



Inaugural Speeches

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Extract from NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers Tuesday 29 April 2003.

Mr ROBERTS (Lane Cove) [7.57 p.m.]: Mr Speaker, first of all, congratulations on your elevation to the lofty heights of the Chair. I rise tonight on the occasion of my inaugural speech with a feeling of great humility and pride. I have always believed that the responsibility for government and its participants is not some preordained right bestowed on a privileged elite, but a gift from the people and a trust held for the people. I am very conscious of the role the seat of Lane Cove has played in government in New South Wales and of the very worthy parliamentarians who have preceded me. Many of us here this evening will remember the late Sir Kenneth McCaw, the longest serving Attorney General in New South Wales history. He was succeeded in Lane Cove by another Attorney General, now Mr Justice Dowd.

My constituents hold in high regard and deservedly great affection my immediate predecessor, Kerry Chikarovski, an outstanding Minister in the Fahey Government. There are many reasons for admiring Kerry Chikarovski. Among them are her tireless enthusiasm and her nobility of spirit in campaigning for the party over the past 12 months. Both John Dowd and Kerry Chikarovski rose to become State leaders of the Liberal Party and each has left a positive legacy not just to Lane Cove but to the State of New South Wales.

Ken McCaw, a man of great erudition, was a role model for the disabled as one of two blind members in the Askin Government. He refused to allow his handicap to restrict him from being a successful lawyer and Attorney General. His widow, Lady McCaw, resides in Lane Cove to this day. Perhaps members for Lane Cove have serially recognised that the high quality of their constituents merits an extra effort in every aspect of parliamentary representation.

I am determined to continue the tradition of high-standard parliamentary representation for the electorate of Lane Cove and to ensure that my electorate remains at the very heart of liberalism and government in this State. When considering who has represented the seat of Lane Cove at a State level it is no surprise that it has also had outstanding representatives at a Federal level with Sir John Cramer, a Minister in the Menzies Government, the Hon. Joe Hockey, a talented Minister in the Howard Government, and, of course, our Prime Minister, the Hon. John Howard.

One of the great privileges of my life has been to serve on the staff of Prime Minister Howard. During the Prime Minister's first term, well-informed observers were describing John Howard as "the best Prime Minister since Sir Robert Menzies". In his second term John Howard was spoken of as "the best Prime Minister since George Reid". By any standard of judgment, John Howard now deserves the description "Australia's best ever Prime Minister". John Howard has the Menzies grasp of history and of international affairs, but in addition his understanding of freedom of trade and freedom of personal economic relationships rivals even the record of Sir Robert and his colleagues of that period.

The most important characteristic of our Prime Minister is that he is prepared to do what is right and to follow his vision for the betterment of Australia, irrespective of opinion polls. John Howard and his colleagues, especially Foreign Minister Downer, led the diplomatic charge which redressed a great wrong of previous Australian governments and secured independence for the East Timorese. He played a significant role in turning Bougainville in the direction of peace, and having served in



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Bougainville as a peacekeeper with the Australian Army I can confirm the admiration for John Howard that prevailed among Bougainvilleans. Compassion for the oppressed is a dominant characteristic of our Prime Minister.

John Howard is among those international statesmen who recognise that tyranny in one nation begets tyranny in another. At a time when opinion polls indicated trenchant popular opposition and the media were howling for his blood, John Howard prudently deployed Australian military forces to the Middle East, ready for action if required. When France, Germany and Russia tendentiously obstructed United Nations military intervention against the Iraqi dictatorship, John Howard and his Government resolutely stood with our allies, Britain and the United States. Australian service personnel have acquitted themselves with traditional courage and great distinction, and we thank the good Lord that they have suffered no casualties.

It is greatly to the credit of my leader in this place, John Brogden, that in the midst of the State election campaign he immediately committed the Liberal-National Coalition in New South Wales to full support for the Prime Minister and the Government. John Howard has proved on the Federal scene that good leadership means doing what is right and thereby winning over the public. I have no hesitation in stating that John Brogden will prove the same on the State scene in New South Wales.

