



Inaugural Speeches

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The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! On behalf of the newly elected member for Summer Hill, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery this afternoon of former Senator for New South Wales Bruce Childs, the former member for Marrickville, Carmel Tebbutt, local government representatives, family, friends and supporters of the new member. I welcome you this afternoon to the gallery. I now call the newly elected member for Summer Hill.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) [5.01 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I am honoured today to come into this House as the first member for Summer Hill. Our area in the inner west is part of a vibrant, modern city brimming with a wealth drawn from many cultures—both newly arrived and more than 60,000 years old. What we now call Summer Hill was the Eora nation and home to the Gadigal and Wangal people, before it was stolen.

I wish to acknowledge their elders past and present. And I take this opportunity, in my first speech in Parliament, to join others who support the recognition of Australia's Indigenous people in the Constitution, and an end to discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It is often said that if you are not a socialist when you are 20, you don't have a heart; and if you are not a conservative when you are 40, you don't have a head. I do not know where people come up with these things! Having worked for Anthony Albanese and Julia Gillard throughout my twenties, I assure this Parliament and the community of Summer Hill that I come to this place with a firm understanding and belief that the values we hold dear need not and should not become world weary at any age. Indeed, I look to Labor elders, like Gough Whitlam and Tom Uren, who have recently passed, as examples of people who never let setbacks tire their commitment to fighting disadvantage and injustice. And, anyway, I am still a long way off turning 40!

I want to say a few things about who I am and how I plan to represent the residents of Summer Hill in this, Australia's oldest Parliament. When I was growing up my mother, Lyndall, taught at public high schools and my father, Peter, practised law. They instilled in me two things above all else: the importance of education and a sense of civic responsibility. I am a proud product of our public education system. It was at my local schools, Artarmon Public and later Willoughby Girls High School, that I made friends from many varied backgrounds. I still believe in a public system not only where all children have the same quality of education, but where children who live in the same areas learn in the same schools and are not separated because of their families' incomes or for any other reason. I think schooling is preparation for life in every sense. If an inclusive society is important to us, schools should strive to be inclusive as much as they strive to be excellent academically.

I have a lot to thank my parents for. They made sure that education for my sister, Phoebe, and I continued outside school. Our parents were dedicated in their efforts to ensure that we grew up with a sense of the wider world, and our extra-classroom education took on many forms. There were weekend trips to museums and art galleries; there were bushwalks and camping trips; and the overseas holidays that they saved for always had an educational focus. Perhaps the most structured part of my parent-led tuition was our weekly Friday night ritual of pizza and *Burke's Backyard*. I assure you that I sent many stamped, self-addressed envelopes to Channel 9 requesting the latest fact sheets on acid rain, worm farming and the results of the recent dog road test.

Through our many adventures I learnt about different people's ways of life, the precious beauty of our natural environment, of art and culture and history; and through this I came to understand that I could not take for granted my good fortune at growing up in a comfortable family home, surrounded by love, support and opportunity. My education about the world took on a very practical purpose: finding ways to change it for the better. In high school I began testing out this civic responsibility. My causes were varied and my enthusiasm was, well, youthful. I could not believe people wanted to kill creatures as beautiful and as intelligent as whales. I still cannot.

At 15, I heard Pauline Hanson's first speech to Parliament. What I heard was an attack on the multicultural country I love. She claimed that this great strength of our country was in fact our weakness; that the only way forward was to go back to the bad old days of white Australia; that a nation built by a mix of immigrants, convicts and Indigenous people should be scared of being swamped by foreigners. She said this even as the world looked to us as a model of a modern, thriving society, more cosmopolitan than anywhere in Europe and perfectly at home in Asia. Soon after her speech, I organised my school friends to go to a rally in the city against the silly idea that Australia needed one culture to be one nation.

Multiculturalism is a great Australian story, and its rich rewards are evident everywhere in the streets and suburbs of the electorate of Summer Hill. I love that on any given day you are spoilt for choice about what to eat—some sticky baklava in Dulwich Hill, the wafting smells of wood-fired pizza across Haberfield, or queuing for the famous Vietnamese pork roll in Marrickville. I love the meandering candlelit Greek Easter parade through the streets of Marrickville, and the colour and the firecrackers of Chinese New

Year in Ashfield. But it is more than this. Our communities celebrate together and we look out for each other. Our differences do not divide us—they unite us.

