



Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Tuesday 12 May 2015.

The SPEAKER: I welcome the family, friends and supporters of the member for Terrigal to the gallery of the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) [4.55 p.m.]: (Inaugural Speech): I speak today with the privilege of being the member for Terrigal. There is no greater honour than being elected to the New South Wales Parliament to represent the good people of this electorate. It has been an amazing journey for me, beginning on a Tuesday in May—almost 43 years ago this week—when my parents announced the arrival of a bouncing baby Liberal, to a preselection on Tuesday 9 December last year, being sworn in on Tuesday 5 May, and now today—another Tuesday—to deliver my inaugural speech.

I am only the second member to sit in this historic Chamber to represent the wonderful people of Terrigal and I acknowledge the tireless work of my predecessor, the Hon. Chris Hartcher, who had the greater honour of being the first member for Terrigal from 2007 to 2015 after the electorate was renamed from Gosford to Terrigal. During his tenure he worked tirelessly—especially following our return to government in the historic 2011 election—to ensure that the Central Coast received record levels of funding for infrastructure after decades of neglect by Labor governments. The Terrigal electorate does not have the lengthy history of many of the other electorates in this House of which we are privileged to be the custodians, but it is no less important.

I want to take members on a short journey north to the Central Coast and in particular to the Terrigal electorate. It begins at St Huberts Island in the south, extends as far north as Forresters Beach and reaches west through the leafy rural suburbs of Holgate, Picketts Valley and Matcham. The Terrigal electorate is also lucky enough to include the stunningly beautiful beachside suburbs of Killcare, Macmasters Beach, Copacabana, Pretty Beach, Avoca, Terrigal and Wamberal.

We are indeed spoilt for choice in Terrigal but the common thread is the undeniable Australian attraction to water. As a former competitive swimmer in my early years I am pleased that I am rarely more than a short drive to one of our amazing waterways, as are all the residents of Terrigal. Our link to the water on the Central Coast is evident in the seven surf lifesaving clubs that exist in the Terrigal electorate. With a combined membership of more than 4,200, these outstanding voluntary institutions play a vital role as part of our local community across the region. Beginning with our nippers—encouraged from the age of five—to the most senior members of our community, they take part in competitions and all have the opportunity to enjoy the strong social aspect and family atmosphere of our surf clubs.

The importance of our region has been highlighted by the extensive commitments that we have delivered as a Government over the past four years. This includes the delivery of the much-needed upgrade to the Central Coast highway. This is just one of many of the major road projects that has benefitted directly from the \$460 million in funding that the Government has provided. This will continue with the bold plan for our region made during the lead-up to the recent election, which includes an additional \$400 million of funding to boost Central Coast roads. Our dedication will ensure that the Central Coast and Terrigal will be well placed to adapt to the predicted growth in our region of an additional 60,000 people by 2030, with our commitment to essential infrastructure projects playing a vital part in the prosperity and success of the Central Coast.

I acknowledge the enormous responsibility that comes with being the only representative of the Government on the Central Coast. At the same time, I make it clear to my neighbours in Wyong, The Entrance and especially Gosford that we have a plan to deliver for New South Wales, with over \$1 billion in investment for the Central Coast. Unlike the litany of broken promises of past Labor governments who took the coast for granted, we will not make the mistake of forgetting the Central Coast. This brings me to the loss of my colleague Chris Holstein, the member for Gosford, from this place by one of the smallest margins imaginable. Despite working tirelessly for the past four years for the people of Gosford, he has, without doubt, been a casualty of one of the most shamefully deceitful scare campaigns run by New South Wales Labor and its union masters.

