



Inaugural Speeches

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The SPEAKER: Order! I welcome to the gallery this morning supporters, family and friends of the member for Blue Mountains. In particular, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the former member of the Australian House of Representatives representing the electorate of Macquarie, and former member for Blue Mountains, Bob Debus, also the former for Blue Mountains, Phil Koperberg, and former member of the Legislative Council Helen Westwood. I warmly welcome all of you.

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) [11.10 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners on whose land we meet today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land I am privileged to represent, the Darug and Gundungurra peoples, and pay my respects to their elders, past and present. Well, here we are, Blue Mountains. Here I am, and here we are. I thank my friends, my family, my community and my colleagues for being here today to hear and see my inaugural speech in Australia's oldest Parliament, the Parliament of New South Wales.

I am humbled and still somewhat overwhelmed by gratitude, excitement, nervousness, responsibility, nervousness, and the enormity of such an incredible job that I am absolutely honoured to hold. All these feelings, I have to tell you, have resulted in the emergence in the past fortnight of the first few silver strands of hair. While I thought that the nerves would kill me, it is actually my locks that will never be the same. Thanks, Parliament! Allow me to tell you a story. Picture another place in another time, late at night, a young girl awake and afraid in her bed, trying to still her racing heart and holding her breath. She is listening to footsteps outside her window and is overcome with a sense of dread. In the blink of an eye, a man stands at the foot of her bed with one finger on his lips indicating, "Shh", and the other hand holding a rifle. It used to live in the old cupboard in the shed.

That young girl closes her eyes. An eternity later, but really only moments, there are shrieks and screams and gunshots. The night erupts. Another eternity after, but really only seconds, the young girl, who is eight years old, races to collect brothers and her sister and pull them close, back under the covers of her bed. The night becomes one of ambulances, police, sobbing, fear, and eventually the delivery of four small, young children to an orphanage of sorts, where they will stay for a short while as their mother recovers from the emotional and physical trauma of a severe beating and internal haemorrhaging. There are, unfortunately, many nights and days similar to this. That small girl of eight is now the woman who stands before you.

Understanding domestic violence and its devastating impact on children, the lives it destroys, the pain it inflicts, has been part of my life and my lifelong work. There is still so much to do, as many in this place have said already, and I want to continue working with you in educative policy, and now through parliamentary processes, to ensure that others might not need to experience what my family did. I was born in Canberra. I grew up in housing commission stock amidst domestic violence and abject poverty. Mum remarried when I was 13 and we moved to the Riverina countryside near Wagga Wagga. I became the oldest of six, as happens in the country. It was not just the rabbits!

I loved being outside. I loved skirting the sheep fleeces in the shearing shed, riding the horse, tinkering with tractors and working the paddocks. But I learned quickly that gendered roles would prevent me from being the farmer. I left home and I studied to become a teacher at Macquarie University. Student politics honed my skills in cynicism pretty quickly, but it was not through the Labor Party; it was with MUAKA—hard yakka—the Macquarie University anarchists and communists, with a "K", alliance. What followed was a string of casual teaching jobs, a temporary project with the public service and the NSW Women's Information and Referral Service, which again saw domestic violence as the number one issue raised.

I then travelled around the world for a year to find myself and I discovered the gorgeous west coast of Ireland, where I lived and worked for the next couple of years. I met my husband and the father of my boys. Love, children, marriage—wonderful times—but then life threw me another challenge. Upon our return to Australia and only a couple of years into his migration, my husband's depression spiralled into a psychotic episode and mental illness turned our lives upside down. Everything one knows and plans for—the routine, the order of life, everything—changes when families deal with chronic mental illness and either attempted or successful suicides.

It was tough being in shock and grief and feeling helpless when trying to learn about how one cares for a family, for oneself, for one's children, and for the person who is mentally unwell when the health system so desperately requires reform and investment. It is a lonely, devastating and anxious place to be. I pay my respects to all those who work in the mental health sector or who live

with mental ill health or those who suffer. Unpredictability can be soul-destroying. Emily Dickinson said:

*"Hope" is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all*

This is what I held onto as the ground shifted again and again. So this is what has shaped me. As we all are products of our environment and our experiences, so it is the case for this working-class girl who made it from the Housing Commission home, to the farms and then into the Legislative Assembly of the New South Wales Parliament. This is the beginning, this is from where I come and this is where I am going. I am the product and the recipient of what good old Labor Party policy and values have delivered: public housing, public education and public health, with social justice, fairness and opportunity at the very core. I am feminist, I am proud working class, and I am proud union. I survived to tell my story—against the odds, really. As Ruth Park wrote in *Poor Man's Orange*:

So she went on, a child one hour and a woman the next, seeing the world often as a bright and lovely place with every possibility of great happiness for those who searched for it, and sometimes as a bog that crawled and seethed with hidden dreadfulness. She knew the poor man's orange was hers, with its bitter rind, its paler flesh and its stinging, exultant, unforgettable tang. So she would have it that way, and wish it no other way. She knew that she was strong enough to bear whatever might come in her life.