The average age of my constituents in Lane Cove is around 38. My constituents are young, they are vibrant and they believe in themselves and their abilities. More than half of my constituents live with children at home. They are active in their local community and school groups, and they work very hard to support their families. Nearly 60 per cent regularly use a personal computer at home. While the three most common ancestries are Australian, English and Irish, people who trace their origins to more than 50 countries are proud to call Lane Cove home.

The Lane Cove constituency is one of the most beautiful and picturesque electorates in the world. It extends from the Greenwich peninsula in the east, following the meandering Parramatta and Lane Cove rivers, through to Putney in the west. My constituency incorporates some or all of four local government areas. On the west, the eastern part of the busy and diverse city of Ryde incorporates Putney, Tennyson, East Ryde and the western part of Gladesville, plus that part of Chatswood west which lies west of the Lane Cove River. In the city of Ryde may be found the Macquarie Park Cemetery and the Northern Suburbs Crematorium, two institutions with a very high reputation for dignity and compassion. Much of the famous Lane Cove River National Park is also in the city of Ryde.

The Mayor of the city of Ryde is Councillor Edna Wilde, OAM, who represents the west ward outside the Lane Cove electorate. The representatives of Ryde city's east ward within my electorate include the former Mayor of Ryde, Councillor Ivan Petch, among other things a wonderful musician who served as member for Gladesville in this Parliament. On its own peninsula in the south-east, the Hunters Hill municipality, proudly described as Australia's first garden suburb, is wholly contained within my electorate. Hunters Hill municipality incorporates Gladesville east of Pittwater Road, Boronia Park, Tarban, Henley, Huntleys Point, Hunters Hill and Woolwich.



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The Mayor of Hunters Hill is Councillor Bruce Lucas, and the immediate past mayor is Councillor Susan Hoopmann, who made a wonderful contribution to my election and whom I am proud to claim as a personal friend. Also on Hunters Hill Council is Councillor Richard Quinn, who provided me with strong competition in preselection. I pay tribute to the graciousness with which Richard Quinn has loyally supported me. The State Government would be aware that the people of Hunters Hill are not to be trifled with, as was shown by their opposition to school closures.

Sharing a name with my electorate is the Lane Cove municipality, all of which is contained within the Lane Cove electorate. The Lane Cove municipality incorporates the suburbs of Greenwich, Lane Cove, Linley Point, Longueville, Northwood, Riverview, Osborne Park, and Lane Cove west, plus those parts of St Leonards that lie to the south-west of the Pacific Highway. The Mayor of Lane Cove, Councillor John May, just a few days ago demonstrated his skills in his inspiring conduct of Lane Cove Anzac Day commemorations. I have had the privilege of serving twice as mayor of Lane Cove, and it would be hard to find anywhere a more dedicated team than the councillors and staff of Lane Cove Council.

In particular I pay tribute to Councillor Ian Longbottom, a man who breaks most records in community service and who is publisher and editor of the *Village Observer*, which is now entering its second decade of publishing excellence. The Deputy Mayor of Lane Cove is Councillor Mary Rawlings. I also pay tribute to my Liberal Party colleague, former Mayor Councillor Steven Bowers, who, among other things, presided over the opening by our Prime Minister of the wonderful Lane Cove Aquatic Centre. The north-east extremity of the Lane Cove electorate, which falls within the city of Willoughby, shares with my electorate St Leonards, which is north-east of the Pacific Highway, Gore Hill and part of Artarmon.

Within the city of Willoughby and within my electorate is the famous Royal North Shore Hospital. The Government should be aware that my constituents are vitally interested in the future of that important local institution. The new member for Willoughby is present in the Chamber tonight. Willoughby is well served by my colleague Gladys Berejiklian. I congratulate her on her win. I commend the Mayor of Willoughby, Councillor Pat Reilly, for his conduct of the Anzac Day service. The Deputy Mayor of Willoughby is Councillor Kate Lamb. Councillor Stuart Coppock, a prominent member of my party, represents Naremburn ward. The total area of the Lane Cove electorate is 31 square kilometres with an electoral enrolment of almost 45,000 people.