Going back to that Tuesday in May 43 years ago, I have to acknowledge my wonderful parents, Jill and Wayne Crouch, who unfortunately could not be with me this evening. I must confess to my colleagues in this Chamber that I have something in common with the new member for Newtown, and that is that I am also from Adelaide. I can assure you that this is where the similarities end. Growing up as an only child, my parents always instilled in me to have the courage of my convictions and never to be afraid of my own choices. They have always been supportive of my decisions and have given me the necessary guidance when they believed it was required, only occasionally using the secret weapon that I think parents are given, which involved using the three words "We trust you". I cannot thank them enough for encouraging me to be the person that I am today.

I was lucky enough to spend my youth also growing up in a beachside suburb, which saw me become a nipper and a competitive

swimmer. I have always had a love of the water, which is why I think I have such an affinity for the Central Coast. Like all kids growing up I had the odd challenge. Mine manifested in growing up with a plethora of teachers in my family, which includes my mum, my grandma, my grandfather, Mike, and two aunties. So you can imagine that family dinners were animated, to say the least, especially with my grandfather who was a staunch one-eyed Labor voter. With my fiercely independent conservative views, he always was my main target in these debates which, to the uninitiated, would look more like a full-blown domestic dispute. We all have bonds with our grandparents and mine was with my grandma. We were mates. During many of these heated debates, she would give me a smile that I came to recognise—that she had always secretly voted Liberal and my grandfather, Mike, never knew. She was my shining star.

The final straw for Mike came on 29 February 1984 when, in year 6 at primary school, we were asked to do a project on the person we most admired. Unlike many of my classmates in South Australia who chose the obligatory sporting heroes such as the Chappell brothers or the late great David Hookes, mine was slightly different. At that time I received a reply to my letter from No. 10 Downing Street. I was thrilled and Mike was apoplectic. Yes, the person I most admired at the ripe old age of 12 was Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. I am proud to say that I still have that letter to this day and it now adorns my electoral office in Erina. She was a politician of conviction and this was a trait that I also admired in President Reagan and, later, in our former Prime Minister John Howard. With John Howard I was privileged to see a politician who never gave in despite repeated defeat. His dogged determination and tenacity as an underdog became an added inspiration for me in my future endeavours.

My parents made the enormous sacrifice required to send me to Pulteney Grammar School, one of the oldest schools in Adelaide, where my father attended and his father before him. At the time, like most teenagers, I did not fully appreciate what that provided me with. It laid the groundwork for my future when I became a vice house captain and captain of the swimming team. This gave me the basis of a leadership role and, at the same time, provided me with the ability to represent others, which I now relish. It was interesting to discover that in the school's 168-year history I am the first student from Pulteney to be elected to the New South Wales Parliament, an achievement of which I am particularly proud.

This brings me to the short journey that was my whirlwind campaign that officially began on Tuesday 9 December after a hard-fought preselection. It now sees me standing here on another Tuesday five months later. It is still hard to believe that this time has gone so quickly. There I was, the new guy, with no brand recognition, replacing a former member with almost 27 years of local history who everyone knew, and a Labor candidate who had the benefit of a 12-month head start. I was under no illusion, unlike others, that I had the fight of my life ahead to ensure that Terrigal did not become the victim of the onslaught of a well-funded scare campaign. I took the 2007 State election results as my benchmark and set a strategy from which we did not waiver. We immediately initiated the most amazing little campaign team that any candidate could wish for.

At this time I would like to acknowledge the brilliant team of people led by my campaign manager, John Barton. I took the step of asking John, who had never before run a campaign, to take on the manager's role because I wanted someone with no preconceptions and who was willing to think outside the square, and not be afraid to ask why something was being done a certain way and whether we could do it better. As I was to realise, a campaign manager very quickly becomes an integral part of a candidate's life, often being the voice of reason, especially as the final days drew to a close. My mornings now seem a little empty at 8.30 a.m. without my daily briefing and reality check from John, which always ended with the words, "Go well today."