When my sons were young and small—not the giants they are today—I chose to move from Sydney to the beautiful Blue Mountains. It was a sense of community I was looking for and community was what I found. The Blue Mountains electorate is a string of jewels along a ridge top. It encompasses a range of smaller communities that constitute a whole. I stand here today for Blaxland, Warrimoo, Sun Valley, Valley Heights, Springwood, Winmalee, Yellow Rock, Hawkesbury Heights, Faulconbridge, Linden, Woodford, Hazelbrook, Lawson, Bullaburra, Wentworth Falls, Leura, Katoomba, Medlow Bath, Megalong Valley, Blackheath, Mount Victoria, Mount Wilson, Mount Tomah, Mount Irvine and Bell. I learnt that on the train trip early in the piece but the train does not stop at all the stations any more, thanks to the Baird Liberal Government.

In the absence of time, I make a note of a few interesting facts, statistics and figures about the Blue Mountains, and I hope that you will come and visit some time. It is home to around 79,000 residents. The electorate's 24 townships are situated from 50 to 120 kilometres west of Sydney and cover a 100 kilometre strip of sandstone ridge within the 1,000 square kilometres of a World Heritage area. Within the local government area that comprises the Blue Mountains approximately 70 per cent is incorporated into the World Heritage Blue Mountains National Park. The Blue Mountains is a place of spectacular and natural beauty and attracts more than four million visitors per year, making it one of the top three tourist destinations in Australia.

Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] census data, 59 per cent of Blue Mountains resident workers travel outside the area to work—I repeat, 59 per cent. The top four employing sectors are health care and social assistance, retail trade, education and training, and accommodation and food services. We sit within a national park consisting of remarkable geographic, botanical and cultural values, including protected sites of Aboriginal cultural significance. Our eco-certified national park boasts more than 140 kilometres of trails and walking tracks. Its people are resilient, proud and caring, and embody the essence of supportive community—as our recent history in the aftermath of the 2013 fire emergency demonstrated. Two hundred homes were lost, many pets and much wildlife died and many within our community still suffer. They are still recovering and rebuilding.

But in the same way as people everywhere, those from the Blue Mountains want our Government and our representatives to provide us with hope and opportunities. That word—"opportunities"—is one of the reasons, for example, that I have fought for TAFE and education over many years, most particularly within my local community in the past four years. Technical and further education was and should be a quality, first-class, public vocational educational system. I note the presence here today of TAFE teachers and students from the Blue Mountains, Katoomba and Wentworth Falls campuses and my friends Annette Bennett and Phil Chadwick of the TAFE Teachers Association. Let me state here, as many others have, that there will be no relenting on my part or on my community's part in our campaign to stop TAFE cuts.

The Smart and Skilled policy is actually one of privatisation, of removing accessibility and affordability, of dismantling public education. As long as I breathe, I will stand and fight, speak up and argue, negotiate, lobby and work with others to save TAFE. As a teacher and a parent, I have seen firsthand in the classroom, at the coalface, the ramifications of conservative government policies that removed funding and resources from our schools in the name of cost efficiencies. I pledge once again in this place to work alongside my community and my union, the Teachers Federation, to retain a strong public education system. We will be

pressuring the Baird Government to take strong action and honour the commitment to fund the full six years of the New South Wales Gonski agreement. Our children and our teachers deserve no less.

If you believe, as I do, that government is important—because there is not one part of our life that is not impacted by it—you will understand and have experienced the following during the election campaign. Besides TAFE and education, people expressed their views and interests, and raised issues and concerns on every possible issue imaginable: wanting protection for our fragile environment, our land, our water, growing our national parks, preventing coal seam gas fracking, needing access to health care—quality health care—starting with 1:3 nurse-patient ratios and 24/7 resident nurses in our aged care facilities. People were seeking assurances that we in this place would work towards retaining public assets in public hands and fight privatisation and its ideology through every sector, improving public transport services, addressing the gaps in our train timetable, and implementing railway maintenance safety and easy access upgrades. They want us to raise awareness of issues important to workers, especially as we see the increasing casualisation of the workforce and its ramifications—I have been a casual teacher for 15 years.

At the same time we need to support small business and our local tourism economy and—would you believe it—connecting family homes to the sewer, just to name a few issues. Over the past four year the people of the Blue Mountains, more than any other issue, predominantly expressed their wish to have in this place a representative who would listen to them, who would respond to their concerns, who would be prepared to take up matters with government—with departments, with Ministers, with bureaucrats—and someone to speak up and fight for them and to walk alongside them at difficult and joyous times. I pledge today that I will be that representative. Today I put each and every Minister on notice: I will come after you and I will not give up. This is the essence of who I am and—as you have just learnt—this is the fabric of my life.

I would not be here today if it were not for the efforts and belief of an enormous number of people. I cannot name every individual but I need to pay tribute to a few of them. My election win is a shared victory. Today we are joined by the Hon. Bob Debus, former State member for Blue Mountains and former Federal member for Macquarie—and Minister for everything. Bob, I blame you and I thank you. The reason I am standing here is because of your wisdom. Phil Koperberg, thank you for being a great mentor and a champion for your community above all else—above government and party politics. You, Helen Buckle and I were a team to be reckoned with.

