



# Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Wednesday 13 May 2015.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! On behalf of the new member for Oxley, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of the former member of the Australian House of Representatives who represented the Richmond electorate, the Rt Hon. Larry Anthony; the former member for Maitland, the Hon. Robyn Parker; the Hon. Patricia Forsythe; the former member for Clarence, Steve Cansdell; local government representatives, family, friends and supporters of the new member for Oxley. I welcome you all to the Legislative Assembly gallery today.

**Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) [12.19 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech):** Congratulations, Mr Deputy-Speaker, on your appointment. It is good to have you back in this place. I would like to start my time in this place by thanking the people of Oxley for asking me to represent them in the oldest Parliament in Australia. I also pay respect to the descendants of the First Nation, the Gumbaynggirr, the Dunghutti and the Biripi people in Oxley. I have to say that democracy in New South Wales is in fairly good hands. The inaugural speeches of the class of 2015 have been inspiring, warm and generous, and the people who have come into this Chamber are good people. I am proud to be part of that team.

The people of Oxley have shown faith that, with my 12 years of experience in the other place, I have the knowledge, the experience and the will to continue the strong representation that Oxley has enjoyed for 16 years. People also know I spent my formative years on a dairy farm; that I have worked in the media; and that I have run a successful small business—took a risk, employed people and created jobs. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I have delivered an inaugural speech in the other place so I take this opportunity to talk about Oxley, its people, their dreams and aspirations, the opportunities and a couple of the challenges. But first I give a very big thankyou to the former member and Deputy Premier as well as my party leader for 12 years, Andrew Stoner. Andrew and Cathy are catching up on some long-overdue time together, celebrating Cathy's birthday with an overseas holiday they so richly deserve.

Andrew Stoner's legacy is the transformation of infrastructure in Oxley with a freeway from one end to the other, new hospitals at Macksville and Kempsey and at the same time being part of the tough decisions that ultimately have helped to make New South Wales number one again. It is my job to see that those projects are finished. With the planning meeting of the Macksville community today about the design of the new hospital, we are getting on with the job. The electorate is named after the famous explorer, John Oxley, who came across the headwaters of the Hastings River in 1818. On seeing the ocean from what he named Mount Seaview he said, "Balboa's ecstasy at the first sight of the sea could not have been greater than ours. It inspired us with new life. Every difficulty vanished and, in imagination, we were already at home." John Oxley went on to become one of the five founding members of the nation's first representative Chamber when the Legislative Council was established in 1824. His two sons served in this place.

The natural beauty of Oxley is breathtaking from the mountains to the sea with four magnificent rivers—the Hastings, the Macleay, the Nambucca and the Bellinger—that meander from the Great Dividing Range into the Pacific Ocean, creating the best beaches and surf breaks in Australia. Oxley is the very best of coastal and country life. Dorrigo and Comboyne are perched on top of the Great Dividing Range with their rich red volcanic soil, a luscious patchwork of paddocks, hedges and rolling hills creating the best dairy farms and dairy farmers in the country—hello, Jenny and Michael Hurrell! Where did our Premier choose to have a much-needed break after the election campaign to recharge his batteries and catch the best waves in Australia? He chose Oxley, of course. The other day I was bit worried when I found myself agreeing with the new member for Newtown on one thing when she said:

I came to recognise the immense beauty of our natural environment and the powerful soothing and calming effect it can have on the madness of our world.

Those words really resonate with me. And then I thought, "What the hell are you doing living in Newtown? Oxley is the home for you!" I might add that a lot of her tribe are moving there. We must do this together, city and country. We are stronger together. We need to bridge the gap between city and country. J. C. Penney said:

Growth is never by mere chance; it is the result of forces working together.

As a Government, we need to plan for the future. We need to look forward and seize the opportunities that exist outside the gates of Sydney. I agree with the member for Epping 100 per cent: Having a job is the most basic human right. That will be my number one priority—to support job creation. Manufacturing is by far our largest industry on the mid North Coast. Like the lion's share of manufacturing in New South Wales, it involves food production. Norco, with a plant on the Bellinger River and just two kilometres from my home at Urunga, is going from strength to strength, paying record prices to its dairy farmers and sending up to 20,000 litres

of fresh Oxley milk to China every week. Smithtown is the home of Australia's favourite chocolate drink, Milo. With Nestle's, or Nestlé—I am a Nestle's girl because that was the factory my family used to supply, but it is Nestlé—the parent company defied the normal trend by closing its Asian plant in favour of a \$60 million plant upgrade at Smithtown. That company chose us for manufacturing over Asia.

