet. My mother baked biscuits, loved her flower garden and cooked the food that my father grew in our backyard garden and the chook pen. Neighbours swapped their produce and I remember when new arrivals from Italy moved in next door they brought us a grape vine cutting that was planted on the adjoining fence and it still grows there. This has instilled in me a love of gardening and an encouragement for local food production. My childhood was also about exploring nature, being able to go on long hikes in the bush and horseriding with friends. My parents were from the South Coast, my father from a Jaspers Brush dairying family, my mother from Berry where her father had his final posting as a policeman after having been a country sergeant in many rural New South Wales towns. It was from him that I heard about my current home when he referred to it as God's own country from his time stationed in Bangalow in the 1920s.

We used to spend holidays at the farm, and I was taught to knit and sew by my grandmothers. I fondly remember nights of family gatherings around the radio—time spent together, with busy hands making what was needed and mending what was worn. It was the foundation of my "green" ideals: the self-sufficiency and the commitment to recycling and valuing what resources were available. There was always a ball of string, and hand-me-downs, and the making of preserves to take advantage of abundant seasonal produce.

I am TAFE educated with two trade certificates. I did two years study at Wollongong TAFE and then won a statewide scholarship to attend East Sydney Tech, where I finished my studies. When I completed my course I did work experience with a fashion company for a

month and was then offered a full-time job. I worked in the fashion industry in Sydney for eight years prior to moving to the North Coast in 1989 to live part-time, still returning to Sydney to do short-term, intense bursts of work. It was a hard industry, non-unionised and tough, but I learnt valuable lessons in business and efficiency.

I left the city in pursuit of a more meaningful life in a small community. When I arrived in Byron Bay I headed to the library to research the local area and understand its history, and I talked to many people to hear the stories of life in a small regional town. I joined local environment organisations and started to come to grips with the struggle between development and the protection of our natural and cultural heritage. This was spurred by my awareness in the 1980s of environmental concerns, most notably the Franklin, the Daintree, North Coast rainforests and uranium mining, and the green bans in Sydney.

The history of the Australian environment movement is one we can all be proud of. We have forged a radical, typically Australian larrikin and theatrical movement that pioneered on a global stage. Many of our songs and images have travelled the world inspiring others. It was the meeting with Jack Mundey and the Green Bans that inspired Petra Kelly on a visit to Australia to take back the ideas to Germany and establish the Green Party. We then adopted the German political structure and principles, and in 1991 Bob Brown along with Ian Cohen and others established the Australian Greens in North Sydney.

I was inspired by the courage, the vision and the creative pursuits of the campaigners. It made me aware that we collectively have a responsibility to protect the world we live in and ensure it is available for future generations. My move to the North Coast was not just a whim; it was in part a response to the death of a close friend that set me thinking on the meaning of life, hence my desire to find greater purpose beyond work and the fast lane. As it turned out, my arrival in Byron Bay was at the same time as the move by the multinational tourism organisation Club Med.

With State Government support and the council of the day giving approval for a resort, the town of Byron Bay was headed for a change of identity. But it was not accepted, and the environment organisation of which I was a member set about assessing the development and investigating the options to oppose. It was broad community opposition that brought businesses together with conservationists, and Byron Shire Businesses for the Future was formed. I was secretary of that organisation and was committed to legally challenging the approval by the council, and we were ultimately successful in the Land and Environment Court.

The Byron Shire community has a reputation for being outspoken, and its voice is heard because it has the megaphone of independent media. The *Byron Shire Echo* this year celebrates 25 years of publication, and this combined with the community radio station BayFM meant that the community has the power to communicate unfettered. It is one place in which the main means of communication is not in the hands of the corporates.

I spent a number of years working on environmental court cases, including a quarry in a coastal area of high ecological significance. The Batsons Quarry and Club Med cases both failed on the basis of inadequate environmental assessments. I learnt about the legal system through my work on these cases, from the ground up. This is in part what inspired me to become involved in politics, to change the inappropriate laws. After 10 years living and working in Sydney in the 1980s my move to the country was a conscious choice to seek a life

of voluntary simplicity. Some referred to it as a "dropping out" but I saw it as a process of "seeking more".

Life in the city sets up a way of thinking that was soon changed when I moved to the country. I did not have a drivers licence, as in the city there were so many options for travel. When I moved to the North Coast I was shocked to learn that public transport was virtually non-existent. I wanted to work, and an opportunity to teach at the TAFE in Lismore was thwarted by the fact that to teach for four hours was going to involve catching a 7.00 a.m. bus from Byron Bay and not returning until 7.15 that evening. Thankfully, I was able to work independently due to the skills I had from my trade training.