The apparently high population density has been offset by sound local planning which has provided splendid parks, sporting ovals, bushland and delightful foreshores for residents and visitors to the Lane Cove electorate. I have listed all the local government areas within my electorate because the people of my electorate are well served by their two cities and two municipalities. There is reason to suspect the State Government's motives in extending by six months the terms of all local governments in New South Wales. Many people are apprehensive that the Government intends to use the time to force amalgamations on councils. I now put the Government on notice. Any plot to amalgamate councils in my electorate will be strongly resisted by my constituents, their councillors and their local member.



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The people of Lane Cove are indeed blessed with thriving churches and parishes as well as the generously supported local charity organisations that provide so much assistance to those in need. Lane Cove electorate has a proud history of military service to Australia and the Commonwealth. This is reflected in the active Returned Services League sub-branches of Lane Cove, Gladesville, Hunters Hill and North Ryde. The strong community bonds and networks are further reflected in the multitude of active service clubs, including Rotary, Lions, Probus and Apex that enhance and support the many communities within the Lane Cove electorate. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

We are blessed with an active scouting and guide movement led by men and women who donate much of their time in a volunteer capacity to ensure that the wonderful benefits of their knowledge and their sense of civic duty are passed on to the next generation. One can drive around the electorate on a Saturday and applaud the large number of young people who are playing every conceivable sport. That is made possible by the selfless efforts of volunteer coaches, managers, umpires, referees and paramedics. This new generation is vitally important to New South Wales. It is the responsibility of this Parliament to nurture and cultivate the potential of all our youth. Sadly, under a Labor Government, the young people in my electorate must look forward to excessive bureaucracy, punitive taxation, restricted freedoms, incompetent administration and impaired employment opportunities for everyone except the beneficiaries of Labor's traditional jobs for the boys. On Valentine's Day in 1956—more than 47 years ago—the then Leader of the Opposition, P. H. Morton, MLA, made this promise on behalf of the Liberal Party:

We will cut through the political patronage which has been so marked a feature of State Labor's term of office. There will be no jobs, no soft spots in the Public Service or elsewhere for tired and worn out political hacks. Unlike the Government, we will make our appointments on merit and on the basis of service rendered. Under a Liberal Government there will be no repetition of scandals, and allegations of scandals which have blanketed the Government of this State in recent years. We want clean government. We are sure the people of this State want it too.

The late Pat Morton was right about the desire of the people of New South Wales for clean government. His comments clearly demonstrate that, with Labor, little has changed over half a century. I make this promise to the young people of my electorate: My greatest obligation is to help deliver to them in 2007 a Liberal-National government led by John Brogden which will rapidly work to undo the damage done to this State by far too many years of Labor. I intend to defend the interests of my constituents and I intend to defend certain principles and institutions that have served us so well.

I honour and respect the Australian flag and the flag of New South Wales. I honour our sovereign and our unmatched system of constitutional monarchy. I respect our Federation and I am determined to preserve the existence and sovereignty of the States of Australia. I appreciate our bicameral system of government in New South Wales and I am aware that the Labor Party still harbours individuals who are determined to launch yet another Labor attempt to abolish the Legislative Council—the first legislative Chamber in Australia and a vital part of our democracy in New South Wales.

I respect our tradition of independence of the judiciary and I reject any attempt to politicise it. I understand clearly that freedom of the individual cannot exist without freedom for individuals to engage in voluntary commercial relationships. Everything that I have learned about history has



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proved to me again and again that the marketplace delivers high and rising prosperity to a degree that is impossible under any other system. Most important, those who gain most from a free market are those who, under socialism, would be permanently poor and oppressed. I believe in five simple values: freedom, security, community, opportunity and respect. Freedom is at the heart of the Liberal Party's distinctive appeal.

I share the Liberal belief that governments should not make for individuals those decisions that they can make for themselves. The second value is security, with the Liberal philosophy being strong on assisting individuals who lack the skills, the intellect or the physical health to care for themselves. Security emphatically incorporates locally led and locally based front-line police and strong commitments to the New South Wales health system. Under Labor, the constantly growing State bureaucracy is a threat to our freedom and our security. Under Labor, the erosion of the property rights of primary producers is a result of the same Labor contempt for private property, which gives rise to punitive land tax.

