



Inaugural Speeches

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

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! With the concurrence of members, the House will continue to sit past 1.30 p.m. to allow the member for Campbelltown to make his inaugural speech. On behalf of the new member for Campbelltown, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the former member for Camden, Geoff Corrigan; the former member for Oatley, Kevin Greene; former member of the Legislative Council John Ryan; Campbelltown City councillors Meg Oates, Rudi Kolkman and Darcy Lound; and friends and supporters of the new member. I welcome you all to the Legislative Assembly today.

Mr GREG WARREN (Campbelltown) [1.23 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, the Gadigal people, and I pay my respects to their custodianship of the Eora nation. I also acknowledge the House and all previous members of Campbelltown and their contributions since the seat's establishment in 1968. I take this opportunity to wish my immediate predecessor well with his future endeavours. Mr Deputy-Speaker, colleagues, special guests and people in the gallery, I am humbled to stand here before you today to deliver my inaugural speech, having been selected by the people of Campbelltown to represent them as a member of the Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales, the oldest Parliament in our nation.

Our greatest attribute is the good nature of our people. I credit this fact to the many amazing volunteers and service organisations that Campbelltown and our region of Macarthur would not be the same without. Today I pay tribute to them all. If I could highlight in words the character of our community, it is the selfless generosity and unwavering spirit of our people combined with their hardworking ethos that embodies the very fabric of our home. The traditional custodians of Campbelltown are the Dharawal people, who ranged from La Perouse in the north to near Ulladulla in the south but prominently along the Georges River in Campbelltown, which at that time provided a great source of food, water and shelter to their people. I acknowledge their custodianship and also acknowledge their elders, both past and present.

European settlement came to Campbelltown with the colonists in the early days of Australia's history. At that time the area was officially declared "The District of Campbelltown and Airds" by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1820—the name "Campbell" being the maiden name of his wife, Elizabeth, and "Airds" being her family estate in Scotland. The region quickly became the engine room for industrial and agricultural growth for this State and for Australia. Our city's history of exploration, development, growth and expansion is part of the wealth of our great State, which remains as consistent today as it was then.

Today the city of Campbelltown, as part of the Macarthur region, consists of around 33 suburbs that are increasing steadily, with a population exceeding 150,000 people and growing every day. The challenges for Campbelltown increase with every new family we welcome, almost every week of every month. True to the nature of the people of Campbelltown and our region, we embrace our new residents—as they did me more than 20 years ago. I fondly recall my first introduction to Campbelltown during my time as an Australian soldier and member of the Australian Regular Army when I was posted to many places, including the Lavarack, Holsworthy and Ingleburn barracks from the early 1990s.

During that time I was honoured to be a member of the catafalque party commemorating Anzac Day in Mawson Park in the centre of Campbelltown. This was when my then girlfriend and now wife, Simone, and I felt an instant attraction to the area and, most particularly, to St Peters Anglican Church, where Simone and I decided to wed in 1996. The celebration continued at the beautiful Eschol Park House, where we were hosted by the wonderful Masina family, to celebrate both the beginning of our life together and our new home in Campbelltown and the Macarthur region. Simone and I are so pleased that we chose Campbelltown and the Macarthur region as our home. We feel truly fortunate to be part of such a great community and cannot think of any place we would rather be to live, work and raise our two boys.

Many years ago, long before I entered any level of public office, I was having a few mates around so I went down to the local Asian grocer to get some things. There I met this bloke who was packing shelves in his mum's and dad's grocery business in Campbelltown. I got talking to him and struck up a friendship, though I had no idea that nearly 20 years later the member for Macquarie Fields, Anoulack Chanthivong, would be not only my great mate but also a parliamentary colleague, fighting for our region with common goals. I commend Anoulack and his family.

Many of our State's historical cities and towns have an interesting story, as does Campbelltown. In 1825 a bloke called Fred Fisher had an argument with a local carpenter and received a light prison sentence. Worried about his farm, Fred gave his neighbour George Worrall power of attorney during his sentence. After his release, on 17 June 1826, Fred Fisher mysteriously disappeared and George Worrall announced that Fred had sailed for England. Three weeks later George sold Fred's horse and belongings. Needless to say, the townspeople were suspicious. On 17 September 1826 George Worrall was arrested on suspicion of Fred's murder. During the trial George confessed. Almost four months later there was a strange occurrence: On that memorable night a

wealthy and respectable farmer, John Farley, stumbled into a local hotel in a state of shock. John claimed that he had seen the ghost of Fred Fisher sitting on the rail of a bridge over a creek. The ghost pointed to a paddock down near the creek and then faded away. This legend is celebrated with a festival every year.