It follows that a successful, multicultural nation should be able to continue to accept new immigrants from all countries and backgrounds. And we usually do. But somehow, for as long as I have been an adult, Australia's political leaders have made a cruel exception for people who come here to seek asylum. The demonisation of people who seek asylum, over the 14 years since the *Tampa*, will not be easy to undo. But I ask Australians who have watched as politicians try to out-muscle each other on this issue to think about the people involved. Who are these people who come to seek asylum in Australia? These are people with enough courage to risk everything they know for a better life for their family—with enough pluck and determination to escape their persecutors, to cross borders with their life savings, to persevere as they make their way through places unknown, to take a journey they know will either bring a new beginning or an end.

Are they really that different from our ancestors, who made new lives after penal sentences brought them to New South Wales around 200 years ago, or those who left post-war Europe 60 years ago? Are they really that different from the Chinese migrants who were welcomed by Prime Minister Hawke, many of whom now call Ashfield home, or the Vietnamese boat people who were welcomed by Prime Minister Fraser, many of whom now call Marrickville home? Australia has always attracted immigrants because of our boundless plains; our beauties, rich and rare. Australians do want fairness; but the idea that there is an orderly queue to enter our country, and that those who seek asylum are somehow jumping that queue, is absurd. Taking a risk, seeking a fair go and asking for the opportunity to work hard in a free country—these qualities are as Australian as it gets.

If we can look past the crimes that people like Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran committed, and see them for the wonderful people they became inside a Bali prison, how hard can it be to look at a family of asylum seekers who have committed no crime and fled persecution and see people equally deserving of compassion and equally willing to contribute to our society? We have gone down the path of being cruel and discovered that we will never be able to be cruel enough. If we think it is acceptable to have a Federal Minister decide to send a sick, innocent child in his care back to an overseas prison because he is worried about the "push factors" that letting her stay in hospital may create, then we have completely lost our way. I do not pretend to have the answers for the world's immigration problems—nor is it the business of this Parliament to debate or enact legislation in this area—but I do know that we need better political leadership that does not abandon human decency when faced with a complex problem.

Climate change is another difficult issue where better leadership is needed. Like the refreshing bipartisan position in this place on the science and undeniable public health benefits of immunisation, we need to come together and end old debates about the science of climate change. We must make the move away from coal-fired power and invest now in renewable energy. All sides need to have an open mind and come to the table willing to listen and do what it takes to make progress. Policy purity should not again mean that an opportunity is lost to put a price on carbon, to reduce pollution and increase renewable energy. These are the crucial issues of our time. As someone representing part of a global city like Sydney, I know these are the issues that our constituents rightly expect us to weigh in on. Moreover, there are lessons here for all parliamentarians about the importance of upholding our principles when making policy.

Seven months ago my son, Archie, was born at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital at Camperdown. While he really is the happiest and easiest of babies, his arrival into this world was somewhat dramatic. As my labour progressed Archie's heartbeat continued to drop and when tests confirmed he was in distress the midwife pressed the big, red button on the wall of the labour ward. A dozen or more medical staff came running into the room and then raced me down the corridor to the operating theatre for an emergency caesarean. Later that night, when our little family was reunited, we gave thanks that we have world-class hospitals like Royal Prince Alfred in New South Wales. The highly trained, professional staff in our public hospitals ensure that there is happiness and joy where there would otherwise be tragedy. We were wonderfully cared for and left the hospital confident that we knew how to look after the new addition to our family.

When we did leave the hospital our only duty was to thank the amazing midwives, doctors and other staff who provided us with the highest standard of care, and we had no bill to pay—not a cent. Archie and I, and all Australians, benefit from our public health system. As the member for Summer Hill, I will fight to ensure that our public hospitals continue to provide people with world-class care. I will always defend the right of people to see a family doctor without having to pay. I will always fight to keep our hospitals in public hands, which is where they belong. I will take the advice of doctors, nurses, midwives and other health professionals over political ideologues with economic theories. It should be clear enough that the flu or indeed the cure for cancer will not respond to a price signal.

