



Inaugural Speeches

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The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! On behalf of the newly elected member for Prospect, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of the former Premier of New South Wales and former member for Toongabbie, the Hon. Nathan Rees; former Senators for New South Wales Michael Forshaw and Graham Richardson; the former member for Fairfield and for Smithfield, Janice Crosio; the former Federal member for Prospect and for Smithfield, the Hon. Carl Scully; local government representatives; and family, friends and supporters of the new member. I welcome you to the Legislative Assembly today. I call the member for Prospect.

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) [12.54 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Thank you, Mr Deputy-Speaker. First, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, their ancestors past and present, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that now forms the electorate of Prospect. They are: the Toogagal people, the Boo-bain-ora people, the Bidgigal people, all peoples of the Eora nation, also the Cabrogal people of the Darug nation. Especially, I want to recognise and pay my respects to perhaps the greatest leader of the Eora nation, Pemulwuy. I hope that one day we will be able to honour him with the respect he deserves and return his remains to the land he loved in the seat of Prospect.

It is wonderful to stand here as the first member to hold the newly created seat of Prospect. The name "Prospect" was formerly the name of the Federal seat, which covers much of the same area, before the name of "McMahon" was given to the seat. I am so pleased that the former Federal member for Prospect, Janice Crosio, AM, MBE, and her husband, Ivo, could be with us today. The redistribution abolished the seats of Toongabbie and Smithfield and brought them together as the new seat of Prospect. This act created one of the most interesting and diverse electorates in Australia. The north of the electorate, formerly Toongabbie, was ably represented until recently by the member for Toongabbie, Nathan Rees—and I am delighted that Nathan is here with us today. However, the south of the electorate, formerly Smithfield, has suffered greatly over the past four years. It is great to have the former Labor member for Smithfield, Carl Scully, here to celebrate today. Carl, you have been sorely missed in Smithfield since you left.

I turn to the seat of Prospect. Who are we? We are a melting pot of people from across the planet: Tamils, Assyrians, Italians, Lebanese, Indians, Filipinos, Maltese, Eastern Europeans, Irish and Anglo-Celtic Australians, to name but a few of the successful multicultural mix in Prospect. It is great that we are all Aussies, we are all Australians. Prospect has the largest industrial and manufacturing area in New South Wales, if not the country, covering the industrial estates of Smithfield-Wetherill Park, Girraween, Eastern Creek, Huntingwood and Arndell Park, directly employing more than 30, 000 people and indirectly employing more than 5,000.

In almost the centre of the electorate is the Prospect Reservoir, the main source of drinking water for the residents of Western Sydney. Beside the reservoir we have our own beach, which includes nippers and surf lifesavers at Wet'n'Wild. I know the member for Port Stephens thinks her electorate has the best beaches; I am sorry, but she does not. The beaches of Prospect are better—we have the Surf Deck, the Nickelodeon Beach with SpongeBob, Dora and Boots the monkey, and the largest Double SkyCoaster in the world. Surrounding the reservoir and the industrial estates, almost like a horseshoe, are the residential areas of Blacktown, Prospect, Toongabbie, Girraween and Pendle Hill in the north, Greystanes and Pemulwuy in the centre, and Smithfield, Wetherill Park, Prairiewood and Bossley Park in the south.

Multicultural diversity abounds, with large and vibrant Tamil, Indian and Filipino communities in the north, great homemade pastizzi from the Maltese community in the centre, and the Assyrian Christian and Italian communities in the south. More than 122 languages are spoken, with more than half of our community either born overseas or having parents who were. Our religions are intertwined: Catholic, Orthodox, Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu faiths, all living in harmony. Three local government areas make up the seat of Prospect: Blacktown, Holroyd and Fairfield city councils. I look forward to working with the mayors and councillors of these councils to stop the Government's forced amalgamation agenda.

Sadly, but as you would expect from a Liberal Government, our community in Western Sydney has been neglected over the past four years. The Prospect community needs to rebuild around Labor values and local issues to ensure that its voice is heard. I am determined that my work in Parliament as the member for the electorate of Prospect will make our community stronger and that each one of our residents will get a fair go. These are core Labor values—values that I believe in. Things like providing opportunities for those who work hard to achieve their dreams, protecting the vulnerable, creating an environment where people feel safe and secure in their homes and at work, and making sure that our kids have good, secure and safe jobs. Labor values are about respecting people with different views, beliefs and backgrounds. Each of us deserves respect regardless of where we were born. With these values as a basis we will be able to create progressive policy aligned to the values that we share as Australians.