The Campbelltown City Festival of Fisher's Ghost is one of the longest-running community events in Australia, staged since 1956. This unique festival, inspired by the famous legend of the ghost of Frederick Fisher, is steeped in community history and includes an extensive program of events that bring our community together. The success of the festival and the mass community involvement speak volumes about the character of Campbelltown, the region and its people.

Modern Campbelltown has no shortage of memorable people—from authors and actors like Tony Park and Kate Richie to bushrangers, former police chiefs like "Mad" Dan Morgan and my good friend Ken Moroney, former Commissioner of the NSW Police Force, decorated war veterans like the late Kevin Wheatley, VC, and rugby league stars like Jarryd Hayne, whose love of footy began while running onto Waminda Oval with the East Campbelltown Eagles Rugby League Football Club.

I was born and raised in country New South Wales, along with my two brothers Brett and Joseph. My dad, Robyn, who unfortunately cannot be here today, is a retired maintenance worker. My mum, Mary, is also retired. She was a support carer for those with disabilities. We never had a lot of money but we had as much love, care and support from mum and dad as we could ever wish for. Like most young blokes growing up, I never realised the lessons mum and dad were teaching me, either directly or indirectly. However, as time went on, I learnt the importance of family, loyalty, consideration and honesty and remembering that there is always someone worse off. I am okay, but what about my mate down the road? Is he or she okay? Is there anything I can do to help?

My two brothers are not here today, as much as I wish they were. I know if they were here, we would all agree that we could not have asked for a better upbringing than that which mum and dad provided for us. Life is a combination of many moments—sometimes tough; sometimes filled with joy. As we know, life sometimes provides us with moments that we will never understand. I enjoy life immensely, with all its challenges and hardships. I know that with hard work comes great satisfaction and reward. I left my family when I was 17, upon enlistment into the Australian Regular Army, and served as a soldier and non-commissioned officer in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and the Royal Australian Corps of Transport.

My learnings during my time as a soldier endorsed everything mum and dad taught me: pride of self; look after your mates; always remember what matters most; and never fight out of spite but instead be the one who stands up for what is right. Upon discharge I took up employment as a truck driver and fuel operator whilst beginning my tertiary education at Campbelltown TAFE College. I recently completed my Masters of Business Administration. TAFE was the stepping stone for me to transition from military life into the civilian workforce, providing me with the opportunity to establish a career and subsequent lifestyle to provide for my family. This may add some further explanation for those familiar with my strong personal feelings and support for TAFE. It is a vital institution that not only provides a pathway of opportunity for many but is also an investment in our economy.

To that point, when we welcome new residents we want to make sure that they have the same opportunities for prosperity as existing residents currently enjoy. This can only be achieved with the appropriate provision of infrastructure, health services, educational resources and environmental sustainability, with subsequent protection of our green space and habitat areas such as the Scenic Hills, amongst others. I will be bold and emphatic in this plight and I look forward to taking every opportunity to make the required representations to ensure that the needs and aspirations of our local families become a reality. I feel that all communities deservingly expect and require this from all their public representatives, be they in government or opposition, at any level and regardless of political persuasion.

It would be out of character for me not to express my passion for Campbelltown Hospital and commend the fantastic efforts and commitment of the many staff who work there. This is the hospital where my two sons were born and the hospital we continue to rely on each month for paediatric care—as we have for over 12 years. The staff at Campbelltown Hospital bring an inspiring ethos of goodwill that has seen words of praise continue over time from many in our community. But, as we know, the good and sustainable functioning of any service cannot rely solely on goodwill. The promised upgrades to Campbelltown Hospital are essential to ensure the health and wellbeing of our local families as we grow to a region that will eventually exceed the size of Canberra.