As a supporter of regional development, as is the member for Ku-ring-gai, he would be interested to know that two of our local companies of which we are most proud—Planet Lighting at Bellingen and our famous Akubra company—arrived in Oxley in the 1970s through programs that encouraged larger companies away from the big smoke and into our rural communities, bringing jobs and opportunities. This has shaped our communities and we want more businesses to look at the great advantages of relocating to our region as well as supporting our local small and emerging businesses to grow and prosper. I will stand with my leader and Deputy Premier, Troy Grant, in making sure that regional industry has a fair go. I commend the Deputy Premier for putting it firmly on the table. By uncapping the potential in the regions, we relieve the pressure in Sydney by giving people job security with a better lifestyle without the pressure of a Sydney mortgage.

As a New South Wales National for almost 30 years, I know the key to economic growth is our primary producers. I remember that our valleys produced large parcels of green beans, but now they mostly come down from Queensland. There is one exception, John Simon, who is my electorate council chairman, and his wife, Noelene. They are in the gallery today and they grow the sweetest and most delicious beans at Gladstone—but only for four months of the year, so they can fund their overseas holiday. But we also know that the vitality and the value of our primary industry sector gradually has waned over the past few decades. I wonder whether we can do more with those vast and incredibly productive alluvial plains in the four valleys. Do not get me wrong: I have nothing at all against those whose business it is to fatten Japanese bullocks for export markets, or who like to run 30 breeders on their 100 acres while they hold down jobs in town. But I wonder whether the wealth of Oxley's natural resources has tempered the incentive to do a bit more with it?

When I am driving across the electorate, besides having a grumble about how much fireweed there is in so many paddocks, I often contemplate what it would be like if there were large, long paddocks of high-value crops growing without irrigation for dairy cow rations and beef feedlots, for food processors and manufacturers, or even for licensed hemp production for the fibre and textile market. I am talking more about rethinking what we do with the land to optimise its use and the value of its outputs as well as increase overall economic activity while supplying raw materials to attract secondary industry. Can we think differently about land tenure so that there can be leasing and share farming for the younger or entrepreneurial farmers who want to farm but who cannot afford the capital cost of land, which is particularly high in this lifestyle-rich environment? Western New South Wales agriculture is climate constrained. Oxley agriculture is incumbency constrained.

I am a little passionate about this. My parents were share farmers. Their share farm was the first step along their journey towards achieving their ultimate goal of owning their own dairy farm, which they did. It was approximately 25 kilometres from The Nationals stalwart "Black Jack" McEwen soldiers settlement lot in the Goulburn Valley in Victoria. I want the next generation of young farmers to have the same opportunity. We believe in the guiding set of principles that underpins my party, which is that all Australian should have an equal opportunity to contribute and share in the wealth of our nation. We believe that initiative should be rewarded and that those who are prepared to work hardest should reap the rewards. Another sector that is due for a major rethink is forestry, particularly native hardwood forestry. Think blackbutt, spotted gum, ironbark and tallowwood which are grown, processed and marketed into a range of products by numerous businesses in Oxley.

Wauchope Timber from around Yarras features in the Sydney Opera House, transported by that famous Frenchman "Froggy" Cassegrain, whose son and famous winemaker, John Cassegrain, is with us today. The tradition continues today, with Hastings Valley timber being used to decorate the high rises at Barangaroo. Our mills and the harvest and haulage businesses operate in a sustainable and renewable industry, and they have the right to continue to do so. There are some outstanding issues in the sector that I will be following through to underpin our industry's economic viability, social licence and environmental credentials.

There is a need to rethink the tenure trap that started with the unscientific scramble to change tenure on large swathes of forest estate in exchange for Greens preferences. The Leader of the Opposition recently fell into this trap. I wish he could have looked into the eyes of all the workers at our local timber mills to see their continued disappointment that Labor would treat them in that way. The tenure trap overlooks the fact that hardwood forest ecosystems evolved under the management regime of the first Australians and that the forests still need to be managed for their protection against the many threats that assail them—especially wildfire. It would be ideal if we had a "forests of care" outcome; not a "bush or scrub of neglect". Why is it that countries such as Germany and Canada are able to come to sensible forestry decisions that are both sustainable and wealth creating? Their environmental experts work alongside their foresters to come up with a best-practice solution that is a win-win.