That is why I ran as a candidate in the 2015 State Election and why I am proud to represent the Australian Labor Party and the people of my community as the member for the electorate of Prospect. After leaving school I worked a number of blue-collar, semi-skilled jobs, including as a barman, jackeroo in central Queensland, office clerk and eight years as a soldier, non-commissioned officer [NCO] and officer cadet in the Australian Army Reserve. Like many young men I was not sure of my vocation in life, but what was so important to me, and still is, was my belief in Catholic social teachings. I admired those who did not simply talk about their beliefs, but who put those beliefs into pragmatic action and helped their community. At first I thought the priesthood would be my pathway. I admired the example of so many Jesuits and religious members who did not simply talk the talk but who stood up and were counted to help the vulnerable and fight the oppressors—especially their political opposition to the fascists in Europe.

I moved to Sydney and took up a job with the Catholic Industrial Office within the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. It was there that I met a man who was to have a profound effect on the path of my career and life, John Ducker. John Ducker, the recently appointed Chairman of the Catholic Industrial Affairs Committee, or "Bruvver" Ducker as he was known to both friend and foe alike, was a former New South Wales Labor Council Secretary and Minister in the Wran Government. Like me, John believed that to be a Catholic, to believe in Catholic social teachings, one must put that belief into action. I will not go into detail about the advice "Bruvver" Ducker gave me over those years, except to say that it was colourful, insightful and, as my standing in the Chamber today bears testament, correct.

John was to introduce me to a man who became my role model, a man who to this day I believe is unsurpassed as a great Labor leader. He was a humble man who did not attempt to take political office but who had a profound effect on our Australian democracy: Laurie Short, the former National Secretary of the Federated Ironworkers Association of Australia [FIA]. Laurie was the man who led the fight against the Stalinist-communist factions that had infiltrated the trade union movement in Australia. His success in winning the FIA ballot in 1951 against enormous vote rigging and violence led to the beginning of the end of communist dominated unions and the growth of social democrats taking control of the Australian Labor movement. Every fortnight for many years Laurie and I would meet for lunch and discuss politics, industrial relations and so much more. I realised that my vocation was to fight for working people by being a member of the Labor movement. I wanted to see people have equality at work and to return safely home to their families after work, to live their lives in peace and with respect.

Thanks to Laurie's advice I began working part time for the Federated Ironworkers Association at their Newcastle Office. I did 4.00 a.m. gate meetings at the steelworks and learnt the trade of union organising. These union members and officials were good men—hardworking Aussies, many Vietnam veterans—and hard as nails. Under the Australian Council of Trade Union's amalgamation program, the Federated Ironworkers Association amalgamated with the Australasian Society of Engineers and, in turn, the Australian Workers Union. During this time I met the newly elected joint secretary of the New South Wales branch of the amalgamated union, Russ Collison. Russ offered me a job and I joined the New South Wales branch, based at Granville in Western Sydney, as a full-time official. I organised manufacturing sites at Wetherill Park-Smithfield, civil construction and workshops on the railways, amongst others.

Russ had worked as a rigger and scaffolder, was an FIA delegate for his workplace at Tooheys brewery, and worked his way up to the position of secretary of the New South Wales branch. Like Laurie Short, Russ joined the union to make life better for working men and women. His leadership rebuilt the Australian Workers Union into the powerhouse it is today. Russ is the only person I have met who equalled the calibre and courage of Laurie Short and the political skills of John Ducker. Russ became, and still is, a role model, confidant and, as a Labor leader, my greatest personal influence. Thank you, Russ. It is because of your example, your belief in me and your unflinching support that I stand in this House today.

With the encouragement of Russ, Laurie and John, while working full-time during the day, I studied law at night at the University of Sydney and the University of Technology, Sydney, completing my bachelors and masters degrees in law. In fact, one of my fellow students, the member for The Entrance, sits with me in the House. So many eminent people helped me to succeed at law school, including my masters supervisor and dean, Professor Ron McCallum; Commissioner Barrie French; College of Law supervisor, Justice Conrad Staff; and I had continuous friendly advice from former Attorney General Jeff Shaw, QC. I was fortunate to do well at law school and was awarded scholarships to complete a PhD in law at King's College, London, at the University of London. I am indebted to my supervisor, Professor Keith Ewing, Professor of Public Law at King's, for his support and guidance over those years.