Mental health remains a challenge for many in our community and requires the subsequent provision of appropriate care. In particular, the Campbelltown area—faced with population growth, a demand for quality health services for our ageing community and the demands that young and new families bring in terms of maternity and paediatrics—is an area that simply cannot be overlooked. I note the Government's commitments to upgrade Campbelltown Hospital and Appin Road, to provide additional parking at Campbelltown railway station and security fencing at Rosemeadow Playing Fields, and to provide the Menangle Spring Farm connection as a vital southern link for the developing region and local road safety provisions.

I look forward to advocating as strongly as I can for these improvements and to working cooperatively wherever possible. I want to

assure the people of Campbelltown that I will unreservedly pursue these promises on their behalf, and I will give no quarter. In addition, I am concerned about the struggle young couples face with housing affordability and achieving the long-held great Australian dream of owning their own home. Youth unemployment in Campbelltown is well above the State average. I remain supportive of a decentralised government department approach. I flag the enormous benefits that such measures would bring for Campbelltown and our region.

I most enjoy getting out and talking to locals and hearing their stories. It is my intention to take an unchained approach in my representations as the member for Campbelltown and to take my parliamentary office to the people. As I am sure my colleagues would know, many of the stories people share with us of their experiences are moving and often we can relate to them. Recently I met James, who has been a resident of Rosemeadow for 27 years. I was humbled when James told me I was the first candidate or politician he had ever met. James is a working man about my age. Sadly, he lost his wife to cancer just 12 months ago. Like me, he has two sons. He explained how they mean the world to him. All he wants is for them to have every opportunity that he has had.

When door knocking in Claymore I met a young mother of two. I gave her my normal introduction, "G'day, I'm Greg. I'm out door knocking to introduce myself and to see if there's anything I can help you with." This lady presented well. She explained to me that in addition to working two jobs she cared for her eldest daughter, who was autistic. As she was a public housing tenant, she asked if I could do anything about her leaking roof, which she had been waiting six months to have repaired—the ceiling inside her home was falling in. I made the appropriate representations with Housing NSW on the following Monday.

However, her final comment stuck in my mind. The lady explained to me that she was an only child and her parents had both passed away. She had no relatives in Sydney and public housing was the only place she could go to escape her violent husband. She said, "I would rather be in this dilapidated place than in our mansion of a home where my husband took pleasure in frequently beating me." There is so much that is wrong about this story and goes well beyond the growing backlog of public housing maintenance that requires urgent attention.

I have always believed that the standard you walk past is the standard you accept. So far this year, two women have been killed in domestic violence every week. This is a standard I do not accept and I am not willing to walk past. Domestic violence is wrong in every way and by every definition. We, as a parliament, must lead the charge and join with all communities to take a stand against this shameful epidemic.

I fondly reminisce about my time carting coal up and down Appin Road to Port Kembla in the wonderful electorate of Wollongong at all hours of the day and night. It was a time I enjoyed and will always remember. I also remember the many dangers that encompassed being a truckie, which further highlighted to me the importance of a safe, fair and equitable workplace along with the important role that the trade union movement plays in modern industry. Much has been said about the trade union movement—sometimes it is justified; however, sometimes it is not.

I am proud to have stood with my union brothers and sisters in campaigning for the pursuit of fairness and fighting for the rights of Ansett workers during a time of injustice. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Unions NSW, the Transport Workers Union [TWU] and the Australian Workers Union [AWU], amongst many others, whose representatives are here today. Those present include but are not limited to Tony Sheldon, Russ Collison, Wayne Forno, Michael Aird, Richard Olsen, Glen Nightingale, Scott McDine, Paul Farrow, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC, Gerard Hayes, Mark Lennon, Julie Griffith, Paul Doughty, Dave Lupton, Alison Rudman, Graeme Kelly and Paul Reed.

I have also been accountable for the financial viability and success of large organisations. Having led and managed businesses in both the corporate and small business fields and as a former director and vice-president of the Campbelltown Chamber of Commerce, I understand the vital importance of supporting business within our common society and the essential role small business plays in securing a progressive and prosperous economy whilst finding balance in cooperation.

Anything worth fighting for is never easy. During the election campaign my team and I engaged with almost every local resident of Campbelltown, be it at the train station, by telephone, knocking on doors or at one of the hundreds of mobile offices that we conducted. During the campaign I vowed that I would do my very best in everything I do, act with integrity and sincerity and remain solely motivated by the needs and aspirations of the people of Campbelltown—those I sought to represent. I repeat that vow today to our local families, businesses, sporting groups and community service organisations. Every day in public office we have a chance to make things that little bit better for our communities.