In addition to John's unwavering support, the team had all worked on local government, State and Federal election campaigns and brought significant insight to particular areas, with the effervescent Jim Gorman arranging a constant supply of willing volunteers; Kathy Minassian working on my social media, events and the ever important street stalls; Debra Wales coordinating my local media and strategy; Councillor Jeff Strickson helping with letterboxing and signage, which became an enormous part of the campaign; the enthusiastic Taylor Gramoski organising the eager Young Liberals; and Chris Wicks looking after our information and technology [IT]. Last, but not least, the most important person in the final four weeks of my election campaign was Mick Waddell, the best electioneer and coordinator on the Central Coast. If Mick was happy I knew that all was well.

My fate and that of Terrigal was in excellent hands with my dream team. We had a job to do and we were unwavering in our commitment, dedication and single-minded focus on the task at hand. With the little time we had, we undertook a grassroots campaign, getting back to the tried and trusted street stalls and doorknocking. These were held at beachside suburbs in addition to the successful and engaging street stall that was held twice a week at the front of Dan Murphy's at Erina. This is now colloquially known as Dr Dan's due to it supplying pain relief for my many volunteers after having to listen to the odd—thankfully not too many—Electrical Trades Union members.

In addition to these extremely effective weekly functions, we ensured that those who lived in Terrigal and commuted from Gosford and Woy Woy stations were never overlooked. Many pre-dawn sessions were undertaken on railway stations and I must acknowledge the tireless and dedicated assistance of some of our Young Liberals: Jack Wilson, Jessie Gale, Andrew Clark, Andrew Stephen, Anna Xena from Victoria, Taylor Martin and Taylor Gramoski, all of whom made themselves available. I ensured post-election that the supportive early morning commuters at the train stations were thanked the following week leading up to Easter by

handing out well over 1,000 Easter eggs, which were gratefully accepted.

At this point I have to say more about our Young Liberals. This truly amazing team of young people have my heartfelt thanks. Not only were they willing to get up before dawn to man train stations with me but also they assisted with mobile street stalls, sign-waving, letterboxing and doorknocking. Without their invaluable and enthusiastic assistance, the result may have been very different. We should be so proud of this outstanding team. I benefitted directly from two visits from the Young Liberals Flying Squad, very effectively led by Dean Shachar and Josh Crawford. However, they twigged after the first visit when I slipped them copious amounts of fish and chips at Terrigal Beach that their youth was being exploited. Lunch was followed by letterboxing and doorknocking in two of the hilliest suburbs of Terrigal—Copacabana and Macmasters Beach but they remained undaunted by the challenges. With inspirational young people like those, our party and indeed our future are in very safe hands.

I was also privileged to receive a number of visits and commitments from Ministers and members from both Houses. I take this opportunity to thank all those members personally: Matthew Mason Cox, Jai Rowell, Rob Stokes, Ray Williams, Troy Grant, Adrian Piccoli, Anthony Roberts, Stuart Ayers, Dominic Perrottet, Duncan Gay, Gladys Berejiklian, Andrew Constance, Jillian Skinner, Natasha Maclaren-Jones and last, but certainly not least, Premier Mike Baird. Those visits were varied and wideranging, from roads to recycling machines, from boat ramp upgrades to new digital radios for our surf clubs, and well received multimillion dollar upgrades to our local schools, plus \$12 million to kick off a new performing arts centre on the waterfront at Gosford City.

At different ends of the funding commitments are two projects that are close to my heart for very different reasons. The first is \$1 million to be allocated to Empire Bay Drive and the Scenic Road roundabout in Kincumber. This announcement was welcomed by the community because once completed it will ease the traffic congestion at this well-used intersection. Many may think this is a small project for the area in contrast to the hundreds of millions of dollars committed for Central Coast roads but it became a key local issue for Terrigal in the State election. The particular intersection is a major congestion point and, as part of my strategy to improve connectivity between suburbs, this Government will deliver the through lane required. The result will be that hundreds of commuters, many being parents taking their kids to school or just simply trying to make their way to work, will no longer find themselves stuck in seemingly endless queues of traffic.