Going from being an Australian Workers Union organiser in Western Sydney to the hallowed halls of King's College London proved to be one hell of an adjustment. However, I spent almost eight years overseas. At first I studied and did university teaching, then I worked as legal counsel and international adviser to the Law Society of England and Wales, and as a commercial litigator specialising in financial crime, anti-money laundering and anti-corruption practice in a number of offshore jurisdictions. I had moved from being a union official chasing dodgy bosses to a lawyer chasing dodgy white collar criminals. On my return to Australia I accepted a senior position with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, before being called to the New South Wales bar and to the Inner Temple of the Bar of England and Wales.

I thank Greg Jones of 12th Floor, Garfield Barwick Chambers, Misha Hammond of fourth floor, Wentworth Chambers, and Phillip

Boulten, SC, of Forbes Chambers for their support both at the bar and for my political ambitions. Whilst practising as a barrister I accepted the position of director of financial crime programs and senior lecturer in law enforcement at the Australian Graduate School of Policing and Security, Charles Sturt University. In this role I was honoured to work closely with State, Federal and international law enforcement. I thank my colleagues at the graduate school for their support over the years.

What are my priorities for the seat of Prospect? Having lived in Parramatta through the 1990s, and now in Greystanes with my wife, Bettina, I have seen many changes in Western Sydney over the past 20 years. Those who live along the M4 and M5 cannot all be stereotyped as blue-collar workers living on Struggle Street—no matter what SBS says. We are people who have professional careers; we are executives in listed companies and government agencies, and business owners. We are also successful tradespeople, educators and healthcare providers. We work hard so that we can make choices about the sort of life we want for ourselves and our families. We want to choose whether or not to start a family, whether or not to send our children to a public or private school, and whether or not to holiday in Australia or overseas. We do not expect a free ride, but we do expect the same opportunities as everyone else and to be able to enjoy the rewards of our hard work.

Having come from a modest background, I have taken every opportunity available to me to get an education and work experience that has allowed me to have a successful legal and academic career. I am committed to ensuring Labor policy continues to create these opportunities for others. While these views are not unique to those of us living in Western Sydney, they are central for many of us who have not come from a privileged background but who have worked hard and been successful in our lives. You do not forget where you have come from and those who have helped you, and you make sure that you in turn help others to make a better life.

There are four key priorities I will focus on in representing the people of Prospect as their member of Parliament. The first is building a safer community with less crime. Having worked closely with law enforcement and with victims of crime, I understand the challenges we face in keeping the community safe. The continued shootings in Western Sydney, increasing illegal gun ownership, increases in property crime, and ongoing and significant family violence are challenges that need to be addressed. These problems are only compounded by the backlog of criminal cases before the courts. We need more proactive, evidence- and solution-based policing, tougher gun laws and above all else a Minister who provides leadership. As one of my parliamentary colleagues across the Chamber has already said, we need solutions to focus on deterrence and a criminal justice system that makes the victims of crime the priority. I acknowledge in the gallery today members of the Homicide Victims Support Group. I look forward to working with them and many others to make my words a reality.

One of the challenges we face in this House is restoring integrity to public life. The corruption scandals previously and currently before the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and the courts have eroded the public's belief in this House and us as their representatives. We need to rebuild that trust and to fight corruption in any form—be it at a local government, State or Federal level. Not only those who commit corruption but also those who enable and protect these individuals must be brought to justice. I was pleased that last week the first act of this Parliament was to pass the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment (Validation) Bill 2015. Let us hope this continues and the Government does not lose its focus on fighting corruption when ICAC continues with its investigations in the future.

My second priority will be local jobs and building a stronger economy. I know from personal experience that a local job can bring big social and economic benefits to a community. We have to attract more jobs and businesses to Western Sydney. We need industry policy that supports industry to grow and increased opportunities to expand into new markets, both domestically and overseas, thus creating opportunities for local residents in Prospect to have satisfying and rewarding careers and working lives.

I think of Gary from Prospect, a highly skilled electrical technician; Suzanne from Toongabbie, an administrator and receptionist; Anna from Wetherill Park, a teacher's aide; or Lazarus from Blacktown who just wants a job, any job. All are 50-plus years old and cannot find a job because of their age. These hardworking Aussies, who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own but due to redundancy or illness, are attempting to re-enter the workforce and are the growing underclass in our community. We all know of the challenge that youth and young adults have in finding employment, and the Government statistics reflect this fact. But now if you are over 50 years of age and unemployed, you are facing an even greater challenge.