I want my child and everyone's children to grow up knowing that if something goes wrong they will be in safe hands. I never want anyone in New South Wales to worry that they will not be able to afford the care they need. We can never take our public health system for granted. We all need to care for this precious community resource. To the people of Summer Hill, I commit to always work hard for you, to always treat you with respect and to be a faithful and fearless advocate for our community and on the issues that matter to us all. I will never abuse the trust you have put in me. I will conduct myself ethically and openly. I respect the

traditions of the Parliament but I will not let tradition hamper the passion with which I discharge my obligations as your elected representative.

I make these commitments and I ask something of you in return: that you remain actively engaged in our community and continue to raise issues and ask questions with the same lively spirit as you have until today. I ask this of you because I know there never has been, and there never will be, substantial social change implemented by government without a social movement campaigning for it. Too often, people believe or hope that Parliament will change something in society by simply enacting legislation. Parliament is only ever part of the solution. We will not end discrimination or solve climate change simply by passing a law. Society is transformed only when people and communities stand up for what they believe in and form movements for change.

The greatest and most enduring movement for social change and justice has been the trade union movement, of which I will always be a proud member. I stand here today because hundreds of thousands of women have organised and struggled to overcome the prejudice and self-interest that has kept us out of places like Parliament. I am extremely proud to be a member of a party that is on the cusp of equal representation in this Parliament. Another movement that is on the cusp of victory has convinced the community that all love is equal and that marriage equality should be enacted in law. I am impatient for our Federal Government to catch up to the mainstream view on this issue. I also mention the work of the student movement—something that was formative for me.

At university I made friends for life with people like Daniel Kyriacou, Rose Jackson, Anna York, Tim Chapman, Felix Eldridge and many others, and together we campaigned against cuts that would lower the quality of education and make it more exclusive. The student movement continues to have a vital role to play, persuading policymakers, and pushing boundaries and barriers to a vision for a better world. I say to students: We need your radicalism because, as history has shown us time and again, today's radical idea is often mainstream policy a generation later. I also say to you: The most effective and proven vehicle for reform has been, and continues to be, the Australian Labor Party.

I come to this Parliament ready to serve alongside all the women, men, students, union members and others who have fought for justice. The role of the Labor Party is to be a parliamentary expression of these great social movements. Campaigns are won by teams, and in Summer Hill I had one hell of a team. There are too many individuals to mention today but I thank from the bottom of my heart each and every person who made it possible for me to be standing here and, most importantly, made Summer Hill Labor. The branches in my electorate are full of hardworking Labor loyalists, but they are also equally engaged in their communities—they are the parents and citizens fundraisers, the cricket coaches, bush regeneration volunteers, Meals on Wheels drivers, faith leaders, the beekeepers and the cake makers. I am so thankful to have true community activists to work with and keep me real. I pledge to keep working hard with you to engage our community and together grow our progressive movement across the inner west.

I do need to thank three Labor locals though. The first two are my campaign directors and excellent friends, Chris Gambian and Phoebe Drake. I am sure that I was not an easy candidate to manage—former campaign directors never are. Things may have been made worse by the occasional bout of morning sickness and then persistent new mother guilt. But you two are campaigning champions and true progressives. Whatever paths you may choose, or which choose you, I will be with you all the way. Thank you.

The third Labor local I give special thanks to is the first female Deputy Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, the former member for Marrickville. Carmel is a smart, savvy woman with impeccable integrity. I will be forever thankful for her support and straight-up advice. She has trodden a path in this place so that women like me can freely stroll down the corridors. I will not forget that, Carmel, and I thank you. My final thanks must go to my two biggest fans: my husband, Garth, and my son, Archie. Home is the only place I am happy not to have the numbers. Garth knew long before I was willing to acknowledge it that I wanted to serve the community as a member of Parliament. I am forever grateful for his support and love. Archie, I hope that one day you are proud to say that your mum represents the place where you grew up, that she stands up for what we believe in and that she never misses your school fete. I hope to do you all proud.