So tackle it I did, and after an extremely enthusiastic visit from Ray Williams, which I have now discovered is the norm with Ray, and representation from Minister Duncan Gay's office, my little roundabout very quickly gained the attention and funding it required. So I had gone from fighting for something to being able to deliver the solution almost immediately, which has become the cornerstone of the Liberal Government in New South Wales and what it stands for. The irony in all of this is that my opponent actually lives on Scenic Drive and will benefit from our solution. So never one to let an opportunity get away, I would happily remind him that, while he could not fix the problem just around the corner, we were getting on with the job and would deliver yet again.

At the other end of the scale is the \$368 million that has been allocated to the redevelopment of Gosford Hospital. This is very personal to me as the love of my life, my wife, Jill, graduated at the end of last year from her three-year nursing degree at our local Ourimbah campus as a mature-age student and commenced her new grad position at Gosford Hospital this year. What was not common knowledge was that Jill was diagnosed in mid-2013—halfway through the second year of her degree—with breast cancer. This, we discovered, had already progressed to stage 4, which at this time has no cure. We found ourselves in the extremely capable hands of the outstanding team at the Central Coast Cancer Centre, with Jill becoming a patient in the M2 oncology ward. After a course of stereotactic radiation and an additional seven weeks of radiation therapy, my amazing wife, who had been pushed to the limit, came through her studies and graduated as a registered nurse. In addition to this, she is being presented next month with the University Medal. She is an amazing nurse and, I have to say, my inspiration that anything is achievable.

To say that the level of care provided by the staff at Gosford Hospital is outstanding is an understatement. I was thrilled when the announcement of additional funding for the hospital redevelopment was made, during the campaign at a meeting at the hospital with health Minister Jillian Skinner to overview the development. The day arrived and I had the opportunity to introduce Jill the Nurse to Jillian the Builder and this wonderful project. Knowing that we are going to deliver a state-of-the-art hospital that will be able to meet the future needs of the Central Coast, and provide the dedicated staff with the hospital they deserve, has to rate as a high point of the campaign.

The other people I have to thank at this time are all the volunteers that accompanied me, week in and week out, on my aggressive doorknocking campaign. In two months I doorknocked well over 2,000 homes and, in addition to losing nine kilograms, I can say that every suburb received a visit from me. Engaging with people in the electorate is what it is all about. They need to know that their elected representative is both approachable and accessible. We are there to represent and protect them. The key message I received above all others during this time was about the ongoing issues regarding the state of our local roads. My constituents see this as a priority. So, Duncan, I expect that we may well be speaking quite a lot in the future.

To those who joined me doorknocking and letterboxing—to Jim Gorman, Jim Spratt, Ron Spratt, Thelma McFarlane, Trevor Hartshorne, Nate, Jeff Strickson, Lois Marshal, Liz Reynolds, Simon Levy, Jennifer Green, Quentin Anthony, Michelina Strickson, Pat Aitkin, Craig Hillman and many more—thank you from the bottom of my heart. To my extended family and friends—Charlie, Jenny,

Tegan, Jonathan, Lee-arne, Barry, Robyn, Brian, Maureen, Tim, Sharon, Janice, Mark, Wayne, Phil, Sarah, Joanne and Nadine—I must also say thank you for your love and your support. To my dedicated crew from the Woy Woy branch—many of you are here tonight—I say thank you.

Many people have mentors and I am privileged to have two—and these are outstanding mates—Detective Inspector Darren Jameson, Crime Manager of the Coffs Clarence Local Area Command, who has made the trip to be here today; and President of the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, Matthew Wales. In addition, I was also joined by two of our exceptional Federal members of Parliament, Lucy Wicks and Karan McNamara. These devoted and passionate ladies did not hesitate to assist in my campaign—especially Lucy, whose willingness to help, give advice, devote endless energy and offer friendship was gratefully appreciated.