My third priority is more funding for education. Education has provided opportunity for me and for many others. I want more opportunities for our kids to get a good education, with more funding for schools, more facilities, and a government that is prepared to make schools and our families a priority. At Girraween Public School, despite the Government's promises of funding, there remain 28 demountable classrooms—many without air conditioning and proper equipment. This story is repeated time and time again throughout Prospect and Western Sydney. At Greystanes Public School, which fronts busy Merrylands Road, the principal and the Parents and Citizens Association have been requesting safe fencing for years. Despite promises from this Government and the then local Liberal member, nothing has been done and the children face safety concerns every day not only from traffic but also from intruders entering the school grounds.

We know of the assault by this Government on the TAFE system only too well—the redundancies, the closure of courses and the astronomical increase in fees. But here is a new element. At Wetherill Park TAFE there is a large, well-resourced childcare centre with competent and well-trained staff. It was established for the children of students and staff so they could have convenient and affordable childcare. It was a great Labor initiative. But as the TAFE reforms have bitten into the sector, enrolments have dropped significantly. So now there are more than 25 places per day available for children. But this Government will not let the centre open its enrolments to the children of parents in the community, despite the urgent need for childcare places in Western Sydney. Why is this? It is because the Government wants the childcare centre closed—it wants the staff gone; it wants the TAFE system destroyed in New South Wales. What a disgrace.

My final priority is better health care and quality of life for the people of Prospect. The community of Prospect is serviced by Westmead, Blacktown, Liverpool and Fairfield hospitals. Fairfield Hospital is within the electorate at Prairiewood. A master plan for Fairfield Hospital has been approved but funding has not been allocated. Despite the urgent need of the residents in Western Sydney, the Government has left this hospital languishing towards the bottom of the funding queue. Our community needs a significant increase in the size of the emergency department at Fairfield, with a designated area for children. We need four new operating theatres. A hand clinic has been relocated to Fairfield from Liverpool and set up in demountables. What a disgrace. The hand clinic needs its own dedicated ward. Furthermore, more doctors and consultants are needed for diabetes treatment and education.

It is also a disgrace that kitchens have been closed throughout public hospitals in Western Sydney, including in palliative care wards. Meals are shipped in from the eastern suburbs and are frozen and reheated time and time again until the food is almost unrecognisable. Hospital patients need fresh food and they need it now. People who are sick or in their final stages of life deserve that at the very least. It is unthinkable that the Liberals deny dying people fresh food. I also think of Diana from Bossley Park and how the changes to workers compensation law have devastated her family. The only winners are the insurance companies, which now make greater profits while injured workers suffer. Marlene from Blacktown, who is 71, cares for her disabled son. She has not had a holiday in more than a decade.

Carolyn from Greystanes is the sole carer for her husband, Gary, who is suffering from dementia. After a lifetime together, working hard and raising a family, they are now struggling to cope and to make ends meet. This wonderful woman, whom I met during the election campaign, after many tears asked for only one thing: Could I get someone to mow her lawn because keeping up the beautiful garden she and her husband had created lovingly together was beyond her. I became determined that day that I would work to make sure that this Government provided better services and support for carers of dementia patients. All these issues make me angry, and I will use that anger to fight for better lives and better policy for all these members of my community as their State member.

I have a few people to thank now. There are so many people and organisations that need to be acknowledged and thanked. During my campaign an army of volunteers knocked on more than 25,000 doors and made more than 16,000 phone calls. Thousands of flyers were handed out at train stations and tramways in the mornings and at primary schools in the afternoons. We held more than 240 mobile offices at shopping centres during the campaign. We introduced the Labor message to thousands of residents. These volunteers sacrificed their time to help make our community better.

More than 300 volunteers worked on the Prospect campaign. Time does not permit me to name each and every one of them. But they should know that I am forever indebted to all of them. First, I thank my campaign team. I start with the leaders of my campaign. I thank Todd Pinkerton, my campaign field director. Todd is a local who grew up in Blacktown and went to Mitchell High School. What an incredible campaign he directed. They threw everything at him. There was a late preselection, which meant we realistically had only three months of campaigning time; an incumbent Liberal member; the No Land Tax Party, which I believe spent more money in Prospect than in any other electorate; and the Christian Democratic Party, which once again reneged on its preference deal—now that was a surprise; an extremely diverse electorate; three pre-poll booths and so the list goes on.