Community means promoting volunteerism and local responsibility, and preserving our autonomous local government areas. Opportunity means commitment to high standards in education and a focus on skills. It means genuine right of choice in schooling for every parent. Opportunity means providing real help to parents in looking after children. Respect means being aware and active in designing services and policies that nurture our young, support our families and care for and protect our seniors. These beliefs are based on the foundations of my upbringing, my education and those who instilled in me a love of service and a commitment to it. Most important, I know that those beliefs are shared by my constituents.

My political initiation was at the hands of the Hon. Dr Brian Pezzutti, who is present in the Chamber tonight—a recently retired member of the other place who taught me that a parliamentarian's role is to stand up for those who are unable to stand up for themselves. I am also fortunate to have been schooled in politics and representation by observing such gentlemen as Mr Arthur Sinodinos, Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, and Mr Tony Nutt, Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister—individuals with a great commitment to duty, honesty and good, fair and open government. I thank the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop, MP, and the Hon. Tony Abbott, MP, for contributing to my understanding of liberty. I have had the fortune to be mentored at a local and State level by Mr Dick White, who is present in the Chamber tonight, Mr Frank Holles, Mr Bill Tafe, Mr Greg Bartels and Mr Mick Lardelli—all of whom I am proud to call friends.

In my formative years at St Ignatius College, Riverview, I was privileged to have studied under great and learned people such as Mr Errol Lea-Scarlett, Mr Philip Lee, Mr Glen King, Father Greg O'Kelly, Father Tony Walsh and Miss Patricia Tomkins. Those individuals instilled in me a passion for knowledge, understanding and Jesuit philosophy. For my understanding of banking and finance I sincerely thank the inspirational Dr Carolyn Currie of the University of Technology, Sydney. I also thank the members of the fourth estate, the often maligned though essential component of our democracy. In particular, I pay tribute to the local press from my electorate of Lane Cove who do so much every day to build, maintain and inform our community. I refer to Ron Bendall and Scott Howlett of the *North Shore Times*; John Booth from the *Weekly Times*, Di Bartok from the *Northern*



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District Times; and I have already mentioned Ian Longbottom. Significant in my election were the photographic and advertising talents of Mark Lee and Kilner Mason.

Worthy members of my local Liberal team that I have not already mentioned include Ian Hardwick, Steve Sim, Tim James, Bill Cross and Alan James. I also thank Stephen and Cindy Blaney, Simon Frame, Mark Donovan, Ronnie Corne, Tom Shanahan, Joe Hassarati, Glenys James, Chris Stone, Trish James, Sam Kursar, Kay Long, Adam Roach, Damien Jones, Nick Campbell, Andrew Gibbs, Sue Sinclair, Soo-Tee and Mary Cheong, Rupert Gray, Paul Hackett, Pat Kennedy, Michael Darby and Rick Forbes for their hard work and assistance during the election, as well as the staff of Ministers Coonan and Abbott and Ross Cameron.

I am so happy that in the gallery tonight are Barbara and Don Roberts, the best parents any son could ask for. Also in the gallery are my brothers and sisters, Jennifer, Louise and Michael; my uncle, John Beckett; my wonderful parents-in-law, Barbara and David Enoch; my sister-in-law, Katrina; and James, my brother-in-law. I am particularly proud to mention that my wonderful grandmother, Marjorie Beckett, who turned 90 years of age the day after my election, and who has always been so important to me, is in the gallery this evening. Let me take this opportunity also to remember my late grandfather, Jack Beckett, a chemist of Coogee, who, I am sure, is with us in spirit tonight.

Most of all I would like to thank my wife, Sarah, a lady of great sensitivity and significant political acumen who has been a tower of strength in these recent months. Sarah takes the old-fashioned view that a parliamentary family represents the electorate as a partnership. Sarah and my family join with me in thanking members of all parties and their spouses, as well as the Clerk, Russell Grove, the Deputy-Clerk, Mark Swinson, the Serjeant-at-Arms, Ronda Miller, and all the staff of the Parliament for the many kindnesses and courtesies extended to us. To my colleagues on both sides of the House, thank you for being here with me this evening. This is a distinguished House and I recognise that all who presently sit in this Chamber seek to serve the people of New South Wales. I thank honourable members for their kind attention.

Mr SPEAKER: I extend my personal congratulations to the honourable member for Lane Cove.