Finally, I have to single out one person in particular for special thanks. This man gave of his time without question and ran up more driveways with me than any other—my friend and deserving new member of the Fifty-sixth Parliament, the Hon. Scott Farlow, MLC. His advice, friendship and good humour during those long days were invaluable, and the Legislative Council will no doubt benefit from having him as a member. On the subject of humour, there were many funny stories during the campaign but one that stands out involved Scott and occurred while we were doorknocking in Empire Bay on a stinking hot day. I received a call from a friend that evening who said that a resident had phoned to say how excited and impressed his wife was that I had doorknocked their home despite the heat. She was particularly impressed that I had been out doorknocking with Premier Mike Baird. We did not have the heart to burst her bubble.

In the weeks post the election I received some very clear reminders of why I had put myself forward to be the local member. These included the recent storms on the Central Coast and especially Anzac Day. Only a few weeks into the job, the Central Coast was battered by a storm event that is referred to as an east coast low, but which is better described as a "super storm". This three-day intense weather event wreaked havoc across the region, uprooting hundreds of trees and cutting electricity to more than 80,000 homes on the Central Coast. It was clear that power would not be restored for many days, and perhaps for an extended period, so we looked at how we could help the local community.

One way was for us to contact a number of local clubs from Forresters Beach to Ettalong, seeking their assistance to provide showers and power for people who were without hot water and electricity. We were able to get the information out to the community through the local radio stations, which were happy to assist us with this message. We were pleased that we could be of some assistance at short notice during these difficult times and keep locals updated with information provided to us by the State Emergency Service and Ausgrid. Sometimes just being able to give a resident a little information and reassurance is all that they need. I commend the community of the Central Coast as the majority of people understood the issues, were patient and understanding and quick to want to assist friends, neighbours and even total strangers who needed help.

Like a large number of people in this Chamber, I have attended many Anzac Day ceremonies. But this year took on special meaning, given that it was the centenary of the Anzac landings at Gallipoli and my first Anzac Day as the local member. The day commenced with the most surreal dawn service I had ever attended. It was conducted at Terrigal Beach by the Terrigal-Wamberal RSL Sub-branch. It was at this event, after laying my first wreath, that I met 93-year-old Mr George Craven for the second time in a week. George, before taking the stage to read the Ode, leaned over to me and said how wonderful it was to see so many young people attend the service, and that he was so very proud that he and his friends would not be forgotten. With surf boats delivering soldiers in period uniforms to the shore to the sound of gunfire, the beach was packed with thousands of locals for as far as the eye could see who were respectfully silent for the entire event.

If the closing of the ceremony was not emotional enough, the spritely digger again leaned over to me, clearly moved by the proceedings, and proudly produced a picture of his sweetheart and late wife of 67 years, Joy, on their wedding day. The photo was of him in his uniform, looking so very young as he headed off to serve in the south-west Pacific, in the 2-11 Army Troop Engineers. He did this to protect the country he loves so much, like thousands of Australians did, without question or hesitation. A tear rolled down my cheek as he told me what an honour it was for him to be able to talk to the "new guy". I had to correct him and tell him that the honour was indeed mine.

I was so proud to be able to attend all the Anzac Day events across the electorate. The final event of the day was a stunning twilight service held at the MacMasters Beach Surf Club. An inspirational address was delivered by retired Major General Tim Ford, AO. The symbolism of this final event for the evening could not have been more appropriate, the day having commenced with the beachside service to the sound of gunfire and concluding with another beachside service and a cacophony of lightning and thunder. It all seemed somehow appropriate—and no-one moved, despite the threat of a torrential downpour. That embodies the spirit of the Central Coast. The storm finally arrived at the end of the service. I would like to close with a quote from Margaret Thatcher:

What is success? I think it is a mixture of having a flair for the thing that you are doing; knowing that it is not enough, that you have got to have hard work and a certain sense of purpose.

With these words in mind, I pledge myself to the people of Terrigal.