Todd held the reins and pulled the campaign together like a skilled general to attack our opposition. We gained community support and more volunteers every day of the campaign. What an incredible campaign and result—there were significant swings to Labor throughout the electorate, we won the majority of booths, we won pre-poll voting, we won the electronic voting and, despite the Liberals spending heaps of their taxpayer-funded entitlements, we won the postal voting as well. Todd, thank you so very much. I believe next week you are in a ballot of your own to become the future President of Young Labor. Best of luck, mate. Take no prisoners. I look forward to opening a bottle of Irish whisky to toast your victory. To George Barcha, you were there throughout the election campaign and the preselection. You worked tirelessly organising teams to put up corflutes, to make A-frames, to cook the sausages at barbecues and to counter my opponents in any way you could. Thank you. You have proven to be a truly loyal friend and comrade.

To Angela Humphries, the brain behind the media campaign and my long-time friend, you took any crisis in your stride and countered any mud the Tories tried to throw at me. To Leo Nelson, my volunteer campaign coordinator, I thank you for making

thousands of calls to volunteers to lock them in for endless doorknocking, phone banking, letterbox drops, et cetera. I think nearly every ALP member and volunteer in Western Sydney has spoken with you at one point. I also thank Nicole Scott, Peter Wicks, Keith Steele, Shaun Nugent, Katrina Diab, Shane Kelley-Resic, and the New South Wales and Victorian Young Labor teams. I thank Ric Sisson from Campaign City, Baden Kirgan from Jefferies Printing and Graham Crawford from AD Industries.

I now thank my family. I thank my mum, Val, who grew up in the Bidura children's home at Glebe and who, with her brothers and sisters, was taken from her parents at six years of age. Each sibling was then placed in supposed "care" and separated, with some never to be seen again. The hardships and abuse she and other children were subjected to are only now being publicly known thanks to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the formal apology. These Forgotten Australians, these care leavers, are not forgotten by me, the members of this House or their fellow Australians. Mum, I love you. To all other Forgotten Australians I say: We love you and we care.

I especially acknowledge Leonie Sheedy from Care Leavers Australia, or CLAN as it is called. She and other "Clannies" have fought for years for justice and acknowledgement of their appalling treatment. Governments in Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia have paid limited compensation. New South Wales and Victoria—the biggest States where the most children were abused in institutional care—have paid nothing. It is time that this Government contributed and supported the establishment of a national independent redress scheme.

Mum, despite your early life you forged ahead and built a life for yourself, established a career as an early childhood teacher and successfully raised a family. You brought me up under often very difficult circumstances that only we and those closest to our family know. I thank you for that. I will never forget where I have come from, nor forget those who have helped me to become the man I am today. You were there throughout the preselection and election campaigns, leaving your home on peaceful Bribie Island for months to move in with Bettina and me to look after the children and to provide any support or advice you could. Thank you.

Sadly, my grandparents, my father and my stepfather have passed away. I know they are watching over us here and would be proud. All of them were working people whose values and strength of character I have inherited. Today I especially think of my grandfather, whose name I bear, Hugh McDermott. He was a man who spent his life in the Labor cause as a railwayman and an official with the Locomotive Drivers Union. He was known as an "industrial grouper", part of those Catholic social democrats who did not split but who fought internally and helped rid the union movement and ALP of extremist infiltration while at the same time protecting the working rights and conditions of fellow workers.

I thank my brother James, a member of the Teachers Federation, who teaches English to children in isolated Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory and central Queensland. I also thank my brother David, a workplace Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union delegate, who worked like a machine charming undecided voters to vote for his younger brother on polling day. By the way, we had a swing of 11 per cent at that booth and I put it down to him. I thank my nephew Jack, who, like so many other volunteers, spent from election eve until 6.00 a.m. guarding the polling booths so that my election material would not be destroyed by my opponents.

My uncle Chaz is a family role model and wise counsel. I am going to embarrass him now. Chaz was the youngest Australian and United Nations soldier to fight in the Korean War, spending his sixteenth birthday in the frontline trenches and fighting at the Battle of the Hook. He went on to serve this nation in Vietnam, fighting with Alpha Company at the Battle of Long Tan and winning the Vietnamese citation for gallantry behind enemy lines as a member of the Australian Army Training Team. He was so prized that the communists even put a price on his head. I thank him for his support and strength throughout the years.