There is also a compelling case to review the Water Act to acknowledge the reality that North Coast is very different from the Murray-Darling Basin. I believe the Water Act can be tailored to satisfy the differences between Bellingen and Bourke and Wauchope and Walgett. I am glad to say that The Nationals have always understood the contribution of farmers and that good

infrastructure is vital. That is why regional infrastructure is going to be a big focus for this member. Two thousand people are employed in Oxley building the Pacific Highway motorway, which will traverse the entire electorate—a \$3.2 billion investment. It will transform our community, bringing jobs and growth and enabling our goods to get to market faster and more efficiently. More importantly, travel will be safer for all.

Over the next four years the towns of Nambucca Heads, Urunga and Macksville will join Kempsey in being bypassed. Tourism provides 8.5 per cent of jobs in Oxley and we need to ensure that the Legendary Pacific Coast campaign is built on so that when the 16,000 vehicles bypass all those beautiful communities every day there is a constant reminder of what is there through an innovative signage campaign, using old and new media. We also need to turn our attention to the Waterfall Way and the Oxley Highway—the east-west routes—looking at twenty-first century ways to traverse the Great Divide, without constant landslips and costly repairs.

Rail continues to play a big role in Oxley. It connects our retirees with their families and ensures the socially disadvantaged have a low-cost travel option. Each week 50,000 tonnes of freight are moved on the North Coast line. Like many people in my electorate, such as Ray Campbell at Kempsey station, I too have a connection with the railways. My grandfather was a ganger and my husband was introduced to Oxley through his father—a Barnardos orphan who served us in World War II. He became a steam and diesel train driver on the North Coast line and took Warren and his brothers and sisters to Nambucca Heads for regular holidays. This year this vital line is celebrating its centenary in Wauchope. We need more rail advocates in the twenty-first century such as Don Neal and Janet Rainbow, who are here today, to continue the hard work and passion to establish projects like the Great Hastings Valley Railway and the Wauchope Gateway project.

We also need to get the Dorrigo steam railway museum opened. But I know I have a good friend in the transport Minister, the Hon. Andrew Constance, who is going to help deliver all this for me. As Andrew knows, we need more commuter services along the North Coast, as has occurred at Bathurst, and we need the trains of the future to ensure the fastest travel times and connections not just to our major cities but also between major regional centres. We must support our local councils as well and help them move on to a stronger footing to ensure that local residents have the water, roads, services and planning that encourage ongoing regional development. To achieve this, we need leaders with courage. Tough decisions are not always popular but I will not shy away from doing what is right.

In that leadership vein, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Mayor of Kempsey and head of the Mid North Coast Regional Organisation of Councils. My four years as the first Parliamentary Secretary for Rural and Regional Health were the best years in the upper House—but eight years of opposition were challenging. With the support of the Hon. Jillian Skinner, I was co-chair of the team that developed a blueprint for health delivery in the country for the next 10 years. I will support good, common-sense ideas and promote those who are prepared to lead to provide community-based initiatives that keep people in their homes and out of hospitals—those such as Jenny Zirkler from Nambucca Valley Care, who is here today, and Sheree Smith, who owns a medical practice and is also here. Sheree, with the community, has created a dialysis facility in partnership with the local health district in Nambucca Heads—the first of its kind in New South Wales. I drove past Kempsey Hospital last week and it is like a phoenix rising from the ashes, with the \$90 million investment giving the people of the district the facility they deserve. It is a different service from that provided by Slim Dusty's grandmother in the 1900s in Kempsey—she was the district's first midwife.

I salute Royal Far West, which has a strong connection to Kempsey. Under the inspiring leadership of Lindsay Cane, it continues to take hundreds of children and their families for intensive medical treatment, a week at a time, at the historic premises on the Manly beachfront. Now Royal Far West is reaching out to children all over the State, with modern technology providing speech therapy, reading classes and even psychology treatment via the Internet. We need to continue the investment in the education sector, ensuring our TAFE system graduates people for jobs that our local industry needs. I know that the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business, John Barilaro, is right onto that. I will also work to ensure that our high-growth areas such as South West Rocks have the complete education and supporting facilities they need. I look forward to working with Adrian Piccoli, the education Minister—my mate—to see that that happens.

However, even paradise is not perfect and, as a community, we have many challenges to face in Oxley. I believe one of the biggest decisions that one can make in life is to have a child. It is a child's right to expect a home based on love, stability, security and unconditional support, but the sad reality is that more and more children in our communities are not provided with this strong, vital foundation. In this country today 143,000 children are living in a vulnerable situation. Sadly, one of the biggest impacts on the Oxley electorate is the number of children living in less than ideal circumstances, which is having a profound impact on law and order in too many of our towns. There are 695 children in foster and kinship placements on the mid North Coast—just one is too many.