For me, politics is about enabling and encouraging the pursuit of prosperity of those I am privileged to represent, with the intent to make their lives a little better than it currently is. The result of the election was both encouraging and humbling; however, it was not possible without the efforts of many, led by State organiser David Latham and my campaign director Jessica Malnersic, along with many others who include Brydan Toner, Andre Charadia, Brett Joseph, George Tamm, Peter Roxby, Daniel Roxby, Jo Pattison, Peter Muntford, Karen Hunt, Marty Peebles and my endlessly loyal dad.

To the limitless and unwavering efforts of Young Labor, thank you. You are the "eternal flame" of our great party and I commend your efforts for the benefit of a fairer society across our nation. I thank each and every Campbelltown branch member for selecting and supporting me over what was a very long and at times challenging campaign. I will not let you down.

I also wish to thank Mark Lennon, Jamie Clements, Kaila Murnain and the entire team at NSW Labor for their support, along with those who have guided me over many years, including Geoff Corrigan, Dr Andrew McDonald, the Hon. Peter Primrose, MLC, the Hon. Walt Secord, MLC, and Chris Hayes, amongst others. I thank our leader, Luke Foley, for his support and leadership. I am proud to be part of an enthusiastic, energetic and renewed Labor team. A special thanks to all the shadow Ministers, current and past, particularly Ryan Park, Michael Daley, Tania Mihailuk, Guy Zangari, the Hon. Adam Searle, MLC, the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, MLC, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC, Linda Burney, and Paul Lynch.

Colleagues, I believe in the enduring values of our party that were born in a collective struggle for better living conditions for all people. I strongly believe in a progressive and reformist agenda and in the continuing pursuit of a society that values the security, fairness, equality and plight of all people without prejudice. We must never relinquish our values to appease another. We must forever stand by the courage of our convictions and, in true Labor tradition, be the voice of the silent and stand for those who cannot stand for themselves.

To my best friend and wife, Simone: There are many wonderful things in my life but nothing that compares to you. Your unconditional support, loyalty and passion for social inclusion combined with your strength of character and tolerance draw my constant admiration, particularly this morning at about 3 o'clock when I think I woke you up. I thank you and I love you. To my two sons, Bailey and Darcy: You are my purpose and the substance of all my pride. I know that right now you may not fully understand the purpose of what I do and why I have to be away from you as much as I am, but I want you to know that not a minute goes by where you are not on my mind. I love you both with all my heart.

To my mum and dad: You are the people who instilled in me the principles that I carry through my life. I hope that I can be half as good a father to my sons as my dad has been to me. As previously stated, my parents are hardworking people and I learnt from them that we are the architect of our success or demise and the decider of our destiny and that we should never allow anyone or anything to impose on the direction of our life.

I also acknowledge my two brothers, Brett and Joseph, along with my sister-in-law Kim and my nephew Zacharia, for their support. To my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Yvonne and Ian, who welcomed me into their family when I was a young soldier a long way from my own family: I forever enjoy our time together. Some of the fondest and most enjoyable moments in my life are our times together. I thank you for the support, help and comfort that you continue to give to me, Simone and the boys. To my good mate and brother-in-law Damian and his wife, Emma: I thoroughly enjoy our times together as a family. Your friendship is invaluable to me and I appreciate all the support you give us. I look forward to being a part of your exciting new chapter.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank the people of Campbelltown for their faith in me. There are not too many greater privileges than to have the people of your local community entrust you to represent them and their interests. I am very aware that with great privilege comes great responsibility—a responsibility I embrace and a privilege I will never take for granted. I pledge to represent every man, woman and child of Campbelltown without prejudice, regardless of their political preference, in every way I can—whether it be helping the boy from Kentlyn working at his dad's service station who wants to one day be the chief of the Australian Defence Force like Air Chief Marshall Mark Biskin, or a young lady from Campbelltown High School who aspires to be like Lisa Wilkinson and reach the highest levels of journalism or the young couple who simply want to raise their family in a fair, just and safe community. I pride myself on this position and I will never yield. I thank the House for its indulgence.