I thank my mother-in-law, Libby, who, in conjunction with my mum, looked after her granddaughters and made sure that our home, which had turned into a 24-hour campaign office, worked well. To my father-in-law, Michael, for his wise counsel and his wife, Judith—the granddaughter of Premier Joe Cahill and daughter of Thomas Cahill, the member for Cook's River and Marrickville—I say thank you. The McDermott family left Dundalk in the north of Ireland, fleeing political and religious persecution. They came to this country to build a better life for their children and grandchildren. In this they succeeded. But at no time did they forget that we have an obligation to help our community when it is in need and especially those who are most vulnerable. I am proud to continue that legacy as a member of this House.

I will now briefly thank my friends in the trade union movement. At the Australian Workers Union I thank Russ Collison, Scott McDine, Wendy Chen, Michael Zelinsky, Michael Kerley, Crystal Validakis and Debra Bushell. At Unions NSW I thank Mark Lennon, Mark Morey, Mary Yagger, Paul Doherty and Alison Rahill. I thank the NSW Teachers Federation and especially TAFE Teachers Federation President Phil Chadwick. At the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Union I thank Bernie Smith and Gerard Dwyer. At the National Union of Workers I thank Derrick Belan and Mark Ptolemy. At the Transport Workers Union I thank Tony Sheldon, Michael Aird, Harish Veleji, Dermot Ryan and Barry Dunning. At the United Services Union I thank Graham Kelley and the delegates and members from Holroyd and Fairfield councils. At the Rail, Bus and Tram Union I thank Alex Classen. At the Electrical Trades Union I thank Steve Butler and Adam Kerslake. Finally, at the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union I thank Tim Ayres and especially Jan Primrose.

I especially acknowledge the phenomenal community champions—the humble, everyday people who serve their communities—for falling in behind me and working hard to support me winning the seat of Prospect. I thank Smithfield Little Athletics. I also thank my fellow volunteer firefighters in the Horsley Park Rural Fire Service Brigade. It is an honour to serve as your brigade president. At the Smithfield RSL Sub-Branch I thank Bill Newell and Secretary Doug Clarke. Doug ran the Fairfield West polling booth with military precision and crushed the Liberals in the process. To Father Arthur Bridge at St Anthony's Parish, Toongabbie, I thank you for your wise counsel and care, for the Rosary beads you had blessed and couriered from the Papal household in Rome and for making the time during the last weeks of the election campaign to organise my youngest daughter, Camille's, christening. God bless you.

To the many from the Tamil Congress who have helped me, especially Reginald Jeganathan, Varuni Bala and Vassee Rajadurai, I thank you for your support. I look forward to working with you to support the Tamil community and reconciliation between all the peoples of Sri Lanka, which must include the establishment by the United Nations Human Rights Commission of an international investigation into wartime violations against the Tamil population during the civil war. At the Assyrian Universal Alliance I thank David David and Hermiz Shahen, and at the Assyrian Resource Centre I thank Carmen Lazar. The Assyrian community is such a key part of the Prospect community and your organisations played an important part in my victory in Prospect. I am committed to assisting the Assyrian people in any way I can as your State member. I look forward to the day when the autonomous Assyrian Province in northern Iraq is established and we can tread the soil of your ancestral homeland together.

I thank Simon Essavian at the Assyrian Cultural and Sports Club. I look forward to working with you and members of your committee to re-establish and rebuild the club after the recent fire. The club is a centre of community, especially to those families fleeing persecution. There are many local ALP branches with so many people who have helped. I will not go through all of the branch members, but the branches are: Smithfield, Greystanes Pemulwuy, Wentworthville, Toongabbie, Prospect, Blacktown, Cabramatta and Fairfield. Thank you all very much for the work you have done.

From ALP head office I thank Jamie Clements, General Secretary, and former General Secretary Sam Dastyari. I particularly thank the Assistant Secretary, Kaila Murnain. Kaila: You are the most innovative campaign strategist that I have had the pleasure to work with. You were the key to my election success and I am indebted to you for your great advice, support and guidance. You are a wonderful friend to me and to my family. To the State Organiser, Dom Ofner: Your calm, focused direction to me and my team was greatly appreciated. Sometimes I thought that you wanted a win in Prospect even more than I did. I also thank Lewis Hamilton, David Dobson, John Johnson, Kendrick Chea and David Latham.