I am excited to be part of the Breaking the Cycle project, coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, that is operating in the Kempsey shire. I thank the Premier for his support. This is a groundbreaking opportunity to address the systemic failure of social policy too focused on good intentions and not enough on outcomes. I am determined that this will not be a talkfest. We must listen to the people on the ground who are making a difference to the lives of young people who are doing it tough—people such as Brian Darby in Dorrigo who has pulled many kids off the streets and into the boxing ring; Sheri Foster in Kempsey, teaching families how

to run a home and wanting to place volunteer grandparents with families; Mark Morrison from the Macleay Vocational College, who has equal amounts of passion and compassion; and the inspirational Richie Donovan from the Nambucca Valley, who continues to shape the lives of many fine athletes, including Greg "the Goanna" Inglis of Bowraville. I also thank the Attorney General for meeting recently with the families of the Bowraville three. Hopefully, this nightmare is coming to an end and justice will be served for Colleen, Evelyn and Clinton—and that will not be a moment too soon.

There are many people who have been part of my journey whom I want to acknowledge. First are my parents, who are here with us today. I thank them for turning east in the Land Rover and caravan in the 1977 May school holidays. The Cobb Highway was closed and we could not get to Wilcannia to go fox shooting—we had great school holidays—so we turned east and ended up at the Grassy Head caravan park, smack in the middle of the Oxley electorate. That holiday transformed our lives and took us on the journey north. My dad was the secret weapon in the campaign we have just run. He spent countless hours listening to the people and would leave it to the last second to confess that I was his daughter. Many said that if I was his daughter then that was enough for them to support me. Thank you also to my mum and my brother Kenton, who are here today. My brother is having a rare day off work. He owns a small business with his wife, Monique, in Dorrigo. They are a constant reminder of how tough it is and why we must continue our agenda of reform to help those who provide jobs and opportunities.

There is my campaign team executive, led by John Simon, with Noel Atkins, Mary Tarr, John Supple, Brian Irvine, Barry Ramke, Anna Shields and Janine Reed. Other key contributors are also here: Maureen and Tony Barwick, Patricia Baker, Susan Ramke, Les Wells, Cheryl and Barry Lewis, Kay and Dallas White, Barry Reed, Mary Kell, David Scott, Gordon Manning, Norma Daley, Alan and Nancy Taylor, Kaye Irvine, Loretta Caelli, and Caroline and Rex Fowler. You all continue to inspire me and I know that you will keep me real. They galvanised 200 booth workers across our 43 booths on election day, which is a stunning effort. The Nationals secret weapon is our grassroots army. A big thank you to my Federal colleagues David Gillespie and Luke Hartsuyker. They wanted to be here today but there is something about a budget in Canberra. I look forward to continuing to work together to deliver for our region. My good friend and loyal soldier Ann Lewis—another Goulburn Valley girl—thank you, and to the team at head office, led by Ben Franklin during the campaign and now Nathan Quigley, and, in particular, Alex Fitzpatrick.

The Oxley team kept their head down and got on with it. I genuinely acknowledge my fellow candidates who poured their heart and soul into the election campaign and gave the people of Oxley a genuine choice on election day. My political compass, Wal Murray, you are with me every day. Your decency, common sense and your down-to-earth approach were your secret weapons in politics. You were not one to look over your shoulder to seek out someone more important. His daughter and Mayor of Moree, Katrina Humphries, replicates that earthy approach. She told me he would be sitting on my shoulder today.

My children, Jack and Emily, I am so very proud of you. I am so sorry, Emily, I was not there on the weekend. I was attending the Bellingen Show while you got your first three-pointer at the carnival in the Illawarra. Jack, we had an amazing journey at Kokoda, paying tribute to our paternal grandfathers. You inspire me. Now you are a corporal in the cadets, so who knows where you will land. To Warren, we met and fell in love in this place 25 years ago, so I could not have a better confidant and leveller. We decided that my role in politics would never compromise Jack's and Emily's desires or goals. That is why you have been there for them 100 per cent. That is why, in 2013, the North Coast branch of Surf Life Saving New South Wales made you Surf Life Saver of the Year. You contributed hundreds of volunteer hours to Jack's and Emily's club. That is why, in 2011, you did not travel to Government House to receive your award from Governor Marie Bashir for saving the lives of a family from Gulgong who were being dragged out in a dangerous rip. You chose instead to go to the end of year school assembly. That is just the sort of person you are.

The people of Oxley are decent, down to earth, honest, hardworking and genuine. They are the types of people who would call a spade a shovel. I will represent them with the same integrity, candour and honesty. They deserve nothing less. I know together we will help Oxley reach its true potential. I thank the House for its indulgence.