There exists a disadvantage for people in the regions if transport is not seen as a priority. Next week is the seventh anniversary of the removal of the North Coast train service. At a time when an increase in the provision of service for a growing regional community was needed a vital service was taken away. We hope to see the new Government reconsider this issue. So "bring back the train" has been a uniting position from the North Coast community. I acknowledge the inquiry into the closure of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail service, chaired by the Hon. Jenny Gardiner, that identified the issues and provided insights into the community need for the service. The inquiry brought the Parliament to the people.

Public transport is a key focus for not only the North Coast but other regions as it is an essential service that affects every aspect of daily life and plays a part in determining a community's access to work, education, health, recreation and community involvement. I can relate a dire situation in which a local woman with breast cancer made the decision to have a mastectomy rather than undergo ongoing treatment after less invasive surgery. She made the decision as she was unable to travel for treatment due to the lack of local medical services and effective transport options. This is only one example of where the limitation of basic services has a dramatic effect on people's lives.

I have experienced exceptional moments with courageous, caring people, from the Aboriginal people of the Bundjalung nation to the fifth-generation dairy farmers, the women of the Country Women's Association—I am a proud member of the Bangalow branch—and the many volunteers who give their time and caring to others. I acknowledge the brave work of the State Emergency Service personnel, the bush fireies, the surf lifesaving movement and the emergency rescue volunteers. As this week is National Volunteer Week it is important to note the work of volunteers, particularly those in rural and regional areas where there are vast distances between services. The need for localised resilience is vital to the functioning of small communities.

The functioning of society as we know it would stop if it were not for volunteers, and governments would never be able to pay for their valuable contribution. So we should value them highly and ensure we do whatever we can to ease some of the burdens that make it difficult for them to function. When I attend citizenship ceremonies or meet newcomers to my area I also make mention of volunteering and advise people that it is a great way to meet people and gain insight in a new community. There is such a wide choice of activities that it means people can choose an existing interest or skill base area, or venture into a new area.

I thank my parents for giving me the principles of honesty and integrity. As my mother said when some felt I had lost my way with leaving a career to search for a purposeful life in a small community, "She's just like her grandparents, quite old-fashioned." My mother, Norma Barham, and my sister, Linda Kennedy, were here for my swearing in last week and were

very proud. My family has always supported me, despite not always understanding me. My late father was a public servant at Tallawarra Power Station and would never help me with my schoolwork. He always told me that the only way to learn was to do it myself, and to always question everything as decisions are what we live with. My brother, Ray, is not a fan of my beliefs. He worked as a railway electrical fitter for his whole life and is a shooter and an archer. But I know he is always there for me.

I worked in this place with Ian Cohen from 1995 until 1999. After working in State Parliament and witnessing some important changes made to legislation to protect and preserve the environment, to enshrine ecologically sustainable development in the Local Government Act, I felt positive about the challenge of local government.

In 1999 I was elected to Byron Shire Council to join fellow Greens councillor Richard Staples. It was a steep learning curve in not only the complex processes of local government but also the harsh reality of the constraints on service delivery. In 2002 a by-election saw the election of Greens councillors Sandra Heilpern and Duncan Dey, which resulted in The Greens being represented by four of the 10 members of that council. In the 2004 general election The Greens were successful in retaining four representatives: Richard Staples, Tom Tabart, John Lazarus and me. In the 2008 general election The Greens were again successful in retaining four representatives: Richard Staples, Tom Tabart, Simon Richardson and me. It should be noted that by no means could it be said that four out of 10, or even four out of nine, constitutes a majority of elected representatives, but that has been the mantra of the detractors and some of the media in relation to Byron Shire Council: a Green dominated council—if only, I say.

I have spent many years on committees and involved in difficult decision-making on the issue of coastal management, and I have relied on some clear guidelines for consideration of impacts set down by the State Government in the 1980s. It appears that the challenge for this Government will be how it deals with climate change and its impacts, and whether it respects scientific advice. I am an arts advocate and I appreciate the expression of who we are as a society. Art portrays and shares our experiences. It is often popular culture that tackles the controversial political issues of the day in a meaningful way for the people and it can define political awareness. I am very pleased to be spokesperson for the arts on behalf of The Greens. I am a feminist and a defender of the disadvantaged. I believe we have a responsibility in a civil society to protect those in need, and we face huge challenges for the future.

I am here because I believe in democracy and the responsibility of being an elected member to serve the people. I know that many people criticise our democracy but there is not a better system; perhaps we have to accept that we are the problem, not the process. The loss of respect for the role of the Parliament and those who serve it saddens me. I believe we have a responsibility to deliver good governance by seeking broad and expansive advice and evidence. I look forward to hearing divergent views. I am respectful of difference and I am delighted if my views can be further informed by others' perspectives. I believe in intergeneration equity and the precautionary principle as guides to good governance. I am here as a realist but also an optimist. I hope that we can work together to deliver good decisions and return to the people of New South Wales trust in this democratic process.