In the Federal parliamentary party I thank Bill Shorten, the Federal Leader of the Opposition, for his personal support, and also thank the members of his staff, Eamonn Fitzpatrick and Andrew Anson, who gave up their free time to support me. To Michelle Rowland, the member for Greenway: You went out of your way to support me in any way possible during the campaign. Of all our Federal parliamentary colleagues, it is you I have to thank the most for your support during the campaign. I also thank the following members and their staff: Chris Hayes, Jason Clare, Senator Deborah O'Neil, Chris Bowen and former Senator Graham Richardson—Richo, I know you are here. Your strategic advice and steadfast, unwavering support over the past 12 months has been incredibly humbling; thank you. I thank former Senator Michael Forshaw, a long-time friend. I also thank Ed Husic, Senator Sue Lines and her husband, Rory, and Matt Thistlethwaite.

At a State parliamentary party level, I thank former Premier Bob Carr. Over the years, as I worked towards this day, his advice on everything from my diet—which I did not really listen to—to community engagement and public speaking was invaluable. To former Premier Nathan Rees, the State member for Toongabbie: Thank you for your support, especially over the past 12 months. Your advice, endorsement and hard work during the preselection and campaign were of great assistance. I intend to be a worthy inheritor of your legacy.

To Luke Foley, our leader: Time and time again you came to Prospect to support my campaign, even up until election eve. You first earned my respect a number of years ago when you were one of the first to stand up against corruption—before it was popular, and when it could have hurt you and damaged you politically. My respect for you grew even further when, during the election campaign, you had a significant policy discussion with my 10-year-old daughter about the possible breakup of the band One Direction. She is now a committed Labor activist.

Michael Daley is a good friend and confidant of many years. You regularly came to Prospect, meeting with community group after community group. Your integrity, wise counsel and good humour have been greatly appreciated and will not be forgotten. Linda Burney, you were always there when I asked, even well before the preselection. Guy Zangari, my neighbour next door at Fairfield, what a ride it has been! I do not know what was more fun—the clowns of the No Land Tax Party or the botox of the Christian Democratic Party candidate, Edward Royal. Ryan Park, thank you for your advice regarding schools and TAFE on your many visits to the electorate.

Nick Lalich, my neighbour to the south in Cabramatta, thank you for your cheerful guidance and the Vietnamese language lessons.

Paul Lynch, thank you for your advice over the past few years. I look forward to working with you on justice and law reform over the term of this Parliament. To John Robertson, neighbour to the north of the electorate, the Libs are still smarting from your actions at the composite pre-poll at Blacktown. I also thank Ron Hoenig and Tania Mihailuk. In the other place, I thank Adam Searle, Walt Secord, Sophie Cotsis, Peter Primrose, Greg Donnelly and Daniel Mookhey, an alumnus of Girraween High School.

Now to my fellow elected Western Sydney members of Parliament who fought the good fight in their own electorates: Jodi McKay is incorruptible, incredible and one hell of a campaigner; Prue Car of Londonderry is a campaign machine—my God, you earned your place in this House; Greg Warren of Campbelltown, a fellow ex-soldier, is quiet and low-key with a will of iron; Edmond Atalla of Mt Druitt, the first Egyptian Coptic member of Parliament, is living proof of the success of a multicultural Australia; and Julia Finn, my neighbour to the east, is a long-time friend.

What a great win it was. Tell me, has Tony Issa actually conceded yet? To Anoulack Chanthivong of Macquarie Fields: You are a worthy successor to Dr Andrew McDonald. Chris Minns of Kogarah, who suggested some four years ago that I would run for the seat of Smithfield, thanks for such a great idea. I also thank Trish Doyle of the Blue Mountains and Jihab Dib of Lakemba, as well as my Labor parliamentary colleagues outside of Western Sydney.

I also thank my wife, Bettina. I love you, and I could not have done this without you. You and our daughters, Olivia, Geneva and Camille, are the reason I wake up every day with a smile on my face. Loving you is easy. You have always stood by me, fought campaign after campaign beside me and never flinched, no matter what the challenge. Over the last days of the campaign you worked so hard that you lost your voice and were ordered to bed rest—something you simply ignored. We are true believers and I love the fact that you share this journey beside me. I am committed to working hard every day to bring a Labor Government to office that will bring Labor values, social democratic beliefs and public integrity back to Western Sydney and New South Wales. God bless Australia.