Tanya Plibersek, my friend and inspiration, set the bar high for me. Helen Westwood, one of my favourite people, is a woman of substance and integrity. The loss to the Parliament of New South Wales is a gain for the Australian Services Union. My buddies, two of the best people I know, are Councillor Annette Bennett and Geoff Bennett. My other Blue Mountains City Council Labor comrades are Mark Greenhill, Don McGregor, Sarah Shrubbs, Mick Fell, Romola Hollywood and Anton von Schulenburg. Each one of them is one my fabulous Labor branch members. Its members are what is truly great about the Labor Party. I am one of you—a rank and file member.

A special mention to some of those who worked tirelessly to assist our campaign: Mike and Helen Clifford, Jan and Chris Taylor, the Bradshaws, Alison Maclaren, Margaret Buckham, Eddy Hearn, William Grieve, Rosalind Haining and Madeline Davis, John Park, Ruth Green, Korey Gunnis, Phil Mahoney, Amanda Carr, and the incredible Susan Elfert for your unwavering encouragement. Suzanne Jamieson and, again, Sarah Shrubbs, you are strong wonder women who provided necessary personal support.

Community members came out in force in the Blue Mountains to assist in a myriad of ways. Many of them voted Labor for the first time in their lives. They owned and loved the campaign. Ray Richardson, Christine Sinclair, Anne O'Grady, Serena Monzo, Liz Foss, Miles Killen, Roger Greeley and Francesca Agosto are just a few of them. I must mention Helen Mountford, who is a unique example of the colour, flair and energy that fortified our community campaign. She is now using that flair on our electorate office, changing it from what she said looks like a methadone clinic into something more homely.

Sally McManus, your younger activist self and the woman you are today, forever the tower of strength and honesty, thanks to you and the mighty Australian Services Union crew. Margaret Jones, my warrior woman from the outset, thank you. My friends of strength, never-ending support and good humour over many years are Rosanna Caltabiano, DC Sanders, Rose Tracey and Miriam Williamson. To Susan Templeman, who will be our next Labor Federal member for Macquarie, and Ron Fuller: Your media expertise, your good humour and practical support have been invaluable.

To John Robertson, Lee Bellia, office manager extraordinaire and policy adviser guru, and Andrew Hewitt: Thank you for your solid support and many visits to the Blue Mountains over the years. To the Hon. Peter Primrose and the incredible staff in this place such as Luke Whittington and Jan Clifford: I thank you for your advice, friendship and quiet hard work for the people of New South Wales over many years. My former boss, who joins us today, the wonderful Maree Cairns, reminded me of my patience, ability and courage on days when I felt none.

Now to my campaign team: the extraordinarily wonderful Kim Brislane, tenacious Tom Harris-Brassil and the calm and capable Suzie van Opdorp were amidst a fabulous campaign team, including the amazing young Amy Knox. She will go far. Mark Andrews;

Brian Kirkby; Lesley Gruit; Kim Cowper; Lauren and Rorie Hutchins; Rose Jackson; and Senator Doug Cameron—thank you. I also thank my comrades from the Blue Mountains Unions Council for keeping it real. I appreciate working and walking alongside the Electrical Trades Union, the Nurses and Midwives' Association, the Australian Services Union the Teachers' Federation, and Unions NSW.

I thank the Legislative Assembly Clerk and her team in this place for her patience and assistance with me and everyone. To Labor's leader Luke Foley, my Labor Party colleagues and the class of 2015: Thank you for your support and reminding me to breathe. I want to thank my mum and my sister, Janelle, for being here today, for being survivors with a smile—the brave and the gentle. I love you both very much. And a huge thank you goes to David Holmes for providing care and love to my boys and me over the past decade.

My sons, Patrick and Tom, are the light that guides me and the breath that enables me to walk through each day. You are the joy of living. You will always come first, but I hope when I am not around so much that you understand my need to work with our community and now Parliament to try to make this world a better place. During some incredibly tough times you have supported your mum and each other. Please hold on to this virtue into your futures. It has been the three of us forging a path in this world, looking out for one another, together saving to buy a home recently, working, playing, laughing, crying, hugging, eating, laughing and eating more. You two are my world.

Finally, parliamentarians and politicians are often perceived as an elite group, and we are. I was told this every day of the election campaign. Communities and families in this State must continue striving to have true representation in this place. We are the people who know what it is like or want to understand and care what it is like to struggle against hardship, wonder where money might come from to pay rent, buy food or pay bills. We are the people who are willing to listen, to be humble and quiet when the need requires it, to hear the stories of those who do not have a voice or cannot articulate what it is they need. We are the people who will stand up and speak up. I have many good people surrounding me who will help me remain grounded and real. I know this because so many have asked me not to change and have uttered the words, "Be yourself. Speak your truth." I will finish with some words from Nelson Mandela:

I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. ... a good head and good heart are always a formidable combination.

This is who I am. This is who I will be. This is the Trish Doyle you are in for. Thank you.